



## A JOURNEY IN SERVANT-LEADERSHIP — LARRY C. SPEARS

W elcome to our 2019 edition of *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*. I would like to offer my special thanks to all of our contributing authors in this journal. Each edition of IJSL contains a wonderful array of articles and papers, poetry and research, film reviews and reflections from around the world that demonstrate many remarkable journeys in servant-leadership.

### FOREWORD TO TRANSFORMING SCHOOLS THROUGH SYSTEMS CHANGE

In 2016, I wrote a Foreword to a wonderful book titled, *Transforming Schools Through Systems Change* (C. Salina, S. Girtz, and J. Eppinga; 2016, Rowman & Littlefield), which I would like to share with you here—

It is no secret that our schools are struggling. That struggle is due, in part, to an organizational orientation that doesn't emphasize the importance of, as this book puts it, "creating a sense of belonging and power regarding the well-being of the group and the organization—the essence of servant-leadership."

A lifelong student of how things get done in organizations,



Robert Greenleaf, the founder of servant-leadership, was especially concerned with encouraging the understanding and practice of servant-leadership within educational systems. Greenleaf examined the process of teaching/learning and offered his thinking on how servant-leadership could enhance the experiences of both students and teachers.

As Greenleaf so eloquently described the servant-leader in his seminal essay *The Servant as Leader*,

“It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant—first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test is: Do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?”

This book offers an educational model for making sure that people’s highest priority needs are being served. Among those needs are a sense of belonging, of being able to contribute, and that others also can and will contribute—what this book calls relational trust. This trust suffuses the model presented here, allowing all parties to become empowered and do their best work while serving others.

Greenleaf emphasized several characteristics salient to the process of servant-leadership, including listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building



community. These ten characteristics of servant-leadership are by no means exhaustive. However, they serve to communicate the power and promise that this concept offers to servant-leaders who are open to its invitation and challenge.

This book describes ways in which many of these characteristics can be manifested in our schools—

Listening intently is of utmost importance as a foundation for the one-on-one meetings the book advocates throughout.

Empathy, in which one recognizes others' special and unique spirits and believes in them, is what allows all people in the school to live out their dispensation, connect with their mission, and understand their role in the organization.

Healing comes about when people no longer work in isolation, or only in their departments, but trust that administrators, teachers, and students will all bring something valuable to the table.

Awareness, which Greenleaf described as “a disturber and an awakener,” is addressed in this book through the notion that leaders in schools must embrace conflict and see it as a way to move closer to an ideal reality.

Conceptualization includes thinking beyond the day-to-day crises that can so easily absorb people working in education. Rather than focusing only on putting out the fires that are always present in low-achieving schools, leaders must also allocate mental energy for moving closer to their envisioned reality. This characteristic is a potent element of the 45-day plan described within as a “call to action” and as school leaders' “lesson plan.”



Commitment to the growth of people means empowering each person to play his or her role with heart and dedication. When this commitment is present, administrators believe in teachers and teachers believe in students. Everyone seeks to clear away any situational dross that keeps others from displaying their truest and most potent gifts. This commitment allows people the autonomy to take risks and supports them at times when plans are not realized.

Building community is one of the most important characteristics of servant-leadership, and of a powerful school. Community is built in schools by fostering relational trust. It grows when people declare their accountability to one another and formal leaders get buy-in from their staffs about how to move the organization forward.

Greenleaf said, “All that is needed to rebuild community as a viable life form for large numbers of people is for enough servant-leaders to show the way, not by mass movements, but by each servant-leader demonstrating his or her own unlimited liability for a quite specific community-related group.”

In many ways, the authors of this book have demonstrated their own “unlimited liability” for everyone associated with school systems. *Transforming Schools Through Systems Change* provides a roadmap for helping to make servant-leadership a reality in school systems. I recommend what follows as a dynamic approach to the creation of servant-led schools everywhere.



## ON SERVICE-LEARNING AND SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

As a student at DePauw University (Greencastle, Indiana) in the 1970s, I spent a year on an off-campus program sponsored by the Great Lakes Colleges Association. Begun in 1967 as the Philadelphia Urban Semester, today it is called The Philadelphia Center ([www.tpc.edu](http://www.tpc.edu)). This program is one of the best in the country, in that it combines a full-time internship experience with living in an urban environment, along with a number of elective courses designed to reinforce the learning and impact of living in an urban environment.

It turned out to be a fortuitous learning experience for me—one which helped to set me along my own life's journey over the past forty years. After graduating from DePauw in 1978, I headed out to Philadelphia and lived there until 1990, when I came back to Indiana to head up the Greenleaf Center until 2007. Since 2008, I have divided my time between my work with Gonzaga University (Spokane) and the Spears Center for Servant-Leadership (Indianapolis).

Throughout the 1980s, I kept in close contact with the Philadelphia program and eventually had some involvement with the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education. Today, that organization is known as the National Society for Experiential Education (<https://www.nsee.org/>).

I have read a great deal about service-learning and its origins, and it is very clear that the writings of Robert Greenleaf on servant-leadership played an important role in the conceptualization of service-learning.

One of the very best books on service-learning—and one



which made the pivotal role of servant-leadership in service-learning quite clear, is a three-volume series called *Combining Service and Learning: A Resource Book for Community and Public Service*. Published in 1990 by NSIEE (Jane Kendall, editor, and now out-of-print), it contains numerous articles by service-learning pioneers who discuss servant-leadership in relation to service-learning.

Today, service-learning programs abound. Some of them continue to claim servant-leadership as an important core value. Other service-learning programs continue to rediscover their servant-leader roots as a result of the increasing public profile of servant-leadership as practiced in such well-known businesses as Starbucks, Southwest Airlines, TDIndustries, the Men's Wearhouse, The Toro Company, and others.

Over the years a number of servant-leadership initiatives have been launched in numerous colleges and universities. These have taken many different forms, from courses, certificates, and even degrees being offered in servant-leadership, to student living units that focus on servant-leadership, to servant-leadership mentoring programs involving college students and local high school students, and more.

Robert Greenleaf spoke of the need for secondary and post-secondary schools to prepare the poor "to return to their roots and become leaders among the disadvantaged." He said that the goal of a college education should be to "prepare students to serve and be served by the current society." ["Servant Leadership in Education," Robert K. Greenleaf, *SERVANT-LEADERSHIP*, 1977]



It is my great hope that servant-leadership may continue to expand into many areas of public and private life—and especially into K-12 schools.

## WRITINGS

Here is a list of some of the servant-leadership essays and papers that I have published in 2018-2019:

- “The Common Good and Servant-Leadership: Rocks Upon Which Good Societies are Built,” (Dung Q. Tran and Larry Spears; 2019; *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, Volume 13, 2019, Number 1).
- *Servant-Leaders in Training: Foundation of the Philosophy of Servant-Leadership* (John Henry Horsman; 2018, Rowman & Littlefield). Foreword by Larry Spears
- “Make Your Life Extraordinary: The Teacher as Servant-Leader,” (Michael J. Reilly and Larry Spears; 2018; *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, Volume 12, 2018, Number 1).
- *Leveraging the Power of Servant-Leadership: Building High Performing Organizations* (James Laub; 2018, Rowman & Littlefield). Foreword by Larry Spears.
- *Servant Leadership in Action: How You Can Achieve Great Relationships and Results* (Ken Blanchard and Renee Broadwell, Editors; 2018, Berrett-Koehler). Chapter by Larry Spears.



## TRAVELS AND PRESENTATIONS

I am most grateful for the kind invitations to speak on servant-leadership that I have received in 2018-2019. I thank everyone at the following institutions for their caring spirits and ongoing commitment to servant-leadership:

- “Introduction to Servant-Leadership.” Presentation by Joseph A. Goss and Larry Spears, at the Servant-Leadership Certificate Program. University of Wisconsin-Madison. Madison, WI (2019)
- “The Common Good and Servant-Leadership: Rocks Upon Which Good Societies are Built.” Presentation by Dung Q. Tran and Larry Spears, at Building Institutions for the Common Good: The Purpose and Practice of Business in an Inclusive Economy. Tenth International Conference on Catholic Social Thought and Business Education & Sixth Colloquium on Christian Humanism in Business and Society. University of St. Thomas. St. Paul, MN (2018)
- “Conversation on Servant-Leadership,” with Kathleen Patterson and Larry Spears, at the Servant-Leadership Research Roundtable. Regent University. Virginia Beach, VA. (2018)
- “From Badlands to the Promised Land: Bruce Springsteen as a Servant-Leader.” Presentation by Joseph Albert and Larry Spears, at the Bruce Springsteen International Symposium. Monmouth University. West Long Branch, NJ (2018)



- Larry was inducted as the first recipient of the Gonzaga University School of Leadership Studies' Hall of Honor, Gonzaga University. Spokane, WA (2018)

## COURSES

It is a great honor and joy to teach for Gonzaga University. Since 2008, I have taught eighty courses and more than 1,600 graduate students. In the past year, I have taught the following classes:

- Fall A 2019: Servant Leadership (ORGL 530)
- Summer 2019: Servant-Leadership (ORGL 530/DPLS 774)
- Summer 2019: Listen-Discern-Decide (ORGL 535)
- Spring 2019: The Art & Practice of Servant-Leadership (ORGL 690/DPLS 775)
- Spring B 2019: Listen-Discern-Decide (ORGL 535)
- Spring A 2019: Servant-Leadership (ORGL 530)
- Spring A 2019: Listen-Discern-Decide (ORGL 535/DPLS 778)
- Fall B 2018: Listen-Discern-Decide (ORGL 535)
- Fall A 2018: Servant-Leadership (ORGL 530/DPLS 774)
- Fall A 2018: Listen-Discern-Decide (ORGL 535)

## ON APPRECIATION AND AWARENESS

In this, our 2019 edition of *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, I continue to feel a deep sense of appreciation and awareness surrounding the wonderful



contributors to this publication, and to all those who have contributed to our previous editions since 2005. As ever, I offer a special note of appreciation for the unflagging work and imagination of our stellar Editor, Shann Ferch, and to our Associate Editor, Jenny Song, for her beautiful work in helping to put this issue together. I am grateful to serve as Senior Advisory Editor of *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*; and, for the friendship and intellectual journey shared with so many servant-leaders at Gonzaga University and around the world who continue to deepen my own understanding and appreciation of servant-leadership.

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Larry C. Spears is president and CEO of the Spears Center for Servant-Leadership ([www.spearscenter.org](http://www.spearscenter.org)), Indianapolis, and he serves as Servant-Leadership Scholar at Gonzaga University, Spokane. He is the editor and contributing author for fifteen books on servant-leadership, including the critically acclaimed *Insights on Leadership* (1996), *Fortuitous Encounters* (2013, with Paul Davis); and, with Shann Ferch, *The Spirit of Servant-Leadership* (2011) and *Conversations on Servant-Leadership* (2015). Since 1994, Larry has also contributed chapters to an additional seventeen books by others. He also served as editor on all five of Robert K. Greenleaf's books. Larry serves as senior advisory editor of *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*. From 1990-2007, Larry served as president and CEO, and also as Senior Fellow and President Emeritus, of The Robert K. Greenleaf



Center for Servant-Leadership. Since 2008, he has served as Servant-Leadership Scholar for Gonzaga University's School of Leadership, where he is an adjunct faculty member and teaches graduate courses; and, as President of The Larry C. Spears Center for Servant-Leadership ([www.spearscenter.org](http://www.spearscenter.org)).

Among other honors, Larry has received the "Outstanding Leadership Award" from Chapman University in California (2002); the "Dare to Lead" Award from the International Leadership Network (2004); the Community Leadership Award from DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana (2008); a special recognition from the Greenleaf Centre-United Kingdom (2015); and, as the inaugural inductee into Gonzaga University's School of Leadership Studies' Hall of Honor (2018).

In 2004, Larry was interviewed by NBC reporter Stone Phillips for a segment on servant-leadership that appeared on NBC's DATELINE news program, which was seen by ten million viewers.