

# Shared Faith Leadership in the Pauline Communities (‘households’)

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## 1. Introducing Paul

## 2. Paul’s expressions for shared faith leadership

- *Adelphos/Adelphe (adelfoz)*—Partner in Faith
- *Sunergos (sunergouj)*—helper, mission colleague, co-worker, partner in preaching (Paul)
- *Diakonos (dia/konoj)*—one commissioned and authorised to speak on behalf of another or represent another.
- *Sungenes (suggenh/j)*—Relative, same kinship group (natural/fictive) or household
- *Apostolos (apostoloz)*—one sent by another; “member of a specific group within the wider community of believers” (Byrne, *Romans*, 41-2); one truly sent by the risen Jesus.

## 3. Engaging Paul’s writings

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**1 Thessalonians 1:1** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

**1 Thessalonians 3:1-7** Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we decided to be left alone in Athens; <sup>2</sup> and we sent Timothy, our brother (*adelphos*) and co-worker (*sunergos*) for God in proclaiming the gospel of Christ (to.n avdelfo.n h`mw/n kai. sunergo.n tou/ qeou/ evn tw/| euvaggeli,w| tou/ Cristou/()), to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith, <sup>3</sup> so that no one would be shaken by these persecutions. Indeed, you yourselves know that this is what we are destined for. <sup>4</sup> In fact, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer persecution; so it turned out, as you know. <sup>5</sup> For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith; I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labor had been in vain. <sup>6</sup> But Timothy has just now come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love. He has told us also that you always remember us kindly and long to see us-- just as we long to see you. <sup>7</sup> For this reason, brothers and sisters (*adelphoi*), during all our distress and persecution we have been encouraged about you through your faith.

**Philippians 1:1-6** Paul and Timothy, servants (*doouloi*) of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops (*episkopoi*) and deacons (*diakonoj*): <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup> I thank my God

every time I remember you, <sup>4</sup> constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, <sup>5</sup> because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

**Philippians 2:19-30** <sup>19</sup> I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. <sup>20</sup> I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. <sup>21</sup> All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> But Timothy's worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. <sup>23</sup> I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me; <sup>24</sup> and I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon. Still, I think it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus -- my brother (*adelphoz—adelphos*) and co-worker (*sunergouj—sunergous*) and fellow soldier (*sustratiw,thn --sustratioten*), your messenger (*apostoloz—apostolos*) and minister (*leitourgoz—leitourgous*) to my need; <sup>26</sup> for he has been longing for all of you, and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. <sup>27</sup> He was indeed so ill that he nearly died. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, so that I would not have one sorrow after another. <sup>28</sup> I am the more eager to send him, therefore, in order that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. <sup>29</sup> Welcome him then in the Lord with all joy, and honor such people, <sup>30</sup> because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for those services that you could not give me.

**Philippians 4:1-3** Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup> Yes, and I ask you also, my **loyal companions** [*lit, 'yoked companions'*], help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my **co-workers** (*sunergouj—sunergous*), whose names are in the book of life.

**1 Corinthians 16:15-20** <sup>15</sup> Now, brothers and sisters, you know that members of the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; <sup>16</sup> I urge you to put yourselves at the service of such people, and of everyone who works and toils with them. <sup>17</sup> I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence; <sup>18</sup> for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. So give recognition to such persons. <sup>19</sup> The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord. <sup>20</sup> All the brothers and sisters send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

**2 Corinthians 13:11-13** <sup>11</sup> Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be

with you. <sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. <sup>13</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

### **Romans 16:1-27**

I commend to you our sister (*adelfh—adelphe*) Phoebe, a deacon (*dia/konoj—diakonos*) of the church at Cenchreae, <sup>2</sup> so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor (*prostatiz--patron*) of many and of myself as well. <sup>3</sup> Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me (*sunergouj—sunergous*) in Christ Jesus, <sup>4</sup> and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. <sup>5</sup> Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert in Asia for Christ. <sup>6</sup> Greet Mary, who has worked very hard among you. <sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives (*suggenh/j—sungenes*) who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles (*apostoloz—apostolos*), and they were in Christ before I was. <sup>8</sup> Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Greet Urbanus, our co-worker (*sunergouj—sunergous*) in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. <sup>10</sup> Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. <sup>11</sup> Greet my relative Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. <sup>12</sup> Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and greet his mother -- a mother to me also. <sup>14</sup> Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters (*kaii touj sun autoj adelfou/j—adelphous*) who are with them. <sup>15</sup> Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.

**Philemon 1:1-3** Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, <sup>2</sup> to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Philemon 1:22-25** <sup>22</sup> One thing more-- prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you. <sup>23</sup> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, <sup>24</sup> and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. <sup>25</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

#### 4. Summary:

- Paul's letters offer central insights for shared faith leadership considered from the perspective of the values of Kildare Ministries: courage, hope, hospitality, justice, wonder and compassion.
- Paul's shared faith leadership draws on a reality based within the kinship (natural or fictive) structures of the Greek-Roman household. The 'household' is central.
- Paul uses key descriptors of colleagues to indicate shared faith leadership. Some of these are surprising (*diakonos*, *apostolos*) and one of them (*sunergos*) frequent.
- All of the collegial expressions which Paul uses are connected to preaching, encouraging, strengthening and responding to pastoral life of the Greco-Roman households of disciples. Overall, Paul is concerned with encouraging faith and communion with each other and Jesus.
- The 'diakonos' is not the table servant or waiter, but the authorised and commissioned agent of the Gospel, performing an ambassadorial function.
- The 'sunergos' is not Paul's helper but God's helper, and a true colleague of Paul. The foundation for *sunergos* rests on the communion in faith in Jesus. This is *koinonia*, the centre-piece of the household of disciples in the first century CE.
- Paul's colleagues in leadership were men and women. Partnership was not gender specific.
- It is worth noting that after Paul emerging tensions emerge over collegial or collaborative ministry which can be identified within the household of disciples.
  - These tensions are evident in the gospels (eg Lk 8:1-2, 10:38-42, 24:11, Jn 4:26).
  - They are also clear from the formalized displacement of women's leadership found in the insertion of 1 Cor 14:33-37 (reflecting 1 Timothy 2:7-15) and the "household codes" of Col 3:18-20; 1 Peter 3:1-6, and Eph 5:21-26.

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#### 5. For personal (and, later, collegial) reflection:

- How does Paul's approach to shared leadership speak to (encourage, affirm, challenge...) your approach to shared leadership?
- How does Paul's approach speak to your enacting the values of courage, hope, hospitality, justice, wonder and compassion?

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