



*Rev. Dr. Larry Grounds*

When an ankle injury during a high school basketball tournament sent me to the hospital, I made a deal with a vaguely known deity. In order to make good on my side of the bargain, I attended church, intending only a single visit. On that Sunday I met Jesus Christ and entered my lifetime home.

My unmistakable call into pastoral ministry came at 19. I met my wife, Claudia, when we were students at Fuller Seminary. I have spent my 29 ordained years in pastoral ministry, mostly in San Diego. Claudia currently chairs the Marriage and Family Therapy Department at Seattle Pacific University. Two of our three children are in college and the oldest has graduated and works in politics in Washington D.C. Coffee Grounds, our 13-year-old dog, is the only dependent left in our Redmond home.

**Personal Convictions**

- To love the One who loved me first
- To express the love of Jesus Christ to the people my life touches
- To study, teach, and honor Holy Scripture in my life and ministry
- To share God's grace and forgiveness for our universally broken and needy humanity
- To encourage others to take seriously their discipleship to Jesus Christ
- To promote the Spirit's transforming work in society and popular culture
- To live with hope, sincerity, and humor as my constant companions ([Leadership Style](#))

**Education**

California State University at Northridge  
Fuller Theological Seminary  
Princeton Theological Seminary  
San Francisco Theological Seminary

B.A. Poli. Sci – 1973  
M.Div. Theology – 1978  
Th.M. Ethics – 1983  
D.Min.\* – 2000

\*Dissertation: "Children's Stories in Worship"



## **My Style of Pastoral Leadership**

Rev. Dr. Larry Grounds

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“If you don’t know where you are going then you’ll probably end up someplace else.” Early in my pastoral ministry I recognized that I was called to lead people to enter into a deep relationship with Jesus Christ as their primary destination in life. Then I had to consider how I would lead people along the way. I distinctly remember asking God about what he thought of my leadership. I got no answer. But in the ensuing years I did become more aware of some areas I needed to work on in my leadership style as a pastor. Shortly thereafter I was headed to Seattle with my wife and kids to learn a little from the “wilderness,” as I once described the Northwest. My first three years here were especially difficult for me. I can now see that God was shaping me into a better leader during that trying time.

When I applied for the position here at Redmond Presbyterian, I described my style of leadership in my Professional Information Form in this way:

*“Leadership in the church should be modeled after Jesus’ life and teachings. This requires that it be thoroughly grounded in a faith relationship with God (open to the promptings of God’s Spirit), designed to equip the laity for doing ministry themselves (discipleship), and based on our Lord’s example that the greatest is the one who serves (reversing the hierarchy of power as we usually know it). Within the framework of this model, my style of leadership is relational, collaborative, and open. I prefer to deal directly and constructively with conflicts, to eschew all forms of game playing and talking behind one another’s back, and to encourage team building and mutual faith development. In leading I seek to be a listener as well as a talker, honest and open about my own shortcomings, flexible and yet true to my convictions. With steady attempts to be thoughtful and caring, I have exercised strong leadership in situations, such as: disputes between congregation members and groups, issues over music and worship styles, alterations to the physical structure of the church building, and generational resistance to change. My leadership style seeks to honor Christ. This involves an incarnational model which prayerfully pursues positive changes primarily through personal relationships of mutual trust, honesty and understanding.”*

Space requirements on my Form prevented me from further explaining other aspects of leadership that I particularly cherish. Here they are:

- 1) I think that **process** is as important as the final result. Therefore I'm very concerned about how we treat each other in getting to a goal.
- 2) I consciously err on the side of **grace**. Mercy routinely overrides my judgment. I look for areas where I can reach common understanding rather than allow my differences with another define our relationship.
- 3) I aim at **freeing** people to make decisions for themselves. Therefore I encourage people to take full ownership of their faith in Christ rather than asking them to buy into my theology or the views of another.
- 4) I have a high regard for **Scripture**. Therefore the Bible is taken very seriously in my preaching and teaching and plays a central role in shaping my ethical values.
- 5) I will use **negotiation** and compromise for the sake of unity. Therefore, unless vital issues are at stake, I seek a way for all to be included.
- 6) I believe the most important personal quality I can offer in my leadership of the congregation is to genuinely **love** the people. Therefore my decisions and actions should be governed by this standard.
- 7) I am in pastoral ministry solely because of **Jesus Christ**. Therefore I seek to make him central in my work and passion in daily life. My ministry will intentionally and persistently point to him.

My journey at Redmond Presbyterian has been exciting, transforming, and personally satisfying. This is a healthy congregation where I feel supported and respected in my role. Hopefully a congruence is visible between my actual practices as pastor and the ideas I have shared on this page.

What does God think of my leadership? He seems to be saying: "You are a work in progress." I am grateful for the wonderful ways this church has responded to my leadership.