LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

A Caricature of Leadership Styles in Conflict

HIGH ASSERTIVENESS

BULL (Forcing)

Personal Purpose Ensure support for decisions leader deems important.

Tone of Communication Benevolent, paternalistic, authoritarian.

Response to disagreement Squelches or discourages it.

Others Become Bulls, Turtles, Teddies.

Group Discussion Vacillates between cosiness (when all co-operate) and tension-laden battles (if resistance arises).

OWL and FOX (Collaborating and Compromising)

Personal Purpose To guide the group through decision -making in an agreed-upon process that invites and takes seriously the views of everyone in reaching a decision acceptable to all.

(Note: 'acceptable to all' is not the same as 'first choice of all'. In the vast majority of decisions, it is possible to come up with decisions that all will accept if the process is truly open and collaborative.)

Tone of Communication Involved, fraternal, confident, thoughtful, purposive, open to challenge.

Response to Disagreement Invites and moves towards disagreement.

Group Discussion Focused, energetic, participatory, centred on issues (not on personalities).

LOW AFFIRMATION

HIGH AFFIRMATION

TURTLE (Avoiding)

Personal Purpose Keep things calm and 'safe' for self and group.

Tone of Communication Timid and passive, discouraged or unrealistically up-beat, tendency to spiritualise.

Response to Disagreement Paralysis or disappearance.

Others Become Bulls, Turtles.

Group Discussion Unfocused, boring, sometimes chaotic.

TEDDY (Accommodating)

Personal Purpose To keep everyone happy.

Tone of Communication Placating, beseeching, ingratiating.

Response to Disagreement Acquiescence or panic.

Others Become Bulls, Teddies.

Group Discussion Lots of energy that goes nowhere, leading eventually to withdrawal and cynicism.

LOW ASSERTIVENESS

Comment: For the majority of issues that leaders face, the Owl/Fox styles have definite advantages. But leadership calls for the ability to use all the styles occasionally. Knowing when, for example, to take a firm 'Bull' stance, despite its negative impact on the feelings of others is part of the challenge of being effective and faithful church leaders.