Leading With Grace: Sensing the Spirit Within - The Shepherd Metaphor for Leadership

Exploratory synthesis of the concept(s)

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Grace is more often seen in action as a form of movement or a simple act - usually one of kindness and graciousness.
These leaders were blessed with a graceful vision successfully executed through the actions of a grace-filled mission.

Stories provide a ‘sense of the spirit’ of what it is to lead with grace.
Leaders Like…

- Warren Bennis
- Queen Elizabeth
- Mary Robinson
- Abraham Lincoln
- Mahatma Gandhi
- Mother Terese
- St Mary Mackillop

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Grace is manifested in the human qualities/attributes, actions that are gracious, graceful and grace-filled.
The Shepherd Metaphor of Leadership is a revisited model (McGahey, 2000, 2002). It has stood the test of time in the years since being first described.

- a research study,
- lecture series,
- a fictional novel for the young in heart,
- a song and
- The Leadership Attributes Game.

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The Shepherd Metaphor for Leadership

The purpose of Shepherd Metaphor for Leadership is the establishment of communities that are essentially moral. This is achieved through the building of authentic and trusting relationships where the emphasis is on people rather than roles.

A moral community can be defined as:

A community that is built upon shared values, norms and beliefs, and one that values the heart, soul and mind of its people.

(McGahey, 2001, p. 37)
The Shepherd Metaphor:
Sensing the spirit - A spirit of good intent

Guiding Principle of
“Life is the precious gift”

Shepherd Attributes

Herding - gathering (shepherd action)

Always there – never alone (shepherd action)

Pathfinder - guide (shepherd action)
The Guiding Principle - ‘life is the precious gift’

It is not more light that is needed in the world, it is more warmth. We will not die of darkness but of cold.

Read (1947 - 1976)
The shepherd is the guardian of the flock - the protector of life. Therefore, a shepherd values life.

A possible principle that emerges from this is, ‘life is the precious gift’. The important word being ‘life’.
Several parables personify the role of the shepherd.

- The Lost Sheep (Luke 15: 5-6)
- The Prodigal Son (Luke 10: 25-37)
- Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
Several human values and likely behaviours reflect this principle.

- **Respect** - for human life and the dignity of all people.
- **Truth** - seek the truth without truth there is no trust and no hope.
- **Integrity** - helps build honesty, empathy and open communication.
- **Intuition** - to be guided by Intuition through sensing the spirit and what is ‘felt’ to be true.
- **Compassion** - A spirit of good intent and care for others.
- **Suspending judgment** - the practice of reflection upon different points of view.
Other qualities, behaviours, mannerisms include:

- resilience,
- tolerance,
- ingenuity,
- integrity,
- transparency,
- accountability (responsibility) and authenticity.

In this way, grace-filled and authentic relationships of trust are built and nurtured.
Several attributes are considered essential for the shepherd leader within the context of a moral community – a community in which all members endeavour to live as shepherd leaders who lead with grace.
Shepherd Leader Attributes - aspiring to be a shepherd of grace
The following list presents attributes for a shepherd leader.

- Empathy - the art of listening and feeling.
- Integrity - the condition of being whole; honest.
- Trustworthy - worthy of trust.
- Passion with Persistence - enthusiasm that flows from the heart.
- Guided by Intuition - the direct perception of truth.
- Compassionate - caring / patient.
- Willingness to Communicate.
- Willingness to Take Risks.
- Willingness to Trust.
- Willingness to Suspend Judgement - detachment from a situation and practicing reflection while viewing from different points of view (multiple perspectives).
- Faithfulness - belief in a future.
- Transcendence - a clear vision of the future that is energising and desirable.
- Prophetic and Challenging
- Diversity as a Strength
- Consistency
Shepherd Actions - The Role of a Shepherd Leader

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The role of a shepherd leader can be thought of as areas of Shepherd Action such as:

- Gathering - vision and mission
- Pathfinder – guiding
- Always There - never alone
Gathering - vision & mission

The Tao leader creates Harmony
Reaching From the heart
To build community
(Toa, 49)

(Dreher, 1997, p.246)

The gathering shepherd action - is what leads to the formation of a community. A leader's vision, mission and plan are tools that can be used to gather people and gain the support needed for the establishment of a moral community.

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Leaders must have the courage to follow their vision (shared), to believe in the invisible, to work for something that is still only a possibility, while others often wring their hands in despair. (Dreher, 1997, p.138)

Shepherds will seek new paths and new directions in which the vision and mission can flourish and be transformed into action. They are pathfinders (McGahey, 2000; Bowling, 2011).
The shepherd is spiritual, a wanderer of open spaces, freedom and greener pastures. The shepherd will mingle with the flock walking sometimes behind, sometimes in front but usually within the flock. 
McGahey (2000, 2001)

And as Loa Tzu taught, leaders are able to:

Live with humility
Remaining ahead of their people
By walking behind. (Toa, 66)
Dreher (1997, p. 231)
Always There (theme) – presence

A good shepherd never left his sheep alone.
They would have been lost without him.
His presence was their assurance.
(Roper, 1997, p.3)
This Shepherd Action - Always There - is vital for developing endurance and perseverance amongst the flock and therefore within community.

The shepherd leaders presence should always be felt through their actions.
Leadership Attributes

What are the 5 most significant attributes for a leader needs to develop within themselves as they strive to establish a moral community?

Take a few minutes to look at the cards
Place them arrange them
Share with your neighbour
Leading with Grace and Shepherd Leadership - a venture into the soul

The Shepherd Metaphor for Leadership is a metaphor for establishing relationships that build community. At the heart of the metaphor is the development of a:

*shared graceful vision for a grace-filled mission which is a call to action.*

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The concepts of ‘leading with grace’ and ‘the Shepherd Metaphor of leadership’ can have a significant impact on the field of leadership.

They strike at the heart of what it essentially human and humane.

A life that is served and a life that gives service. A life of contemplative reflection translated into vision, mission and action.
The Shepherd Metaphor can be used by leader(s) to guide them in their daily work within community. There is a need for research that identifies shepherd leaders in all forms of community life and listens to their voices so as to hear their stories.
Simplistic by design the concept of leading with grace and the Shepherd Metaphor touch at the soul of what it is to lead and be called a leader. They are not associated with a set of skills or managerial tasks that can be taught.

They must be first be desired, then sought, found and lived in daily life with each breath we take.
Time to bring this exploratory paper to an end. And so remember:

_A graceful vision of a grace-filled mission is a call to action._
It can be said that the greatest gift each of us brings to this world is a “single breath”.
For in a single breath there is life and a presence.
Each breath can bring forth a voice.
And so, there is purpose and hope.
Leading with grace is not so much as what is done but more of what is not done. It is a presence and has purpose.

Leading with Grace is a gift to be received as well as a gift to give. Leading with grace can be found in relationships that have service at the heart of all actions.
It can be found in leadership that steps back to take a grace-filled breath and then move on graciously with a vision and mission that is a call to action.

Grace can be a gift from God that is at rest and very calm yet filled with urgency and purpose. It is listening to the silent voice, for silence speaks for itself…so be still…
The last book of the Bible is The Book of Revelations. It is interesting to note that it has as its final words and indeed the final words in the Bible:

“The grace of the Lord Jesus, be with all the saints. Amen” (Rev 22:21).

And Indeed, I believe, that in God’s eyes we are all saints.  Amen
A graceful vision for a grace-filled mission is a call to action.
Upper trigram: Kên
Keeping Still, Mountain

Lower trigram: Li
The Clinging, Flame
The Judgement:

Grace has success.

In small matters

It is favourable to undertake something.

(Stenudd, 2012)

…a call to action

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