

ALED 342 Learning Organizations  
LEARNING APPLICATION: Reverence for Radicals - Level 5 Leaders

1. Read the Fast Company article: "Reverence for Radicals," Rekha Balu, FastCompany, Issue , page 48, June 2001. It is located after the question section of this application and is also found at <http://www.fastcompany.com>
2. Go to Glide's website: [www.glide.org](http://www.glide.org) and obtain further information by reading about the leaders of the organization.
3. For the assigned class, prepare a "lesson" that you can teach to a partner within our class. In this "lesson, your objectives are to provide information so that your partner will know:
  - a. how the 2 sides of Level 5 Leadership (Professional Will + Personal Humility, page 36) are demonstrated by a selected leader of this organization
  - b. how creative tension (class definition) is manifested by the leaders to produce their ultimate vision
  - c. what this organization can teach us about all organizations seeking excellence
4. On the assigned day, you will actually teach your 3 points to a classmate. It is important that you demonstrate your personal mastery of how Level 5 Leadership is demonstrated by this organization's leader. So, telling your partner the answers for 3a, 3b, and 3c is not permitted. Instead, be creative! You should use some type of teaching aid that your partner can keep for reference. You will not be able to use the projector for power point so if you want to use a visual, you need to think of another medium. Ideas??? Think of what you have done in our class and other classes where you have learned without just a lecture and create a technique you can use to teach the lesson.
5. Plan to spend about 5 minutes with your partner.
6. The application is meant to stretch your creativity and your capabilities. You need to think and mentally try out your ideas prior to class.

## Reverence for Radicals

Reverend Cecil Williams, of San Francisco's Glide Memorial United Methodist, is on a mission: He's teaching tradition-bound congregations how to stay vital by embracing change.

From: [Issue 47](#) | May 2001 | Page 48 | By: Rekha Balu

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Marvin Arnpriester is desperate to hang on to his customers. He works in an industry that has lost 5.4% of its consumer base in the past decade and is destined to lose even more in the next, in part because its core demographic group is aging. Arnpriester knows that staking out new markets and younger customers means taking risks and adopting an updated mission. But how does he grow his business without alienating his traditional base?

It's a classic growth dilemma, whether you're marketing Cadillacs or Major League Baseball. But 57-year-old Arnpriester has to overcome more than just demographic hurdles. He's the pastor of Broadway United Methodist, a church in Council Bluffs, Iowa, and his business -- religion -- has never put much of a premium on change.

So where does a true believer go to find expertise in risk and resuscitation? Arnpriester found his inspiration in Reverend Cecil Williams, leader of Glide Memorial United Methodist, in San Francisco -- a congregation that itself was once on the brink of extinction.

Back in 1963, when San Francisco was emerging as one of the centers of American social and political activism, Glide was an outpost of orthodoxy whose Sunday-service attendance had dwindled to a paltry 35 people. Williams, who had joined as pastor that year, watched in frustration as members fled in search of services that were more relevant to their lives. He vowed to turn back the tide -- and to transform Glide into a vehicle for community action and social change.

"We had to take risk after risk to become an integral part of the community," recalls Williams, 71. The first step was to look for new members -- wherever he could find them. He reached out to everyone, including drug addicts and prostitutes. And with his wife, San Francisco poet laureate Jan Mirikitani, he turned Glide into a laboratory for the kind of faith-based initiatives now touted by President George W. Bush, offering an array of social-services programs.

Glide's conservative national leadership held the congregation at arm's length, visiting rarely and offering scant institutional support. But the San Francisco community flocked to the church anyway, drawn by Williams's ministry of social engagement. Today, religious services regularly draw homeless people and once-high-flying dotcom-ers alike. Gays and lesbians speak from the pulpit, and the gospel choir is a mix of whites and Asians, blacks and Latinos. Glide runs more than 50 community-service programs on a \$10.5 million budget.

And the new members keep coming. Glide now boasts nearly 10,000 members, many of whom are between the ages of 18 and 35. Meanwhile, the national United Methodist denomination (median age: 55) has lost more than 1,500 churches and more than 475,000 members in the past decade.

"Glide approaches people from the place of community, rather than as an institution," says Ezra Earl Jones, former general secretary of the General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church. "It pays attention to people in the context of their lives, rather than in the context of the church."

Now the former outcast is being heralded as a model for the future: It has been designated a "teaching church" -- one of about 100 or so among Christian denominations nationwide -- charged with spreading its unique gospel to the Methodist faithful. Glide leaders are working with 5 churches, including Arnpriester's congregation, and another 25 are on the waiting list.

Still, convincing congregations that they need to make a dramatic cultural shift is no small undertaking, especially in tradition-bound towns like Council Bluffs. When Arnpriester became pastor of Broadway United Methodist in 1995, the church was mostly a place for polite, middle-class Sunday services and little else. But he resolved to change that. He urged his church members to look for a place to open a men's homeless shelter -- a service provided by no other community group in town. And he began a weekday-evening service (with dinner), which immediately began to attract new parishioners, including the homeless, the hungry, and the transient. "It was a huge risk for us," Arnpriester says. "Some people said, 'Do we want those kind of people in our church?'"

Then Williams, along with several other Glide staff and board members, visited Broadway for three days last November. They helped Arnpriester come up with new ways of increasing membership, such as hiring a Spanish-speaking pastor to attract Hispanic immigrants who had come to Council Bluffs in search of factory jobs. Arnpriester welcomed their advice, even though some people questioned his strategy. "We all want to be told we're doing a good job," he says, "not that we're taking an organization in the wrong direction."

Clearly, the strategy is paying off. Some 400 people now attend Broadway's services, up from 250 just a few years ago. And Williams hopes to see similar changes nationwide: "If the church leadership embraces this, it will have an important impact on the direction of the Methodist Church. It will never be the same."

Not in Council Bluffs anyway. "At first, changing the church's work was scary," Arnpriester says. "But if we don't take that risk, how can we be faithful to our mission of serving people in need? How can we learn and grow?"

Visit Glide on the Web ([www.glide.org](http://www.glide.org)), or email the church for more information ([info@glide.com](mailto:info@glide.com)). Contact Reverend Marvin Arnpriester by email ([cbbrdwy@radiks.net](mailto:cbbrdwy@radiks.net)).