



A JOURNEY IN SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

—LARRY C. SPEARS

Welcome to our 2021 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.

PREFACE TO GLOBAL SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

“Preface: A Thirty-Year Global Journey in Servant-Leadership,” by Larry C. Spears, from *Global Servant-Leadership: Wisdom, Love, and Legitimate Power in the Age of Chaos* (Edited by Philip Mathew, Jiying Song, Shann Ray Ferch, and Larry C. Spears); 2021, Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland.

This collection of essays, *Global Servant-Leadership: Wisdom, Love and Legitimate Power in the Age of Chaos*, represents a compelling look at servant-leadership from an international perspective. The chapters in this compilation offer up deep wisdom, powerful questions, and helpful practices for those of us who desire to grow as aspiring servant-leaders who also understand that servant-leadership has been influenced by the deep insights and perspectives of many cultures around the world.

The term servant-leadership was first coined in a 1970 essay by Robert K. Greenleaf (1904–1990), entitled *The Servant as Leader*.



Greenleaf spent most of his organizational life in the field of management research, development, and education at AT&T. Following a forty-year career there, he founded the Center for Applied Ethics in 1964 and enjoyed a second career that lasted another twenty-five years. In 1985, the Center for Applied Ethics was renamed The Robert K. Greenleaf Center, where I served as President & CEO from 1990-2007. Since 2008, I have divided my time between Gonzaga University (Spokane), where I serve as servant-leadership scholar; and with The Larry Spears Center for Servant-Leadership (Indianapolis).

During those early years, I edited or co-edited five volumes of writings by Robert Greenleaf: *On Becoming a Servant-Leader* (1996), *Seeker and Servant* (1996), *The Power of Servant-Leadership* (1998), *Servant Leadership: 25th Anniversary Edition* (2002), and *The Servant-Leader Within* (2003). Working together with many others, both then and since, I have also co-produced an ongoing series of servant-leadership anthologies, including *Reflections on Leadership* (1995), *Insights on Leadership* (1998), *Focus on Leadership* (2002), *Practicing Servant-Leadership* (2004), *The Spirit of Servant-Leadership* (2011), *Conversations on Servant-Leadership* (2015), *Servant-Leadership and Forgiveness* (2020), and this latest volume, *Global Servant-Leadership* (2021).

Since 1970, more than a half-million copies of Robert Greenleaf's books and essays have been sold worldwide. Slowly but surely, his writings on servant-leadership have helped to transform both people and organizations around the world. In many ways, it may be said that the times are only now beginning to catch up with Robert Greenleaf's visionary call to servant-leadership. The idea of servant-leadership, now in its sixth decade as a concept bearing that name, continues to create a quiet revolution around the world.



But what does servant-leadership entail? Who *is* a servant-leader? Greenleaf said that the servant-leader is one who is a servant first and a leader second. In *The Servant as Leader*, Greenleaf writes,

The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants 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? (pp. 13-14)

The words servant and leader are usually thought of as being opposites. In deliberately bringing those two words together in a meaningful way, Robert Greenleaf gave birth to the paradoxical term “servant-leader.” His writings on the subject of servant-leadership helped to get this global movement started, and his views have had a profound and growing effect on many organizations and thought-leaders. Organizations like AFLAC, Chick-fil-A, The Container Store, Starbucks, Southwest Airlines, Synovus Financial Corporation, TDIndustries and many more are recognized today for nurturing servant-led cultures. These institutions and many more have been encouraged and supported by a long list of servant-leadership thought-leaders such as James Autry, Cheryl Bachelder, Warren Bennis, Ken Blanchard, Peter Block, John Carver, Stephen Covey, Max DePree, Shann Ferch, Don Frick, John Horsman, James Kouzes, Parker Palmer, M. Scott Peck, Peter Senge, Margaret Wheatley, and Danah Zohar, to name but a handful of today’s cutting-edge authors and advocates of servant-leadership.



In 1992, I conducted a study of Robert Greenleaf's writings. From that analysis, I was able to codify a set of ten characteristics that Greenleaf wrote about in various writings, and which he considered as being central to the development of servant-leaders. These include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. My analysis showed these to be the ones that Greenleaf mentioned most often in his writings, and which led me to codify them into a list and to begin to write about them. While these ten characteristics of servant-leadership are by no means exhaustive, they do serve to communicate the power and promise that this concept offers to servant-leaders who are open to its invitation and challenge. Like Robert Greenleaf, I am convinced that it is possible to become an increasingly authentic servant-leader through the conscious development of these and other characteristics.

It is helpful to understand that servant-leadership starts within each one of us, and that it is first-and-foremost a personal philosophy and commitment that we can choose to practice in any environment. If we understand Greenleaf's best test as the fundamental understanding of servant-leadership, then it becomes clear that the choice to seek to practice servant-leadership is ours to make. Our personal embracing of servant-leadership does not require the approval of our supervisor, or our organization's chief executive. We don't need anyone's permission to personally do our best to act as a servant-leader. It is our choice.

Since 1990, my work has included a strong focus on encouraging a global understanding and practice of servant-leadership. During my years with the Greenleaf Center, I worked to encourage the translation and publication of various servant-leadership essays and books into Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, Czech, Dutch, French,



German, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish language editions. In 2005, Shann Ferch and I launched *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, which is a joint publication of Gonzaga University and The Spears Center for Servant-Leadership. We have taken great care over the years to cultivate content contributions to the journal from a wide-ranging global perspective.

For thirty years I have travelled internationally to meet with others in sharing ideas and inspiration around the servant-as-leader philosophy. While I have visited a dozen countries, the internet has allowed me to be in touch with people from many more countries who are interested in servant-leadership. Today, I maintain a strong-and-growing correspondence with many who have been impacted by their own understanding-and-practices of servant-leadership, and who are also helping to shape the future legacy of servant-leadership in the world.

Global Servant-Leadership: Wisdom, Love and Legitimate Power in the Age of Chaos reveals many pathways available to people, institutions, and countries desiring a better way of working together through serving first, and then leading. This book also shows how servant-leadership attributes of healing, listening, awareness, community-building and others can be used as an antidote for an increasingly fractured and divisive world. So many caring people are working across the globe to build strong relationships, grounded in the belief that serving and leading one another is yet another important expression of love in the world.

REFERENCE

Greenleaf, R. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. Paulist Press.



WRITINGS

Here is a list of some of the servant-leadership writings that I have worked on in 2020-2021:

- “Head, Hands, and Heart: The Essential Tripod of Servant-Leadership Education,” (Michael Carey, Kathleen Patterson, and Larry C. Spears); *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* (Volume 15, 2021, Number 1).
- “Reflections on Robert Greenleaf’s Five Books of Writings,” by Larry C. Spears, *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* (Volume 15, 2021, Number 1).
- “A Journey in Servant-Leadership,” by Larry C. Spears, *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* (Volume 15, 2021, Number 1).
- “Preface: A Thirty-Year Global Journey in Servant-Leadership,” by Larry C. Spears; *Global Servant-Leadership: Wisdom, Love, and Legitimate Power in the Age of Chaos*; (Philip Mathew, Jiying Song, Shann Ray Ferch, and Larry C. Spears, editors; 2021, Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD).
- “Foreword: The World of Servant-Leadership,” *Servant-Leadership and Forgiveness: How Leaders Help Heal the Heart of the World*; (Jiying Song, Dung Q. Tran, Shann Ray Ferch, and Larry C. Spears, editors; 2020, SUNY Press, Albany, NY).
- “Building Relational Bridges: The Inclusive Spirit of Servant-Leadership,” (Dung Q. Tran, Larry C. Spears, and Michael R. Carey; 2020; *New Horizons in Positive Leadership and Change: A Practical Guide for Workplace Transformation*; (Satinder Dhiman and Joan Marques, editors; 2020, Springer, Switzerland).



- “Reflections on Servant-Leadership and the United Kingdom: Interview with John Noble and Ralph Lewis, by Larry C. Spears; *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*, Volume 14, 2020, Number 1).
- “Servant-Leadership and Community: Humanistic Perspectives from Pope John XXIII and Robert K. Greenleaf,” (Dung Q. Tran and Larry Spears) in *Humanistic Management Journal*, 2020.
- “A Journey in Servant-Leadership,” by Larry C. Spears, *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership* (Volume 14, 2020, Number 1).

TRAVELS AND PRESENTATIONS

I am most grateful for the kind invitations to speak on servant-leadership that I have received in 2020 and 2021. Due to COVID-19 restrictions I haven’t done any travelling. However, I did participate in a series of three virtual presentations as part of the 2021 International Servant-Leadership Summit which was held online on June 9-11, 2021. These sessions included the following:

- “A Deeper Understanding of Servant-Leadership Characteristics,” by Larry C. Spears, June 9, 2021.
- “The Servant as Leader at Fifty: How Do Greenleaf’s Writings Apply Today?” Speakers included Don Frick, Kent Keith, Reggie Lewis, Jenny Song, and Larry C. Spears. June 10, 2021.
- “Head, Hands, and Heart: The Essential Tripod of Servant-Leadership Education.” Speakers included Michael Carey, Kathleen Patterson, and Larry C. Spears. June 11, 2021.



COURSES

It is a great honor and joy to teach for Gonzaga University. Since 2008, I have taught 2,000 graduate students in nearly 100 courses. In the 2021 calendar year, I have taught the following classes:

- Spring A 2021: Listen Discern Decide (ORGL 535)
- Spring A 2021: Listen Discern Decide (DPLS 781)
- Spring B 2021: Servant-Leadership (ORGL 530)
- Summer 2021: Listen Discern Decide (ORGL 535)
- Fall A 2021: Servant-Leadership (ORGL 530)
- Fall B 2021: Listen Discern Decide (ORGL 535,1)

ON APPRECIATION AND AWARENESS

In this, our 2021 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 we began in 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 putting 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.

Larry C. Spears is president and CEO of the Spears Center for Servant-Leadership (www.spearscenter.org), Indianapolis, and he



serves as Servant-Leadership Scholar for the School of Leadership Studies at Gonzaga University, Spokane. He is a writer-editor-teacher and contributing author to 36 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). He also served as editor on all five books of writings by Robert K. Greenleaf; and, since 2005 he has served as editor or co-editor of eight servant-leadership anthologies. 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.

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.