



# Prologue

*When the Choir Began to Sing* is a familiar story about our on-going struggle with change. While this book is fictional, its story is currently being replayed each day in communities, businesses, schools, churches, and other organizations throughout our society.

While studying this book, the reader is encouraged to identify with similar characters and events within his or her organization and community. Such reflection can lead to a higher purpose and offer opportunities for people to interact with one another in meaningful ways.

Many of the answers to the issues and concerns that surface throughout the book can be found in the “Insights” at the end of each chapter. These insights lead to tenets and operational guidelines that will prove useful to those who wish to use this work to explore the importance of leadership and the pivotal role of leaders in an angry, cynical, and distrustful world.

The first insight is fundamental and relates directly to the title of the book. Specifically, how many times have we been told we shouldn’t waste our time preaching to the choir—explaining our opinions to those individuals who we feel are already on



our side and will support what we think and what we recommend when circumstances dictate a new direction? Composed of people of good will—whose hearts are in the right place—the “choir” can be a group of neighbors, employees of a company, staff of a school system, members of a civic organization, or citizens of a nation.

As a result of the widespread belief that we shouldn’t waste our time preaching to the choir, the “choir” tends to be either taken for granted and ignored, or fed a constant diet of good news to keep it comfortable and happy. In both instances, the consequence is the same: the “choir” is put to sleep at a crucial juncture.

However, when preaching to the choir embodies urgency, motivation, and empowerment, it can inspire action in those people on whom leaders most rely. In this sense, not only is preaching to the choir a productive activity, it is essential if those in our society who believe in the importance of fostering the common good are to control their own destinies.

In addition to focusing on the importance of the “choir”, *When the Choir Began to Sing* is a story about leadership. How do leaders make decisions? Where do they get their power? What do leaders expect from their followers? Who are the real leaders? How can they lead in this era of pent-up anger and growing cynicism and distrust? And how can they call upon the deep reservoir of trust and hope residing in all of us and inspire the small acts of heroism that make such a big difference?

This story is also about an organization facing change and the vital importance of the “choir” in leading it through that



change. While the focus is upon the people who serve a church, it is really the story we all face. How can we deal with change in a constructive way? What brings us joy in doing what we do? How can we work with others who have different views? How can we participate fully while retaining what is important to us?

**Insight 1: The “choir” is an untapped source of power for leaders.**

*When the expression “Don’t preach to the choir” is used, the implication is that the “choir” is not just those people who dress in robes and sing in church on Sunday. This larger “choir” consists of anyone in a group who is loyal and willing to do what is right for the common good. They are people who believe there is a calling beyond their own personal interests. Members of this larger “choir” are defined more by their positive attitude and demeanor than by how old they are, how much money they have, how much education they have, or where they attend religious services. This book illustrates how much power and support leaders have at their disposal to harness the positive energy of the “choir.”*

© Copyright 2002 by The MASTER Teacher, Inc.