

# NICOV TAKES A LOOK AT...

## RELIGIOUS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Edited by Ann Harris

National Information Center on Volunteerism

### THE CLERGY AS ENABLERS OF HUMAN RESOURCES

A Report on the Iliff School of Theology  
1977 Summer Seminar

By Nancy D. Root

The sign on the classroom door said "Multiple-Role Schizophrenia of the Clergy." Inside, a noisy, haranguing crowd of 34 students and faculty assaulted one helpless pastor whose attempts to deal with the crowd were totally frustrated by a red bandana blinding and silencing him and by the ropes that literally bound him—hands, body, heart and feet—as he stood on a pedestal behind a pulpit, holding a shepherd's crook. The ropes twined around his body were held taut by the weight of all 34 persons linked intimately to him.

The scene symbolized the plight of any clergyperson today as he or she seeks to meet the seemingly impossible and conflicting demands of a family, a parish, a denominational hierarchy, a local community, a nation and the world.

And yet these are the leader/managers of the largest volunteer group in America and Canada today. Lay church and synagogue members represent half of the 37 million volunteers identified in the ACTION survey, *Americans Volunteer*, 1974.

What is happening to these volunteers within church programs that are managed by "bound-and-gagged" leaders suffering from "multiple-role schizophrenia"?

A lot—and a lot of it isn't good! Religious leaders are reporting a visible exodus of volunteers from church-based programs, and they are turning to the field of "people management" for answers.

In their search for theories and tools consistent with a theology that says the *person* is more important than the *program* or the *product*, church and synagogue leaders are finding they may have more in common with the managers of volunteer organizations than they do with managers in business and industry.

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*Nancy Root is one of the lay volunteers who participated in the Iliff experiment. She is volunteer coordinator at the Boulder County Department of Social Services and elder in the First Christian Church of Boulder.*

It was for this reason that Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colo., assembled a faculty drawn from the professional field of volunteer administration, rather than from the possibly less appropriate business administration ranks, and offered a 1977 summer seminar entitled, "The Clergy as Enablers of Human Resources."

Twenty-five clergypersons and laity responded to the experimental course. Most of the students were ordained ministers pursuing either continuing education, a master's degree in sacred theology or a doctorate in ministry. They represented five denominations (Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, Christian [Disciples of Christ], and Presbyterian) and came from local, state and regional denominational offices as well as parish churches.

By week's end the participants agreed that the field of volunteerism has developed management approaches that combine equally important parts of functional skills and growth-releasing experiences, making them highly appropriate for use in religious settings.

It was their hope that the application of these management skills to religiously based programs may "unbind" the clergy from some of their schizophrenia, slow the flow of volunteers away from church programs, and enable the release of the tremendous human potential lying undeveloped in most of these 18 million lay volunteers.

Certainly this latent human potential is badly needed to address the complex social and economic problems existing in the world today. And what more rewarding personal experience is there for a volunteer than to discover his or her own unique gifts and a place to use them on behalf of fellow human beings?

### The Iliff Experiment

In December 1975 the National Information Center on Volunteerism (NICOV) identified a growing demand from religious leaders for help in better utilizing the volunteers in their organizations.

In response, NICOV convened in Boulder, Colo., a small group of people active both in volunteer administration and in religiously based organizations. The group was self-christened ROVG—Religiously Oriented Volunteers' Group. For a year-and-a-half this group discussed informally the problems of clergy and laity in achieving an effective, fulfilling volunteer effort.

NICOV also kept abreast of similar work going on through the Religious Involvement Task Force convened by



Church Women United as its major responsibility within the Alliance for Volunteerism, also based in Boulder.

The experimental seminar at Methodist-related Iliff School of Theology emerged as a "testing ground" for some of the assumptions ROVG was making about the performance problems characteristic of religiously based volunteer programs, and the application of management principles to those problems from the hybrid world of "volunteer administration."

Volunteer faculty for the course was drawn from the ROVG group. Nationally known consultant and author Marlene Wilson served as director of faculty and the Rev. Wallace Ford, pastor of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Boulder and doctoral candidate at Iliff, served as clergy advisor.

The rationale for designing such a seminar stemmed from both verifiable realities and intuitive, experiential data on the parts of ROVG members:

- They recognized a church as a *voluntary* association of members who are there only because of some "will to belong."
- They realized that the church is the largest voluntary association in existence, with the potential to contribute a lot to other community volunteer efforts if only the people-power could be released.
- They were crystal-clear in their thinking that it is no longer viable motivation to tell church members that they "ought" to volunteer just because, as members, they are a captive audience.
- They duly noted the escalating concern in church literature about the increasing number of "just pew-sitters" and the loss of active volunteer members to secular volunteer efforts or to suspected noninvolvement at any point.
- They labeled these church members both "non-paid staff" and "client" of the organization—the only organization they could think of where the "doer" of the program may be also the "recipient" of the program.
- NICOV and other consultants in the world of volunteerism were experiencing a sharp increase in requests for diagnosis of ailing church/synagogue-related programs and for assistance with management skills.
- They suspected that a major breakthrough in the form of more delegation of responsibility would occur if both clergy and lay leaders could understand their roles to be "enablers of other people" rather than "doers."
- They noted the increased number of clergy and lay leaders who were either "burning out" or leaving the church to seek roles in the secular world which would enable them to discover and actualize their human abilities.
- Because many of the ROVG members were actively engaged in the management of volunteer programs, they believed the field had much expertise which would translate neatly into the language of religiously oriented program management.

One of the most exciting trends to emerge from this growing awareness of the church or synagogue as an organization of volunteers has been a move in the direction of using paid or nonpaid volunteer administrators as part of a church staff.

Among the 25 clergy/students in the Iliff course, three are adding volunteer coordinators to their local churches this year.

In Iowa six Lutheran churches already have volunteer coordinators, and several more plan to follow suit in the next two years.

One faculty member in the Iliff course, Maxine Marshall, has been a paid "coordinator of congregational care" in her home Methodist church for several years.

### Theology of Involvement

In planning course content that might result in an energizing reinvolved church and synagogue members, ROVG selected insights into sensitive leadership and management; needs assessment to pronounce the basic dignity and worth of the persons within the survey; creative design of volunteer jobs to honor individual strengths and needs; design of "support systems" for sus-





taining volunteers within their chosen tasks; an evaluative process to measure not only progress towards program goals but, more important, what was happening to the persons engaged in the tasks.

The image of the "servant-leader" in Robert Greenleaf's terms—a leader who helps followers to grow wiser, stronger and happier—emerged as a product ROVG wanted to test in the religious marketplace at Iliff.

The seminar that evolved was a mixture in content of the theological, the theoretical, the experiential and the practical brought to bear on the problems of personnel management in the religious setting.

A "theology of involvement" undergirded the week's intense study. According to Wallace Ford, whose doctoral dissertation is on volunteerism in the church, the dilemma of clergy/managers is to discover an authentic role for themselves in the midst of a "ministry of the laity" in which the laity are involved in the world—in their homes, on their jobs, in their schools, in their leisure, and in their volunteer commitments.

The manager's job then becomes one of leading people to create those structures which will best sustain and nur-

ture them as both "gather and scatter" within their chosen involvements.

A second dilemma for clergy is trying to hold in tension two widely differing views of the church/synagogue as an organization: the view that it is primarily a *functional* organization with an emphasis on visible structure, rules, departments, officers and organizational goals; or the view that it is primarily an invisible, *relational* organization with deemphasis of structure and elevation of interpersonal relationships, small groups and meeting personal needs.

Both views are valid, representing valid human needs. Therefore, another authentic role of clergy is to guard the right of both voices to be present in planning for the organization and in leadership roles.

Understanding the decisive ingredients of the "will to belong" or the "will to be involved" is basic to good volunteer management in the church. Positive reinforcements of the "will to belong" are successful experiences within the task with evident, valuable and recognized results; the meeting of individual needs for growth, rewarding personal relationships, and a satisfying position in the group; the honoring of differences in motives for participating in a group; and the incorporation of differences in the meaning or value of belonging.

### Learning By Experiencing

Beginning with the rope exercise, which was modeled after the work of family therapist Virginia Satir though modified for the Iliff course by communications experts Ruth Hattendorf and Jean Hodges, there was a liberal sprinkling of experiential sessions. ROVG was relying heavily on the "feeling" level of participants to guide the entire group to relevant and dependable insights into the nature of the management problems faced by leaders in religious settings and into the recognition of the merits of certain solutions.

A "no holds barred" panel discussion by laity of some of their discouragements as volunteers in church programs seemed to jar the perceptions of clergy-enrollees. As one clergyman wrote in his personal journal, "I was angered and saddened to hear her say she felt she could not offer her best to her church because the minister was so threatened by her competence—that she had to offer her best to the secular world where it was accepted eagerly. I felt covetous for someone as gifted as she to be part of my church."

Clergy/managers also appeared startled when the laity equated "being evaluated" with "being appreciated," and when they proposed that volunteers in the church should be expected to meet the same standards and be "hired and fired" (or at least transferred) in the same way paid staff would be. The whole concept of volunteers as non-paid staff seemed quite new to them.

Journal entries during the week reflected growing awareness that there are subtleties to personnel management which had escaped the clergy/students. "I see that sensitive awareness of the strengths and the needs of one of my parishioners should result in getting her into a job which has some prospect for satisfaction. This in turn would reduce those agonizing times when I have to find a way to 'fire' a member from a job," one clergyperson wrote.

One lay panelist complained that the paid staff fre-





quently is covetous of creating a program—the “fun part”—and relegating to the nonpaid staff the tedious matter of implementing a program.

“I get my kicks from helping with the creation!” she declared. “That’s what helps me endure some of the nitty-gritty of the *doing* of program, and if I can’t use my creative juices in the church, I’ll go somewhere else where I can!”

Those who presented the views of lay volunteers included Richie Boatman, registered engineer and clerk of session at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Boulder; Ruth Hattendorf, communications instructor at the University of Colorado and active laywoman at Grace Lutheran Church in Boulder; Jean Hodges, a consultant in communications and human resource development and an active laywoman in the Methodist church; Faye Raymon, leader of workshops in leadership skills and active laywoman at local and regional levels of Hadassah; Nita Ross, Colorado state president and national board member of Church Women United and member of the Rocky Mountain Synodical Board of Lutheran Women.

Another experiential session was designed as a series of role plays of typical encounters in religious settings. The issues that emerged included the lack of common and clearly stated goals; confusion of roles and lines of authority and responsibility; inadequate job descriptions; guilt over serving “outside the church” rather than inside; conflict over differing values; inadequate understanding of decision-making as a process; fear of conflict; role reversals of the clergy; resistance to newcomers; burn-out of the “faithful few”; protecting one’s pastoral “turf”; a manipulative or exploitative use of lay volunteers; and the importance of “feelings” within decision-making.

One journal entry marveled, “I am struck with how the absence of clearly stated goals and lines of authority and responsibility infects almost every encounter I can think of in the church! Surely bearing down on this one area would relieve the confusion and friction we experience at so many points.”

As clergy (equivalent of agency paid staff) and laity (non-paid staff) shared their concerns and needs, it became increasingly apparent that their lists were nearly identical. Both claimed to need:

- Freedom to be creative
- Time to do important things
- Affirmation as individuals
- Acceptance as persons with needs
- Support from others
- Recognition of their achievements
- Clear definition of role
- Inclusion as part of the team
- A chance to grow as persons
- A chance to be heard
- A chance to be understood

The question then became how to create a climate in which these needs could be met.

### Styles of Leadership

The most important ingredient in establishing a particular climate within an organization, according to Marlene Wilson, faculty director, is the style of leadership or management.

Management, defined by Peter Drucker, means working with and through other people to accomplish organiza-

tional goals. Wilson presented several images of “manager”:

There is the “boss” who clearly casts himself as the decision-maker and doesn’t let anyone else in.

There is the “expert,” the knower of all things. (In the church the clergy/manager is a God-expert.)

There is the “doer” who likes to “fix things up” and hates to give up the doing to anyone else.

There is the “hero/martyr” who starts out as a “doer,” then turns into a martyr, loving every minute of it.

There is the “abdicator” who stops leading and turns it all over to the group.

Finally, there is the “enabler” whose concept of leadership is to be an “assistant to subordinates” in helping them grow in all the ways necessary to get their jobs done. This is the “people-grower”—Greenleaf’s “servant-leader.” This is not to say that a “servant-leader” manager subordinates the functional side of the organization to the relational aspects of the organization.

“It is only within a carefully planned, creatively designed, and sensitively administered structure that both staff and nonpaid staff can have the most freedom to create and the most satisfying of successful achievement experiences,” Wilson believes.

Participants in the seminar had a chance to pinpoint their own styles as managers by self-administering Blake and Mouton’s “managerial grid,” which is an indicator of





both one's dominant and back-up styles of managing. The style varies with the particular blend of concern for people within an organization and concern for production or achievement of program.

Another faculty authority on management was Jim Williams, deputy manager of the Rocky Mountain Division of the American Red Cross and associate pastor of the Wellshire Presbyterian Church in Denver. Williams identified one problem that may be unique to clergy/managers. "Role reversal is thrust upon the clergy/manager by members of a congregation," he said. "Unless a clergyman is very clear on what role he is playing at which time and with whom, he may end up with a lot of roles he doesn't want and that do not facilitate his work as a manager. Then, too, we find clergy who really do not want to delegate any roles of significance to volunteers. This makes them vulnerable to 'multiple role schizophrenia' and dilutes their effectiveness."

Williams listed planning as the major role of management today, with evaluation as a close second. "The

church doesn't know how to measure its achievements," Williams commented on evaluation.

## Motivating Volunteers

Since several of the Iliff course participants had expressed concern about distinguishing the difference between manipulating volunteers and motivating volunteers, one session was devoted to motivational theories and the relationship of motivation to job selection.

Following psychologist Abraham Maslow's "hierarchy of needs," Wilson illustrated what jobs in the church would provide such things as social satisfaction or increased self-esteem or an opportunity for self-actualization.

"If a young mother who is isolated at home with small children wants to volunteer to meet her needs for social encounters," Wilson said, "you don't put her all alone in the library repairing book covers! On the other hand, if you have a middle-aged woman who is recovering from an emotional breakdown, mending library books might give her a real sense of valuable contribution without the threat of having to relate to too many people."

For someone who is eager to actualize his or her own unique talents, asking the volunteer to edit the church magazine or to do the artwork for it would probably be a good match, depending, of course, upon where the creative skills lie. The significant factor is knowing what the personal needs and skills of an individual are before referring him or her to a particular job.

Wilson also finds David C. McClelland's motivational theory, as reported in Litwin and Stringer's *Motivation and Organizational Climate*, helpful in volunteer management. McClelland believes people are motivated by their needs for achievement, affiliation or power. Identifying these needs affects what jobs will provide satisfaction and what kind of supervision will be well received.

In preparing to match up volunteers and jobs, two things need to happen simultaneously, Wilson says. A talent inventory of "who's out there" and a complete listing of detailed job descriptions go hand-in-hand, although the inventory of talent gets top priority.

Wilson has developed an "interest inventory" which puts the emphasis on listening to the volunteer's needs, dreams and personal goals. Four Boulder churches represented at the course are preparing jointly to train lay interviewers to do such an interest/resource inventory with their congregations through personal visits. The interviewers will carry with them precise descriptions of every job in the church, including skills needed, time involved, training available. In some cases new jobs will be written to accommodate a volunteer's unique skills and interests.

## Support Systems

Because ROVG had observed that reward and support systems in most churches are either minimal or non-existent, much time was devoted in the Iliff course to "support systems."

A support system was defined by faculty member Maxine Marshall as "a network of persons or groups to help undergird other persons or groups as they move towards accomplishing any goal or task." She referred to Milton Mayeroff's book, *On Caring*, which provides sensitive images of the ingredients of caring for another person.





To aid in the related envisioning and creation of support systems, students were sent out in pairs on the campus to observe metaphors in nature of support systems and how the various parts supported each other. One journal entry reflected, "The experience of finding new metaphors in nature for caring or supporting really turned me on! The metaphors we found and shared opened up new images of support systems I might design in my church. I realize now too often I have recruited and then turned volunteers loose without providing for their rewarding or sustenance."

Each student was asked to select one major church role he or she hoped to fill with a volunteer, then create a support system which would sustain the volunteer and add to the job satisfaction. There was a spontaneous result from the metaphor work. Clergy/students realized that if they had had one lay person enrolled with them in the Iliff course to share their new understanding, new tools, and ideas for the future, they would have had an immediate support system upon returning to their home churches.

### Planning and Evaluation

Planning for the future was addressed by Ivan Scheier, president of NICOV and an internationally known consultant in the field of volunteer leadership. Scheier renamed planning "organized hope" or "guided imagination." In relation to the servant-leader style of management, planning becomes the preparation of "a medium in which people can grow."

Students performed a methodical planning exercise by taking one real problem of "people involvement" from their home churches or synagogues and writing a plan which answered five basic questions:

- Where are we now? (base line assessment)
- Where do we want to go? (goals and objectives)
- How will we get there? (resources, strategy)
- How long will it take? (time line)
- How will we know when we get there? (evaluation)

Dealing with evaluation, Scheier suggested that "feedback" may be a less threatening term to use and that evaluation should only be done face-to-face with a volunteer. He exploded several myths about evaluation which usually make leaders uneasy.

"When you do an evaluation," he said, "you really impact that person. It says to him or her that his task is worth evaluating. If he or she happens to be achievement-motivated, he or she wants such progress reports!"

Other myths, which many of the clergy/students admitted to believing, were:

- "Evaluation is apt to be destructive." (It is more apt to be positive because it should talk about successes, new mountains to be climbed, and anticipated growth for the volunteer.)
- "Evaluation is something only specialists do." (Everyone who is in the task or impacted by the task should be involved in doing the evaluation.)
- "Evaluation is purely statistical." (Feelings and comments about what has happened within the task may be more important than figures.)
- "Evaluation is performed only after the project is all over." (Better do it periodically as the task goes along for feedback and correction purposes.)
- "Evaluation is an end in itself, a final report." (It doesn't mean anything until it is put into use.)

Clergy reaction to an evaluation tool designed by faculty

NICOV Announces...

## Frontiers '78

**"Impacting Systems and Institutions:  
How to Deal Effectively  
In the Changing World of  
Citizen Participation"**

**May 15-18, 1978  
Estes Park, Colorado**

### PURPOSE

To go beyond program skill development to explore deep, complex issues related to the field of volunteerism, such as power, organizational climate and change.

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND

Managers of volunteer efforts, professionals working with citizen volunteers, educators, social workers, religious leaders, corrections professionals, agency directors, board members, legislators, personnel officers—anyone concerned with citizen involvement in the changing role of volunteerism.

### MAJOR SESSIONS

Creativity: Making People and Programs Come Alive

Power: What Is It and How Do I Get and Use It?

Negotiations: The Key to Effective Change Agency

### FACULTY

Ivan H. Scheier, National Information Center on Volunteerism

Marlene Wilson, Volunteer Management Associates

Barbara Sugarman, Office of Volunteer Services,  
Georgia Dept. of Human Resources

### REGISTRATION

Full tuition and fees before April 1, 1978—\$150

Full tuition and fees after April 1, 1978—\$175

Guaranteed enrollment fee—\$50 (nonrefundable after April 15, 1978)

*Note: 20% to 50% cost reductions are available to NICOV Service Plan Members.*

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member Jean Hodges for use within functional church departments was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. One journal entry noted, "Our church staff has talked about doing departmental evaluations for the last year, but we couldn't find anything that existed that applied to our parish. I was elated to see the one Jean had developed."

### Clergy Reactions

Students in the Iliff course were asked to evaluate all segments as well as the overall effectiveness of this first course offering. They used a weighted evaluation sheet with a scale of 1 (no value) to 6 (very valuable). Out of 23 students, 20 ranked the overall course as either a 6 (9 votes) or a 5 (11 votes).

They found the four most valuable segments to be motivation, job design and interviewing; leadership styles; planning and evaluation; and the experiential morning on assessing the needs of clergy (the rope exercise).

More interesting, perhaps, were some of the journal entries at week's end:

"The entire week has been very valuable for me. The concept of the church as a voluntary organization is very obvious but still a breakthrough for me. I am especially grateful for the staff who cared enough about the church to share themselves and their expertise with us."

"I am feeling some despair that class will end tomorrow. Most productive week ever in terms of working with volunteer systems. Principles are as valid at regional level as at local level. Excellent reading list, excellent course. Would highly recommend to seminarians and seminary faculties for including in degree programs."

"I enjoyed the course and got a lot of good practical things out of it I know I will use."

"I received new energy to give it a whirl in a couple of places I've been avoiding."

"Appreciated seeing shared leadership in the faculty. Observed the attentiveness of staff taking notes and using them later in the week."

"Appreciated the reading and emphasis of Greenleaf's *The Servant as Leader*. Gave me all kinds of spin-offs for some other situations and some other ways to go at it."

"The fishbowl (panel) was an interesting experience in that I heard honest expressions of what volunteers really think and why they think that way. I learned I should be more aware of volunteers' needs and affirm them in success, failure, and pain."

"I was heartened by the development in the rope exercise of people looking to each other for meeting their needs when it became apparent that the ministry could not meet all of them. This is a good prescription for what needs to happen in our congregation over the next few months with growth groups and geographical care units."

"The notion of manager as 'assistant to his subordinates' is one that opens up some new directions for me. It is clear that to keep from angering the people who want the minister to be decision-maker or expert, I need to confront that expectation head-on as I share the model that I'm trying to fulfill."

"I was glad to hear Marlene say that we should not lower standards and expectations for volunteers in the church. It's an especially appropriate stance for the church to take if the Lord of the church deserves our best gifts and our best efforts."

"I have been unaware of whether people are motivated

by achievement, power or affiliation needs. I think this helps me understand some of the leadership dynamics and criticisms that have been cropping up in my church. Perhaps I haven't been authoritative enough with power-motivated volunteers."

"As for training volunteers, what we've done so far in our church is to neglect it entirely! After this course, I want our training to help people develop management skills as well as deeper theological and biblical bases for our life together."

"Greenleaf's notion that 'systematic neglect' of some tasks is an intentional and healthy tool for a leader to use gives me some comfort and makes me feel less guilty when some of the less important things don't get done."

"The rope activity, binding the clergy, helped me see clearly in a new way things I had long suspected but never had been able to visualize. The insights I gained from everyone's feedback every time the rope changed or moved just blew my mind!"

"One of my concerns in the church is that in our floundering we are looking many places for answers. This week I have discovered that disciplines outside the church can make great contributions to the church. We do have theology not only as our roots but as the one thing we hold uniquely and can share with other disciplines."

From the comments and the evaluation sheets, ROVG feels it is on the right track in seminary course design, since three-fourths of the participants said the course met their needs and expectations and they would recommend such a course for their fellow clergypersons.

### The Challenge

ROVG sees this as a challenge to the field of volunteerism. If, indeed, these clergy/managers of some 18 million potential volunteers turn to volunteer administrators for the tools necessary to waken and then enable this sleeping giant, are the leaders in this field ready and able to share their expertise and experience in any meaningful way?

It is not too soon to begin to share with churches and synagogues news of training events being offered in their areas.

Or, to modify training materials and management tools so they fit the unique situations within religiously based volunteer programs.

Or, to recommend volunteer coordinators as valuable additions as paid or nonpaid church staff.

Or, to design seminary courses that understand the appropriateness of adapting volunteer management principles for use in the religious setting.

Or, to begin planning for joint training sessions with lay leaders of several congregations.

It is not enough for only the clergy to grasp the strength and unlimited possibility of the concept of manager as "enabler." It is within the volunteer leadership of religious organizations that the acting-out of the enabler/leader truly has the potential for revolutionizing the impact of the church on the world.

The Religiously Oriented Volunteers' Group (ROVG) is actively seeking feedback on courses, models, and/or volunteer coordinators in religious settings (churches, synagogues, etc.). If you have any information of this kind, please share it with Steve Hansen, NICOV, P.O. Box 4179, Boulder, CO 80306.