

Willerup Whispers



... To Glorify Christ in Word & Deed

MAY 2024

Leaders Leading Well

The Outcry for Biblical Leadership: A Beacon in a Confused World

Our era seems to be marked by a profound leadership crisis, the world faces ethical ambiguities, division, and a general lack of visionary guidance. Both globally and locally, leaders often seem more preoccupied with personal gain than with the welfare of those they serve. In these challenging times, the principles of Biblical leadership not only offer a refuge but a profound solution. But what exactly is God-honoring leadership, and why does it seem so rare today?

Rediscover the Biblical Foundation

God-honoring leadership is rooted firmly in the Biblical text. People like Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Ruth and Esther provided leadership in the midst of difficult and often tragic circumstances. God in Jesus Christ, confirmed leadership as a humble service to the Father, empowered by the Holy Spirit. This contrasts sharply with the domineering styles other types of leadership

provide. Mark 10:45 states, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." This servant leadership is vividly illustrated throughout the Bible and illustrated brilliantly when Jesus washed His disciples' feet in John 13:1-17, a direct challenge to any notions of leadership as an exercise of power.

Consider Characteristics of Biblical Leaders

Humility: Philippians 2:3 advises, "Do nothing from *selfish* ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."

Integrity: Proverbs 10:9 states, "Whoever walks in *integrity* walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out."

Compassion: Colossians 3:12 encourages believers to "*put on* compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience."

Visionary: Proverbs 29:18 notes, "Where there is no *vision*, the people perish."

Resilience: James 1:12 promises, "Blessed is the man who *remains steadfast* under trial."

Now Consider What Biblical Leadership is Not:

1. Not Authoritarian: Christian leadership is the antithesis of authoritarianism. It seeks to *empower* rather than *control*, as exemplified by Jesus in Matthew 20:25-26: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you." Jesus gives away his authority.

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2. Not Self-Serving: True God-honoring leadership is never self-serving. Acts 20:35 reminds us of Jesus' words: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Leaders are called to give, not to accumulate.

3. Not Just for the Clergy: Every Christian is called to be a leader in some capacity. 1 Peter 4:10 exhorts, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."

Why the World Needs Christian Leadership:

1. We need an ethical compass. As we can see, in times of moral uncertainty, Christian leaders provide a compass based on unchanging biblical truths.

2. Hope and healing are found nowhere else—only in salvation or sozo. The word salvation includes healing. Perhaps the most profound use of "sōzō" is in reference to spiritual salvation—the act of *being saved* from sin and its consequences. For instance, Ephesians 2:8 states, "For by grace you have been saved (sōzō) through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God," emphasizing the concept of salvation as a gift from God.

3. Shared authority has integrity. Jesus gave authority to heal and cast out impure spirits or demons to His disciples. In Matthew 10:1, Mark 3:14-15, Luke 9:1-2. Recall Jesus' words to his disciples from Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:17-18 and Acts 1:8. Power to lead from a resource not our own but from above. Something higher, greater and eternal.

4. Leaders are called to be agents of healing and hope, as in 2 Corinthians 5:18, where God "reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

So why do so few Bible believing people engage in leadership?

Fear and inadequacy reign. Many gifted leaders rebel against leading fearing consequences, some flat out quit or disengage altogether, and others half-

heartedly assume the opportunity to lead acquiescing to the reality that no one else will lead. Many feel inadequate to deal with the changing tide of society, yet 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds us, "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

Sometimes, we suffer from a misunderstanding of calling. Leadership isn't limited to the pulpit. Ephesians 4:11-12 teaches that leadership roles are varied: "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry." These positions of power were identified in David's kingdom and thrived under Solomon's leadership.

Training and mentoring must become vital during an era of confusion and chaos. Structured leadership development is critical, but Titus 2:7-8 underscores the need for all of us to model good works in all respects. God-honoring leadership is vital in our times, perhaps more than ever sharing of personal experience how we made it through difficult times or stories of personal resilience need to be shared from generation to generation.

As we accept the mantle of leadership, I call on you to be courageous, to reflect on your potential as a God-honoring leader. No one was ever brave without facing challenges that seemed bigger or greater. Seek training, find mentors, and step into roles where you can lead by serving. The world needs your faith in action. It's your turn—to lead in action. Trust that what God says in His Word is truth and nothing will stop you. Do it all with love—a deep sense of the Father's love for creation and for us. Unstoppable. That is what you will be. Go lead.

Pastor Jen

History Speaks– May 2024



May 3, 2024, marked the 173rd Anniversary of the formal organization of what we now call “Willerup Church.” For the past two months, we have enjoyed reading about the beginning of our congregation as written by Vivian Vasby Burnie for her high school English assignment. She grew up in our church, and title her paper, *Long May She Live*, “she” being Willerup Church.

The church was incorporated in Madison on May 3, 1851, as a member church of the Methodist Episcopal denomination. But it was unique, because it was the first Norwegian Methodist Church in the world. Norway had named the Lutheran denomination as their state church, which meant it was subsidized by the government, and other Christian faith expressions were not allowed. But immigrants to the U.S. were open to exploring freedom of religion, and some converted to Methodism.

So, we left off in Vivian’s account at the point where Rev. Christian B. Willerup had arrived in Cambridge in November 1850 and began preaching in the small school house of Cambridge. He was a good preacher and people hungered to hear his messages in their native language. After several sessions, Willerup invited the congregants to join the church and 67 people did!

But why should we care about that in our current context of 2024? That was then, and this is now. Why should we bother to care about old news? My answer is that we should care, because of the content of Rev. Willerup’s preaching. He made the Bible relevant to the daily lives of the people. He taught them that there was more to being a Christian than simply being baptized as an infant and attending Sunday morning church services. He taught them that when a person truly understood that Jesus died in their place to pay for their own sins and thereby provided them eternal life, they would have peace in their souls. (When this happened to Rev. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, he said that his heart was “strangely warmed.”)

But even then, salvation wasn’t the end goal for a Christian. It was just the beginning. Rev. Willerup knew that the Bible is the Living Word of God. In it, God reveals who He is, how to live to please Him, and how to find contentment in the circumstances of our own lives, no matter what is happening around us or to us. God is with us in everything. And to help the congregation ingest this knowledge and apply it, Rev. Willerup set up a system of ‘classes’ and assigned people to them. The leaders were lay people and the groups met regularly to share how their lives were going, to encourage one another, to discuss passages of scripture and determine how those Living Words applied to their lives, and to pray for one another. Together, they helped each other become better Christians. And Willerup’s congregation grew.

We can learn from their experience and apply it to our own congregational life today:

First, their pastor preached the Living Word of God. ✓

Second, classes of lay people were established for sharing, caring, studying scripture to find applications, and prayer. ✓

Third, often lay people, not the pastor, were in charge of the classes. ✓

This describes Willerup today, although we call our ‘classes’ Growth Groups.

Some people may think that our church always had these three practices happening, but when I joined in Fall 1971, there weren’t Growth Groups, as such. However, there were small group Bible studies in

peoples' homes in the evening and separate women's study groups in homes during the day. And some may think we always had pastors who strongly preached the word. Not so. But through it all, God provided strong leadership and Biblical knowledge by other means, particularly from our own laity.

It's important for us to examine the history of Willerup Church to find encouragement and direction on how God led this unique congregation, and also, to recognize low points and failures, which caution us going forward. It's important to go back... in order to find direction for the future.

by Judy Vasby, historian



MARK YOUR CALENDARS! YOU'RE INVITED TO THE CELEBRATION OF WILLERUP CONGREGATIONS' 175 YEARS OF WORSHIPPING AND SERVING THE LORD!

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Banquet-Saturday May 2, 2026 Worship Service- Sunday May 3, 2026

Our Key Verse: Matthew 13:31-32. *Another parable He put to them saying: The Kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.*

This picture shows the size of a mustard seed, at the upper left, along with a mustard tree



The idea is that the small seed planted in 1851 has become mature and vital with a sturdiness and welcoming aspect that draws 'birds' to it, a safe place to be for both rest and growth. And the branches reach out to the surrounding community and beyond.

Our Slogan is: **PLANTED IN FAITH – VITAL AND GROWING**
Willerup Church – Est. 1851

Our Logo: - has not been created yet, but the vision is that it will include the mustard tree and the church building together, perhaps intertwined. Along with the slogan. This will be used on commemorative items such as mugs, water bottles, aprons, shirts, and caps, plus as our letterhead.

But more importantly, activities and programs are being planned for the twelve months leading up to the anniversary date. And we will be using as titles many of the slogan ideas that you. For example- Sunday May 4, 2025, a reenactment Rev. Willerup coming to church with his horse and buggy, the ushers poking people awake with long sticks, congregation dressed in 1850s style clothing, etc. It will be titled, "When Willerup Was Planted." Look for more about the 175th Anniversary in future *Willerup Whispers*.