Sacred Container for Logos

Rev. Kara Keating

Gonzaga University

When I began the servant-leadership concentration with Gonzaga University, I wanted to discover the characteristics, ideas, or philosophies that make organizations great and to know how I could be a better leader. As I end my time with Gonzaga University, I realize that the foundation of an organization rests upon the inner self-awareness of its leaders. The best organizational growth happens from the inside-out through creating a sacred container that is moving towards logos – our inner wholeness. My philosophy is to create a sacred container where I and those I serve can grow in authentic leadership guided by logos. I am deeply aware that I must embody that philosophy statement because it is through the consciousness of the leader that the container forms.

One of my ways to create the sacred container for organizational growth is through the concept of Ubuntu, which is exemplified in Desmond Tutu’s book on restorative justice. Ubuntu means that we are all interconnected; your wellbeing is as important as my wellbeing, and we have a moral obligation to each other. Tutu (1999) writes,

We are bound up in a delicate network of interdependence because, as we say in our African idiom, a person is a person through other people. To dehumanize another inexorably means that one is dehumanized as well. (Tutu, 1999, p. 35)

I am bound to others as they are bound to me, which means that it is in our best interest to help each other individually and collectively actualize. Our healthy independence is needed to create healthy interdependence (Horsman D. J., 2016, p. 3). It is through our own self-actualization that we can help others self-actualize. It is not an either-or proposition for the individual and community; rather, both need to be nurtured for wholeness, and both aspects can bring wholeness to the other. My wholeness and capacity to live authentically from my inner self gives others permission to do the same.

Another way that I create a sacred container is to listen first before seeking clarity or influence, which was best exemplified in the somatic exercises of Theory U groups in Gonzaga’s

Foresight and Strategy course. In groups, we made somatic gestures of ideas we were working with individually. Our groups would model those gestures as somatic structure one; then they would listen to the collective intuition and move those structures into a physical model of wholeness in structure two. Wholeness does not mean perfection as much as it means the next step in the evolution of the issue. The way my group modeled my next level of wholeness was still imperfect. I know that once I move to the next level, there will be another evolution waiting to emerge always asking me to listen more closely to logos.

Part of creating a sacred community within an organization is to practice foresight, which is about “getting to the right questions rather than the right answers” (Horsman J. , 2016, p. 1). I think this best exemplified in the idea of logos or the center of wholeness. Leaders can either be in self-embeddedness moving away from logos, or transcending the self and moving towards logos. Foresight is about getting our narrow view out of the way to listen for and quickly act upon what is emerging from the collective intelligence. Foresight, much like adaptive leadership, is about getting rid of what we think we know to move towards what wants to emerge from people both individually and collectively.

The final way that I can create the sacred container for logos is through increasing an organizations capacity for systems thinking, which is awareness of the systems from the personal to the global scale by moving through the stages from micro to macro thinking. Being a good leader means having both the grasp of the local and individual impact of our decision and their implication on a global and spiritual scale. All true growth moves from the inner self (micro) out towards the service of others (macro). Parker Palmer (2000) writes,

We share responsibility for creating the external world by projecting either a spirit of light or a spirit of shadow on that which is other than us. We project either a spirit of hope or a spirit of despair, either an inner confidence in wholeness and integration or an inner terror about life being diseased and ultimately terminal. We have a choice about what we are going to project, and in that choice, we help create the world that is. Consciousness precedes being, and consciousness can help deform or reform our world (Palmer, 2000, p. 38)

The more I embody presence, centeredness, and the capacity to listen for intuition, the more the relationships and systems around me will also move toward wholeness.

My goals as a leader are to continue to grow my capacity to create the sacred container of logos within myself and those I serve. My ultimate goal is to project a consciousness of light upon the world. I will do this through the following steps:

* Creating meditation and quite space for my own inner self-awareness to develop a deeper connection to my inner teacher, which creates a well from which I can give to others
* Being authentic in everything I do modeling my own personal growth because that gives others permission to be authentic and unmasked
* Listen more attentively and question myself every time I think I know what the “right answer is because that is a sign of my own self-embeddedness
* Pray before going into meetings or work asking that the well-being of the micro to the macro emerge from our work
* Serve first and make my service an embodiment of Ubuntu

These goals are focused on my own inner growth because my connection to the still, small voice within is the most important part of leading people and organizations toward wholeness.

My goals align with my strengths as a leader. I have excellent foresight that comes from years of spiritual practice. I often just know things. My challenge is to not grab those intuitions as the truth, but rather, add them to the mix of information with others to emerge with a collective intelligence. Another strength I have as a leader is authenticity. I am willing to be honest, open, and vulnerable because I know that people respond at the level in which I engage with them. With my interfaith ministry background, I am exceptional at working with and growing people to reach their capacities; I do so without telling them how to be, but rather allow their own inner wisdom to emerge. I have strong organizational, community building, and communication skills that serve as a foundation for creating sustained, nurturing relationships with others.

I have participated in two retreats with the Center for Courage and Renewal to learn Parker Palmer’s Circles of Trust as well as Quaker Clearness Committee methods. I have used that experience as well as the information learned in the Organizational Leadership program to create the sacred container. I opened the first interfaith center in Las Vegas where I taught classes on different aspects of spirituality. My work with Gonzaga taught me that what matter most was who I was being as I facilitated my groups. I made certain that I was well connected and listening both within and to others while I taught. Whenever I prepared a class agenda, I ended up moving the courses towards the direction the students wanted to learn rather than forcing my schedule on them.

I also created community and a sacred container in my work with the Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada (IFCSN). IFCSN’s board was filled with faith leaders from the community, and the organization had ties with multiple stakeholders. Allowing myself to not know the answer and being open to asking questions made a difference in the work that I was doing with IFCSN. I increased community support for the organization just by being willing to listen to, connect with, and come to understand the differing perspectives of many different community leaders. By being open without an agenda, I created lasting relationships for the organization.

Through the capacities taught in servant-leadership, I am better able to embody my philosophy statement to create a sacred container where people and organizations move toward logos. I am still working on my ability to live all the capacities to their fullest. I also know servant-leadership will always be about my ongoing unfoldment closer to logos as I learn to embody the humble presence of God.

# References

Horsman, D. J. (2016). *Leadership and Community.* Spokane: Gonzaga University.

Horsman, J. (2016, November 5). ORGL 537: Foresight & Strategy. Spokane.

Palmer, P. J. (2000). *Let Your Life Speak.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Tutu, D. (1999). *No Future Without Forgiveness.* New York: Doubleday.