A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO BETTER BOARDS FOR A BETTER WORLD
An Integrated Practice of Policy Governance® and Servant-Leadership
—JOHN P. BOHLEY, JR. AND LARRY C. SPEARS

Better Boards for a Better World — a daunting challenge. In the pages that follow, we will describe an approach to board governance that we believe will enable boards to unleash their

potential to become better boards and to make significant contributions to the creation of a better world through embracing Policy Governance and servant-leadership.

Our approach involves bringing together the comprehensive system of board governance called Policy Governance that was developed by John Carver and the constellation of core values embodied in the servant-leadership concept articulated by Robert K. Greenleaf. Policy Governance provides the logical governance framework promoting efficient, effective, accountable governance while servant-leadership provides the altruistic values that can drive the system. You might say that Policy Governance is the head while servant-leadership is the heart of the powerful synergistic approach to board governance that we are envisioning. While the “head and heart” analogy may be somewhat of an oversimplification, it is helpful in understanding what we see as the major contributions of Policy Governance and servant-leadership to the approach that we delineate in this book.

While Policy Governance may be understood as value neutral in that different boards can use the Policy Governance system to express differing values, it is also true that certain values including servant-leadership values are embedded in the very structure of the Policy Governance model and boards practicing Policy Governance are expected to express their ethical values in their policies. While servant-leadership writers beginning with Robert K. Greenleaf have not developed a detailed comprehensive board governance system model, they have expressed keen thoughts and insights for board governance inspired by servant-leadership values.

We see Better Boards for a Better World as providing an introduction to Policy Governance for organizations that embrace servant-leadership and an introduction to servant-leadership for
boards that practice Policy Governance. We see Better Boards for a Better World as providing an introduction for all boards to a powerful approach to board governance that integrates the system of Policy Governance and the values of servant-leadership.

Governing boards are extremely common in our society and have a critically important role to play in directing and protecting our for-profit, private non-profit, and governmental organizations and in ensuring that these organizations contribute to an improved society. In chapter one: “The Failure of Board Governance,” we explore the functioning of governing boards and identify reasons why, for the most part, they are not fulfilling their potential for governance excellence. In chapter two: “The Role and Promise of Governing Boards,” we review the optimistic and challenging views of board governance developed by Robert K. Greenleaf, the modern articulator of the concept of servant-leadership. In chapter three: “The Policy Governance Model,” we provide an overview of this powerful comprehensive governance model developed by John Carver.

In chapter four: “The Understanding and Practice of Servant-Leadership,” we provide an overview of the servant-leadership concept, a concept that can revolutionize board governance in the service of a better world for all of us and our descendants. We describe ten key characteristics of servant-leaders and survey a wide range of applications of the principles of servant-leadership. In chapter five: “Complementarity and Synergy,” we bring Policy Governance and servant-leadership together into a dynamic synergistic governance system that can unleash the potential of boards for efficient, effective, accountable governance that is compassionate and genuinely concerned about all persons impacted by the organizations being governed including our society at large.
In chapter six: “Implementing and Sustaining an Integrated Practice,” we turn from theory to practice and provide detailed guidance for organizations to implement and sustain a board governance practice that integrates the complementary elements of Policy Governance and servant-leadership into an efficient, effective, accountable, compassionate governance system. Since boards are in different places in their governance practice with respect to Policy Governance and servant-leadership, in this chapter we provide guidance for boards who already practice Policy Governance but do not explicitly embrace servant-leadership as a guiding philosophy, for boards who already embrace servant-leadership but do not practice Policy Governance, and for those boards who neither practice Policy Governance nor explicitly embrace servant-leadership.

In chapter seven: “Board Policies for an Integrated Practice,” we provide sample board policies developed by the authors as well as template board policies developed by John Carver and Miriam Carver with suggested possible modifications reflecting servant-leadership values. In chapter eight: “Tips and Tools for an Integrated Practice,” we provide specific guidance and concrete tools to operationalize board governance that practices the Policy Governance system and that is driven by the core values of servant-leadership.

In the appendices, we hope we have provided additional information that you may find helpful in your governance journey. Appendix A provides the Policy Governance® Source Document developed by the International Policy Governance Association (IPGA) in consultation with John Carver and Miriam Carver. (IPGA is now known as Govern for Impact.) Appendix B provides a set of template board policies developed by John Carver and Miriam
Carver and is included with their permission. Appendix C provides suggested resources for Policy Governance while Appendix D provides suggested resources for servant-leadership.

A brief note on terminology: Since Robert K. Greenleaf uses the terms “trustees” and “boards of trustees,” we use these terms when referring to Greenleaf’s thinking. Otherwise, we prefer to use the terms “board members” and “boards of directors.”

Our hope is that you will be able to find in our book guidance that will assist your board and other boards to unleash their potential for governance excellence and to make significant contributions to the creation of a better world through an integrated practice of Policy Governance and servant-leadership.

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR BETTER BOARDS FOR A BETTER WORLD

“In Better Boards for a Better World, Bohley and Spears effectively bring together two complementary leadership frameworks: Policy Governance and servant-leadership. Drawing on the extensive works of Greenleaf and Carver, they show through theory and practice why and how to weave these two powerful approaches into a solid Policy Governance framework that is guided by the values of servant-leadership. The Appendices are full of practical tips and sample policies that can easily be adapted for any governing board. Governing boards that implement this approach will grow in excellence and strengthen their organizations’ impact for good.”

H.A. Musser, Jr., MA, MSW, President and CEO, Santa Maria Community Services, Inc.

“The job of a leader is to do the right job right. Nowhere is this more important than when serving on a Board. In this book John Bohley and Larry Spears make the case that the “right” job for a Board
member is to be a Servant-Leader. They then show you how to do your Board job “right” using the proven tools of Policy Governance. The authors know Servant-Leadership and Policy Governance. They are proven thought leaders in both areas. This book’s examples, links and questions to consider will make you a better Board member and the organizations you serve more effective.”

Paul Davis, Scanlon Steward and Advocate

“Leadership requires vision, structure and clear communication while considering individual needs. John Bohley and Larry Spears offer powerful insights to any group or organization desiring healthy functional governing boards. The driving intention of all individuals on boards is to service their organization or stakeholders. This work supports that intention by helping to offer structure and clear policies to govern effectively and efficiently. It is a MUST READ for all people in positions of leadership.”

Dr. Peter Kevorkian, Board Chair, International Chiropractic Pediatric Association

“Integrating the values of servant-leadership (the “heart”) with Policy Governance principles (the “head”) is an idea that is long overdue. Any board member who truly wants to make a difference can benefit from the insights, questions, and tools offered here by Spears and Bohley. When more and more governing bodies embrace these simple but profound ideas, what a better world it will be!”

Susan Mogensen, President, Brown Dog Consulting

“Larry Spears, and John Bohley have created a book that will serve to deepen the foundations of wisdom, love, and legitimate power in people and in the world. How do great organizations function? How
do great organizations develop, grow, and deliver future greatness? They do so through boards that conceptualize rather than meddle, through people who listen and persuade rather than coerce, and through a vision that results in greater wisdom, health, autonomy, freedom, and service of others, especially the least privileged among us.

**Shann Ray Ferch**, author and Professor, Leadership Studies, Gonzaga University

“John Bohley and Larry Spears have woven together two mighty concepts for our world: Servant-Leadership and Policy Governance. Their work brings a needed in-depth exploration of how the two concepts can not only co-exist, but complement each other to make a board and the organization it governs a much healthier contributor to its community.”

**Richard Stringham**, BSc, Partner, The Governance Coach™

“After finishing this I was left with a feeling of optimism and hope. There is a better way to run companies and other organizations for the benefit of all and John Bohley and Larry Spears show us how. Their book is a wonderful combination of values-based ways of being with practical means of achieving good governance and service through Servant-Leadership. So many of the ills and poor leadership that bedevil much of corporate life could be avoided with the wisdom contained in here. It really is a must read for all Board members and leaders at every level.”

**Ralph Lewis**, Past Programme Director, London Business School

“This book provides clarity about governance and many useful resources, such as a board-ownership linkage plan and a set of
templated governance policies. The authors start with the rationale upon which sound governance and leadership is based, and then champion servant-leadership as a key credo for success. Reflective questions provided at the end of each chapter motivate the reader to put this elucidated knowledge into action. For anyone who wants to have an impact as a servant-leader director or trustee this text is invaluable!”

Cam Brinsdon, Board Clarity Limited New Zealand

“Better Boards for a Better World is the epitome of Aristotle’s expression ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.’ Policy Governance and servant-leadership combined provide a powerful framework for achieving extraordinary results. This book is truly a seminal work that clearly highlights how an advanced governance model practiced with the morality and effectiveness of servant-leadership can change the world. An invaluable resource filled with examples and tools boards can use in all aspects of their practice for outstanding governance.”

Ray Tooley, P. Eng., Dir., CEO, OurBoardroom Technologies, Inc. Consulting

“Ultimately, as Robert K. Greenleaf writes, good governance is about creating a society that is more just and more loving. What this book shows, is that this doesn’t mean you have to be a saint to serve on a board. If you read this book carefully, and apply its wisdom, I’m sure you’ll be in for a surprise: The vast difference in the impact you and your board members will make on your beneficiaries and society as a whole.”

Dr. Hartger Wassink, GSP, former Board Chair, Govern for Impact

“I know of no better person to write and teach on Servant-Leadership
than Larry Spears. He is a pipe carrier of the servant-leader tradition and tribe. And a legacy holder who has carried the torch of such directly from Robert Greenleaf and down through the decades. I highly recommend all of his work.

George SanFacon, author, *The Council of Equals*

Dr. John P. Bohley, Jr. is owner and principal consultant for the board governance consulting firm Boards On Course (www.BoardsOnCourse.com) based in Monroe, Ohio just north of Cincinnati. He assists boards of directors to enhance their performance through application of the principles of the Policy Governance model and a range of board performance improvement tools. He has received personal training in Policy Governance from Dr. John Carver, the developer of the model, and from Miriam Carver, co-authoritative source of the model. Such training included the Carvers’ Policy Governance® Academy in 2005.

He has lived the Policy Governance model for over ten years as a CEO reporting to a board transitioning to and then practicing the Policy Governance model and for six years as a board member of the International Policy Governance Association (now called Govern for Impact). His practical experience with board governance also includes reporting to and serving on boards not following the Policy Governance model.

He has made numerous presentations on Policy Governance to individual boards as well as to state association membership and at annual conferences and advanced practice forums of the International Policy Governance Association/Govern for Impact in the United States and Canada. He has provided consultation and training services on Policy Governance to a wide range of private non-profit and public/governmental organizations including a faith-
based social service organization, a faith-based housing development organization, a statewide church organization, an addiction treatment center, governmental planning and funding bodies, state-wide associations, an international association, school boards (including a charter school), colleges, a public employees retirement system, and a law enforcement organization.

Dr. Bohley has a master’s degree in social work from West Virginia University and is a Licensed Independent Social Worker (LISW) in Ohio. He has a doctoral degree in public administration from Nova University (now Nova Southeastern University).

Prior to his board governance consulting focus, Dr. Bohley had extensive experience in the development and management of a wide range of mental health and substance use disorder projects, programs, and services in public/governmental, private non-profit, and proprietary settings.

In recent years, spurred on by references to servant-leadership made by Dr. John Carver in his writings on the Policy Governance model, Dr. Bohley has developed a strong interest in servant-leadership. After studying the writings of Robert K. Greenleaf and other servant-leadership authors, he began collaborating with Larry C. Spears on writing this book.

Larry C. Spears is President & CEO of the Larry C. Spears Center for Servant-Leadership, Inc. (Indianapolis), established in 2008 (www.spearscenter.org). In 2010, he was named Gonzaga University Servant-Leadership Scholar, a title granted in recognition of his role as one of the leading scholars in servant-leadership worldwide, and he currently teaches graduate courses in servant-leadership for Gonzaga University. Larry also serves as Senior Advisory Editor of The International Journal of Servant-Leadership, founded in 2005.
From 1990-2007, he served as President & CEO, and as President Emeritus and Senior Fellow, of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership. In the 1970s and 80s, Larry served as director or staff member with the Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium, the Great Lakes Colleges Association’s Philadelphia Center, the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, and with the Quaker magazine, *Friends Journal*.

Spears is a noted writer and editor who has published hundreds of articles, essays, newsletters, books and other publications on servant-leadership. Dozens of newspapers and journals have interviewed him, including *Fortune*, *Indy Star Business Journal*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Washington Post*, and *Advancing Philanthropy*. A 2004 television broadcast interview of Spears by Stone Phillips on NBC’s *Dateline* was seen by ten million viewers. Larry is co-creator and co-editor of nineteen books on servant-leadership, including the best-selling *Insights on Leadership*; and, he is a contributing author to those books and an additional twenty-one books by others.


Larry is also editor, co-editor, and contributing author for a

Since 1990, Larry has travelled throughout North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, giving hundreds of talks and workshops on servant-leadership, and engaging in countless meetings and interviews in an effort to nurture seeds of interest around the world. Larry has over forty-five years of experience in organizational leadership, entrepreneurial development, non-profit management, and grant writing, having envisioned and authored many successful grant projects.