Serving Those in Need

A Handbook for Managing Faith-Based Human Service Organizations

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Chapter 1: Religion and the Emerging Context of Service Delivery
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One of the underlying assumptions of this book is the belief that most of the world's faiths view human beings as more than just physical needs and appetites. They have abilities and strengths of mind and will; they suffer mentally and emotionally; they need to live in relationship with others. In those relationships people often fail us, yet those failures should, where possible, be borne and forgiven. We also will fail, and perhaps people also will forgive us. In nearly all of the world's major religious traditions, human beings are seen as sources of both strength and weakness. Often the weaknesses are to be forgiven; they are not, however, to be accepted and certainly not encouraged. Everyone, these traditions tell us, can be more or better than what they are. All are capable of realizing their essential nature. By being in community with others, we begin to understand this. Although articulated and actualized in various ways in different traditions, the dominant thrust of their teachings is that we realize our true humanity and highest nature in community with others. Even traditions that value wandering ascetics and eremitic holy men do so because those persons are able to manifest the values of the tradition and because of the element of holiness and religious enlightenment they impart to others.

The emphasis on the word tradition, however, should not mask the fact that religions must bring those traditions to bear on new and changing realities. This chapter surveys several of the emerging contexts with which faith-based providers must contend within the next decade or so. These contexts are grouped into three broad categories: political, social, and management.

Emerging Political Context
The perception that religious traditions combine a commitment to community with a commitment to the inherent worth of individuals provided a focal point for the increasing attention paid to the role of religiously based human and social services. This became a major issue during the debate over welfare reform that dominated political discourse in the early 1990s.

By that time, it had become evident to many throughout the political continuum, and a nagging suspicion to others, that the system of public welfare in the United States did not work or at least was not working. Regardless of whether the consensus was valid, and given the fact that many made this admission only with many caveats, it was widely shared. The evidence appeared overwhelming. The deepening of poverty, the collapse of families, increasing criminality, growing drug use, rising illegitimacy, and the establishment of an underclass all were used to illustrate this presumed fact. These "socially destructive" results as well as the development of a poverty mentality-"welfare dependency"-argued strongly in the minds of many for a massive overhaul of the system. This overhaul demanded not only a change in the manner in which monies and services were transferred to the poor, but, as one looked over the types of problems that seemed to have developed, a change in values. Money seemed to be the least of the problems facing the nation's poor. Their lives were in ruin because they had been stripped of, or had rejected, the very values and behaviors necessary for stable and successful lives. Any meaningful and effective change would have to provide not only the material resources to help but, more important, the moral and spiritual resources they needed. From the religious and cultural right, to the communitarian middle, to the reflective left, many stood aghast at the social and cultural catastrophe that seemed to be occurring before their eyes.

This growing feeling that the situation demanded a transformation of personal values led many to turn their attention to religion. Politicians and cultural analysts looked increasingly to religion and religious organizations as important actors in the welfare arena. This attention focused on two broad areas. One saw religious organizations as able to play a greater role in providing services of both a material and spiritual kind to the poor, weak, and suffering. The second saw religion as a source of the stability and values needed as people moved from dependency and irresponsibility to responsible community membership. For many, these presumptions overlapped. They felt that the delivery of services by and through religious organizations was the means by which the poor could be aided materially while simultaneously experiencing and observing the importance of certain values and ways of living.

There was no more powerful and influential articulator of this position than Marvin Olasky in his book The Tragedy of American Compassion (1992), especially given its influence on politicians such as Representative Newt Gingrich. Olasky articulated, or more precisely argued for, a particular way of viewing and understanding poverty and welfare. This argument altered dramatically and drastically the basis of the public conversation over welfare. The perspective on religion and the provision of services was stated most concisely not by Olasky himself but by Charles Murray in his preface to the book:

We have learned in this century that the search for human happiness is not well served by egalitarian systems, let alone socialist ones. We have relearned in the last few decades the age-old lesson that narcissism and materialism are not satisfying bases for a fulfilling life. Marvin Olasky recognizes openly what most of us sense less articulately; the problems of America's social policy are not defined by economics or inequality, but by the needs of the human spirit. The error of contemporary policy is not that it spends too much or too little to help the poor, but that it is fundamentally out of touch with the meaning of those needs. By reminding us that it was not always so, this badly needed history points us toward a possible and better future [Murray, 1992, pp. xvi-xvii].

Although this view that people are more than just physical appetites and have other needs was articulated by one whom many regard as a spokesman for the political right, it resonates across the political spectrum. What else is the language of empowerment, dignity, and human rights than a statement that within human beings exist certain ways of being that are more important and higher than just their gross physicality?

The concern that people are more than physical beings explains why many turned their attention to religious organizations. Nearly all major religious traditions care about the whole person, about what a person is, not just about what she or he has. If a change from one way of being to another depends less on what one has than on who one is, then greater interest must be shown to that part of the person.

The recognition that the transformation of lives was necessary demanded that welfare provide not only goods but also the means by which people could be transformed.

Pundits and politicians turned to religious organizations and the services provided by and through them for the intangibles that many believed were key to the success of welfare reform: the ability to move people from dependency to independence.

One result was the decision by many politicians to aid the work of religious organizations engaged in human service delivery and to develop greater government partnerships with them. Numerous local examples abound. In Indianapolis, the mayor established the Front Porch Initiative designed to bring all local organizations, including religious ones, to bear on the needs of their neighborhoods. The family court has encouraged the development of faith-based counseling programs for juvenile offenders and their families. In Chicago, home of the nation's first family court system, a Cambodian Buddhist temple provides a place of discipline and refuge for Cambodian youth who find themselves in trouble with the law. While such state and local initiatives could be multiplied, one of the most potentially important and influential initiatives has come from federal legislation as part of the 1996 welfare reform bill. One section of the law, known as the charitable choice provision, is directed explicitly at the use of religious and faith-based organizations for the delivery of services provided under certain federal block grants.

Using religious organizations to provide services paid for with governmental monies is not new; it is common in the international development field and significant domestically. Organizations such as Lutheran Social Services, Jewish Welfare and Family Services, and Catholic Charities receive nearly 50 percent of their operating budgets from public funds. The charitable choice provision for the first time explicitly addressed the ability of religious organizations to receive such funds on an equal basis with other nonprofits and to do so without having to alter their religious character substantially. It is worth quoting the section at some length:

> **Sec. 104 (b) Religious Organizations**
> The purpose of this section is to allow States to contract with religious organizations, or to allow religious organizations to accept certificates, vouchers, or other forms of disbursement under any program described in subsection (a)(2), on the same basis as any other nongovernmental provider without impairing the religious character of such organizations, and without diminishing the religious freedom of beneficiaries of assistance funded under such program.
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> **(c) Nondiscrimination Against Religious Organizations**
> In the event a State exercises its authority under subsection (a), religious organizations are eligible, on the same basis as any other private organization, as contractors to provide assistance, or to accept certificates, vouchers, or other forms of disbursement, under any program described in subsection (a)(2) so long as the programs are implemented consistent with the Establishment Clause of the United States Constitution. Except as provided in subsection (k), neither the Federal Government nor a State receiving funds under such programs shall discriminate against an organization which is or applies to be a contractor to provide assistance, or which accepts certificates, vouchers, or other forms of disbursement, on the basis that the organization has a religious character.
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> **(d) Religious Character and Freedom**
> (1) Religious Organizations.-A religious organization with a contract described in subsection (a)(1)(A), or which accepts certificates, vouchers, or other forms of disbursement under subsection (a)(1)(B), shall retain its independence from Federal, State, and local governments, including such organization's control

over the definition, development, practice, and expression of its religious beliefs.

(2) Additional Safeguards.-Neither the Federal Government nor a State shall require a religious organization to-

(A) alter its form of internal governance; or

(B) remove religious art, icons, scripture, or other symbols; in order to be eligible to contract to provide assistance, or to accept certificates, vouchers, or other forms of disbursement funded [under this act]....

(h)(2) Limited Audit
If [a religious] organization segregates Federal funds provided under such programs into separate accounts, then only the financial assistance provided with such funds shall be subject to audit.

Although the law states what freedoms a religious organization that accepts federal monies under this law has, there remain numerous constraints on both religious organizations and the states in the provision of these services. These include that no undertakings under this law are to be seen to breach the establishment clause. Monies are not to be used to support the religious work of the organization. They shall not be used, as subsection j states, for "sectarian worship, instruction, or proselytization." In addition, the law seeks to protect the religious rights of beneficiaries seeking services. Recipients objecting to the religious character of a provider have the right to receive services of an equal value from an accessible, alternative provider. The state is required to provide such an individual with assistance within a reasonable period of time of her or his objection (section e(1)). Religious providers contracting with the state are forbidden to discriminate against recipients "on the basis of religion, a religious belief, or refusal to actively participate in a religious practice" (section g).

Although this act provides a major opportunity for well- organized and well-managed faith-based organizations to increase their funding pool, it does not provide a source of infinite funds that all religious organizations should chase. Since the monies will be allocated on a competitive basis, those organizations with a successful track record will be at an advantage. They will be aided as well by their level of sophistication in the field-in writing proposals, knowledge of contracting opportunities, and, often, personal relationships with state decision makers.

Applying for and accepting these funds will bring religious organizations, especially those with an explicit faith-based component, into greater contact with governments at all levels. Although this legislation is intended to minimize the legal conflicts that might emerge from the practice of using religious organizations to deliver governmentally funded human and social services, the legislation does open the way for increased governmental oversight. Any organization attempting to garner these monies as well as any other previously untapped sources of funds must accept that potential funders may ask serious and probing questions about the program's success, costs, and management. Reporting demands will increase, and an ability to track funds will be demanded.

The capacities necessary to meet standards expected by funders may bring new and unfamiliar organizational demands. To some extent, these demands result from highly publicized scandals among both religious and secular nonprofits, but they also emerge from the donors' needs to guarantee that their monetary gifts are used wisely and efficiently.

Although organizations with a history of gaining funds from governments and foundations might be accustomed to such precision, reporting schedules and measures of success may strike other organizations, especially those that are smaller and more focused on direct or emergency service, as puzzling and even unreasonable. Organizations and their leaders accustomed to making the case that the homeless should be housed or the hungry fed will see the value of their work in the fact that beds are full, tables are crowded, and many others are turned away. Yet this growing pressure to show success and prove efficiency will be one of the most powerful forces in the future.

To some extent, this is as it should be. Both donors and those in need have a moral demand on managers and organizations-the donors that their monies will be used correctly and wisely, those with needs that as many of them as possible will be met. Inefficient and irresponsible use of funds fails to meet these moral demands. In many ways, however, success is not an easily identified product. Certainly one can count the numbers fed, immunizations given, and children tutored, but these measure only outputs. They tell us nothing about the impact of those services on people's lives. Similarly, low-output programs that strongly emphasize a close relationship to the recipient at a higher cost per person served might prove much more successful, perhaps even more efficient, in the long term.

The determination of quality will cause numerous difficulties. "Success" has become increasingly contested as many organizations are called on to define and meet certain "outcomes." Obviously faith-based service providers will (and should be) required to produce results of the same quality as secular providers, but who determines the results and the means by which they are produced? Invariably, it will be those who have a secular social science or social work background or vocabulary. The possibility of cultural clashes is high. If one of the assumptions behind "Charitable Choice" is that faith-based services provide a qualitatively superior service (and that was one of the assumptions), what happens when determinations about services are made by those whose training and education have formed them in a radically different way? When added to the administrative demands of government, issues revolving around procedures, bookkeeping, and rules, the possibility of radical differences in approach becomes quite obvious. This does not mean that religious organizations do not and cannot meet serious objective criteria. Many do. In fact, many religious services are as professional as most secular social services, and perhaps more so. If the purpose of the act, however, was to enable smaller, allegedly more responsive, and more humane organizations greater access to monies in order that they could do more of what they already were doing well, the very nature of the law may mitigate against it. Indeed the very act of accepting contracts may constrain the flexibility, responsiveness, and human contact that appear necessary to deal adequately with the needs of those suffering from poverty and its consequences.

Two problems exist, embedded in the assumptions of the drafters of the legislation and the categorical nature of governmental policies. The assumptions focus on flexibility, responsiveness, human contact, and the willingness to spend time with those in need. Simultaneously, the categorical nature of government assumes everything is the same, that procedures must be followed, outcomes must be measured, and all must be served. Those judging programs on the latter bases will be unable to see the former.

This does not deny the legitimate expectation of accountability, which lies behind an emphasis on procedure. News reports of waste, mismanagement, and inefficiencies have destroyed many good programs. While we may cheer in novels the soldier, the lawyer, or the social worker who bends the rules for a greater purpose, in real life too often we are resentful, suspicious, and condemning. The preacher whose work may save hundreds of children receives our applause, but when the money cannot be found, suspicions abound and rumors spread.

Fraud and corruption are real. Those charged with spending tax monies have an obligation and a duty to ensure that they are rooted out or prevented. Those allocating monies under the welfare reform bill must ensure that procedures are followed and will bring oversight into any project. Government will stand in judgment on programs.

Social Context: The Organization as Teacher

Faith-based service providers must become more aggressive in educating others about the nature of their work. There must be greater attention to real education rather than merely providing information, especially that which only demonstrates how benevolent the organization is. A process of education will enable the organization to articulate the reasonableness of its view of success, demonstrate its importance to those who use its service, and show concern for those who support it.

This education must take various forms and should be directed and led by someone within the organization. Certainly everyone in an organization should be capable and willing to make the case for it, but management and administrators, including board members and volunteer leaders, are obligated to take the lead. The main responsibility falls on the executive director and other senior staff. Larger organizations, especially those that undertake significant life-changing services-job training and placement, rehabilitation for substance abuse, and turning around at-risk youth-often find that those touched by the service are grateful and eloquent spokespersons. While one must guard against exploiting the population one serves, nothing prevents an organization's leaders from asking people to tell about what receiving a service meant to them, their families, and their futures. This point must be emphasized. Too often people focus on the benefit of their services to individuals and their lives (with good reason) and ignore the fact that changed lives have important social consequences. They produce marked community goods. A person freed from addiction or drunkenness can now hold a job, pay taxes, need not resort to theft and prostitution, and may be able to reconnect with estranged family members. The single mother with a job, adequate day care, and a support system undoubtedly will have markedly improved parenting skills. Her children will be better fed and treated and will fare better in school. The mentally ill who receive treatment and counseling may become functioning members of society. If an organization's work produces important goods in the lives of individuals, it also produces many goods for the wider society. They should not be ignored, and as part of the process of education, one must argue strongly for this significance, especially when convincing people of the importance of this work.

This highlights a peculiar anomaly in this arena. An increasing emphasis on the social value of human services has emerged at a time when individual donors give more readily when they know that their gifts touch concrete individuals. Research has shown that this is particularly true of women donors, who tend to become much more involved in the activities of the organizations to which they contribute than do men. Part of the function of public teachers is to help supporters see the real impact of their gifts in people's lives.

The statement of women's charitable donations also brings us to a new reality. Women of independent means-those who are successful in business and the professions-make large gifts. Organizations need to be aware of that fact and ensure that these donors are recognized as independent moral agents and their gifts acknowledged accordingly.

Just as independent and financially successful women constitute part of the emerging context of faith-based service agencies, so too does a marked shift in the overall way in which people approach their giving. There is a powerful and growing trend toward individual selection and accountability. To meet this challenge, organizations need to become clearer and more direct about their activities and successes. As many communal organizations have begun to discover, connections of ethnicity or faith no longer provide sufficient reason for receiving support. Those within a religious tradition may have internalized the obligation for giving, but that does not necessarily mean that such giving needs to be directed toward religious organizations. Certainly this is not new. My mother tells of a virulent argument between her aunt and a local Methodist minister in the 1940s over giving. My aunt set aside 10 percent of her salary, of which she gave half to the church and the remainder to other charitable enterprises. When the minister remonstrated with her, arguing that all of it should be given to the church, she quickly informed him that he was sorely deluded if he thought she was going to change her giving patterns.

This tendency has become more marked. The increasing number of organizations designed to receive charitable donations, the weakening of certain forms of traditional loyalties, and an increasing emphasis on ensuring that gifts are used wisely and effectively have acted to exacerbate this tendency. Donors want and deserve to know what an organization does with their money. They have a right to be convinced that their gifts are used wisely and for the purposes for which they gave them. Given that resources always are finite, the donors and volunteers want to know that they are putting their limited resources into an organization, program, or project doing something important, doing it wisely, and doing it well. Part of the obligation in meeting these expectations rests with one's function as a teacher and educator. Everyone in the organization must be able and willing to make the case for what it is doing to anyone who asks, to provide the appropriate information to those who have a legitimate need for it, and to help them to see why certain costs are the way they are.

The need to provide this information, to make sure that organization members can speak articulately and honestly about their work, demands finding ways to gather, assemble, understand, and interpret the necessary information at a level appropriate to the organization's size and activities. Gathering such information serves several important purposes. Most important, it helps the organization judge its successes and determine the areas where it needs to improve. The need to be a teacher about the organization's work requires that the organization itself becomes one that learns. Success in the future will not come to those organizations that regularly repeat the same old activities but only to those that struggle to learn first what they ought to be doing and then how to do it better. The bureaucratic mind-set that focuses on not erring and simply on fulfilling its duties will not be a successful one in the future.

Management Context: The Organization as Learner

This process of learning first requires that organizations determine the context in which they are working; this is true both for existing and for planned programs. Is what they think they are accomplishing and what they are accomplishing the same thing? Organizations find this out by talking to staff, those whom they serve, and thoughtful outside observers. Where is the real value of their activities? Sometimes they will discover that it often is radically different from their perceptions and a small alteration in their programs may serve to distort terribly certain goods they are producing but about which they may be quite ignorant. Related to this is the fact that certain individuals working in the organization may be producing tremendously successful work, yet it might be invisible. The ability to see clearly what is going on and why the organization is being successful, if it is, depends on a willingness to understand the components of the organization's life.

This examination also will reveal what the organization is not doing well, where it is slipping, and where it is sacrificing too much to sacred cows. Really knowing what it is doing is both very important and very, very difficult. While often the discussion of organizational mission has led to pointless wordsmithing, the essence beneath it is unassailable. Organizations exist for reasons, for purposes: to accomplish some good (at least a perceived good), to meet some need, to attain some end. At its best, the language of mission reminds us that we need to attend carefully to these purposes, means, and ends. More important, it asks us to think carefully about what those ends ought to be.

The appropriate end of the organization depends on multiple factors: the expressed needs of those being served, the abilities of those who have created and sustained the organization, the supporters' vision of the good, and the distinctive calling or chrism that motivates the organization and those who support it. There is much in need of doing, and each organization has its distinctiveness. At the same time if the organization has a supply and no demand, it will be unable to accomplish anything unless it manages to create the demand. Coming to grips with its vision and supporters' abilities is the first step, and it requires careful thinking and discernment, just as does the next task: determining how an organization's abilities will enable it best to accomplish the ends for which it was created.

Becoming a learning organization means constantly comparing the activities undertaken with the mission and with the strengths and gifts of the organization. Another consideration is the interests and values of the various stakeholders within the organization. Insofar as it is humanly possible, these components should find themselves working together. Things should fit. If there is not a fit, then the organization must struggle to bring the various components back into a relatively cohesive whole. If it does not, the negative results will be large.

A lack of coherence will lead to a long-term dissipation of energies and a decrease in efficiency. When an organization's energies and resources are wasted, it cannot fulfill the purpose for which it exists. Perhaps one activity or two may be successful, but the overall success of work may be far less than it would be otherwise. This may seem like a relatively minor effect, but the populations being served by human and social service organizations are the weakest and most vulnerable, so any undertaking that "cheats" them in any way must, at the most basic level, be considered immoral, especially for a religiously based organization.

On a more powerful level, the failure to meet stakeholder expectations or to provide promised goods will result in a marked decrease in support, both financial and in terms of social goodwill. The loss of support will produce powerful and immediate effects on the organization's ability to continue its work, resulting in greater failures and a long-term downward spiral. It will begin to focus increasingly on institutional maintenance and less on providing the services it was created to provide. Such undertakings usually produce even greater dissipation as the organization struggles to generate revenues, identify and cultivate supporters, and manage in a crisis mode.

The implications of this way of working are both obvious and marked. Activities become diffuse, morale plummets, and work quality decreases as projects are undertaken for the revenue they generate and not for the good they accomplish. These weaknesses feed on each other as the organization spirals downward. Good employees move to more secure organizations, acrimony and conflict emerge between the executive director and the board, and any attempt at critical reflection and evaluation becomes a way to allocate blame rather than to adjust the organizational course and to right the ship.

This brings us to another significant change within the corporate environment. Organizations not only have to be thoughtful and reflective and encouraging of their staff, but they must learn how to evaluate and judge their activities in a way that produces greater learning and encourages responsible creativity. Too much concern in evaluation has focused on apportioning blame, on determining who made what error, rather than on asking what can be learned from activities that succeeded less than optimally. Little attention has even been given to the question of how organizations can learn from their successes. If we were unwilling to take the time to dissect our victories, what are we to do when we are faced with failures?

This is most definitely a place where we need to draw a lesson from professional sports, especially football, where the attention paid to every detail of the most recent project-the last game-is immense and is almost completely focused on improving the work for the next project and the overall quality of people's work. Organizations need to learn from both their failures and their successes, and they need to learn that often the best planned and most carefully organized project can fail. The failure of a project, or its incomplete success, does not necessarily reflect a failing or weakness of the people running that project. Often it is impossible to manage the external environment sufficiently. Events out of the control of an organization can have dramatic effects on the success or failure of some undertaking. One must be aware, therefore, of how to discriminate between failures that emerge from irresponsibility and incompetence and those due to simple mistakes, unanticipated events (especially those that no reasonable person could have anticipated), and sheer bad luck. One or two failures from incompetence can provide important learning experiences for staff, but they will not learn from them if their energies are directed toward covering up errors. In addition, an unreflective, judgmental corporate culture encourages bureaucratic numbness and time serving, not creativity, flexibility, and autonomy.

As we are called to do more and more, the need for flexibility and creativity will increase. Flexibility and autonomy ought to be the hallmark of faith-based services-the ability to deal with people where they are and with what they need. The genius of the faith traditions in so many ways is that they do not treat everyone similarly. The Jesus who could rebuke powerfully one of his closest followers also could speak comfortingly to the Syro-Phoenician woman, expressing his disapproval of her life, yet treating her as a child of God. Buddhism and Judaism are replete with stories about how teaching should be geared to the needs of the pupil and to her or his personality. Hinduism provides perhaps the most formalized set of this, articulating different duties to different ages of a human life, yet recognizing that there always will be those whose way is different.

Faith-based organizations need to focus carefully on the gifts of those in them. We must never forget our obligations to those people and their commitment to the organization. In our management and in our styles we must model the values we claim to hold. This does not mean that we are free to overlook and ignore incompetence and irresponsibility, but that in the way we handle all personnel matters, we must behave differently than many other organizations do.

We must do this particularly because as organizations driven by religious motivations, we look to higher standards than other organizations. We begin from a particularly exalted view of the individual: as a child of God, a fellow sentient being. The gifts and strengths of those around us should be honored and acknowledged. Staff are not simply instrumental to the ends of the organization; they are essential to it. An organization that respects them and honors their giftedness can attain successes previously unconsidered.

An organization's strength rests with its gifted people. The quality and creativity of staff and volunteers will make a major difference in the work accomplished and the successes achieved. In the future, the most productive and successful organizations will be those that find the best way to tap into the creative potentials of these individuals. The corporate and management culture of a organization must create an environment that gives people flexibility, rewards creativity, and values people for what they are and what they do.

This requires more than the superficial gesture and the awarding of meaningless recognitions. It demands that management attend seriously to the real value of those working in the organization and their contributions to its success. We have to learn how to give up power and the presumption that we have all the answers. Current management techniques such as teams are designed to do this, but as with many other management undertakings, they often are only shifts in form and not substance. As a result, evaluations of the process focus only on whether the model has succeeded, not whether it has accomplished the purpose for which it was designed. Simultaneously, rather than decreasing pointless meetings and busywork, they often increase it as greater emphasis is placed on making sure that the model "works."

Like much of the work on developing mission statements, this misses the point. Indeed restructuring may at best be a way to bring the goals to the fore, but it is not sufficient to accomplish them. Indeed it may not even be necessary. Probably one of the most successful organizations in encouraging flexibility and creativity is also one of the most hierarchical and tradition bound: the U.S. Marine Corps. The backbone of the marines is the smaller squad or group based around a noncommissioned officer and its ability to respond, within the wider purposes of the organization's mission, to situations as they emerge and develop. Within this context, incompetence, irresponsibility, and dereliction are punished severely while flexibility and initiative are rewarded. This fact should remind us that although certain management forms can facilitate the movement to a more flexible organization, they are no substitute for a work environment that gives both responsibility and authority to individuals and honors and rewards success.

Similarly, success comes only to organizations that value and undertake training and retention of individuals. Again the military provides a powerful example. It invests heavily in the training of new employees, recognizing the value of those employees and the expenses incurred; it also struggles to help them work through minor weaknesses and failings in order to improve their skills and to retain trained employees. Training and retention are going to be keys to organizational success in the future. As the level of demand becomes greater, especially for more sophisticated services, the ability of staff-both paid and volunteer-to meet those demands will be crucial. Costs incurred by losing high-quality employees could spell the difference between success and failure for the organization. As margins become thinner, anything that provides an advantage should be grasped. In doing this, both what is good for the organization and what is right, morally and religiously, converge. Investing in staff, board, and supporters will help them to succeed marvelously, and an organization will be doing what is right in honoring and valuing them for what they are and what they do.

Personal Context: Respecting Individuals

This commitment to the value of the individual, especially framed in religious ways, must manifest itself increasingly in the organization's commitment to and struggle with worship. The emerging context for faith-based organizations is the reality of their distinctiveness. The key to this distinctiveness, the centrality of faith, will come into tension with the growing nature of pluralism and interfaith partnerships. While it may be appropriate, theologically and structurally, for some organizations to limit their staffs to those who share a particular faith commitment, for others this will be neither a desirable nor acceptable alternative. These organizations must find some way to maintain their distinctive religious character while simultaneously respecting and honoring the religious sensibilities of others.

Such an undertaking will not be easy, but it will be necessary and is not as difficult as many imagine. Numerous organizations have been successful at it, Habitat for Humanity and the Catholic Worker being among the most obvious examples. Those whom the organization serves, its staff, and its partners will all come from different religious faiths and none at all, yet the shared commitment to service and the shared nature of the need will bring everyone together.

To do this successfully, everyone in the organization must keep to the forefront that their commitment to service functions as an expression of faith. However, it should not necessarily be accompanied by any overt or explicit presumption on their part. To undertake to provide a service to those who are in need as a leading wedge to conversion is ultimately a violation of their personhood and fundamentally diminishes the morality of the undertaking. This differs, however, from a position that views the good produced by religious belief as paramount and therefore presents it in a straightforward way as a part of the service provided. At any time, however, to dangle food before a starving person as bait for a sermon is not and cannot be considered appropriate.

In the future, religious individuals and organizations engaged in delivering services to others must increasingly come to understand that the faith component of their service is more about them and less about those being served. Doing unto others must be viewed as part of a religious obligation, something from which one cannot escape and not simply as instrumental to other ends.

This respect for others also has to extend to those with whom those in the organization find themselves working as they struggle to meet the pressing needs of the community or the population served. The future will mean partnerships, working together. While many use the term, few know its true meaning and significance. Preeminently, just like the organization, the partnership has a purpose and an end. Partnerships are designed to help accomplish broader goals more readily, through building on differing strengths, reducing inefficiencies, and avoiding redundancy. Approaching any partnership with the view that the organization must get something out of it is wrong. There is nothing more likely to kill or destroy a partnership more quickly than such an attitude. For that reason, although there may be legitimate debates over governance and resources as partnerships are formed, these always must be viewed as secondary to the reasons for creating the partnership. Differences in faith and practice should be dealt with in similar ways. Partnerships always must be undertaken as though they are partnerships of equals. The organization has an obligation to treat partners in service as equals and to provide respect and support for their faith traditions. The requires respect, curiosity and honest questioning where necessary, and a constant focus on the wider context of the shared work together-not an attitude of indifference or denial.

Organizations in the future must be able to adjust to emerging realities and new needs. Only by planning for these, with a clear and well-articulated statement of the nature of the organization and its values, can the mission be fulfilled. It is a constant struggle to do this amid everything else and to do it in a way that does not become a drain on organizational life. Careful planning and implementation, however, will pay off markedly.

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