LIVING OUT THE CALL

BOOK TWO:

LEADING GOD'S PEOPLE

Paul Beasley-Murray

Revised edition 2016

Contents

To Caroline

Preface

Hockey can be a tough game. People can get hurt. I vividly remember getting hurt in a school hockey match – blood was streaming from my mouth and the pain was intense – but the headmaster who was refereeing the match simply shouted to me 'Play on Beasley-Murray, play on!'. And play on I did.

Ministry too can be tough. People can get hurt. Most ministers go through at least one bad patch in their ministry. Indeed, for me the first seven years of my ministry at Chelmsford were pretty lean. For whereas in my first church in Altrincham everything I had touched seemed to turn to gold and as a consequence the church turned round and began to grow, in Chelmsford everything I touched seemed to turn to dust and the church continued to decline. It was tempting to give up, particularly when there was misunderstanding and even rejection. In that context, however, somebody simply shouting 'Live out your call, Beasley-Murray' would not have helped. I needed people around me to help me live out the call.

I trust that the four volumes which make up *Living Out the Call* will prove to be a positive resource to those who have been in ministry for a while and are perhaps finding the going tough. Hopefully the lessons I have learnt over 43 years in stipendiary ministry, 34 of which were spent in leading two local churches, will prove of help to some. Hopefully, too, some of the thoughts and ideas will encourage and revitalise pastors in living out the call.

But *Living Out the Call* is not just for seasoned pastors. It is also for those who are just beginning ministry. Indeed, these four volumes are based on lectures that I have given to students preparing for ministry. They need to learn that it is not enough to be called – the call needs to be lived out, and that is a constant process. Hence the present participle – 'living' out the call.

Please also note that *Living Out the Call* is not an instruction manual. I am very conscious that there is no one way to do ministry. Every individual is unique; and what may be appropriate for one pastor may not be appropriate for another. Likewise, every church has its own individual character and its own particular mission to fulfil. God is not in the business of cloning! This does not mean that individuals and churches cannot learn from one another. Indeed, perhaps we can find a Scriptural basis for this, for according to Proverbs 18.15: "Intelligent people are always eager and ready to learn" (GNB), which the *Living Bible* translates: "The intelligent man is always open to new ideas. In fact, he looks for them." Over the years I have greatly benefited from seeing how others operate and subsequently adapting the insights gained to my own church. But do notice, there is all the difference in the world between 'adapting' and 'adopting'. To

'adopt' an idea from another church fails to recognise the unique character of each church. Each church has its own special calling to be church. We can learn from one another, provided we do not slavishly imitate.

Living Out the Call is different from other books about ministry, not least because of the person I am.

- It reflects 43 years of ministry, 34 years of which were spent turning around two declining churches and developing them into the strong churches they are today. There are not many books on ministry written by authors with such experience. As I know well from my six years as Principal of Spurgeon's College, it is very easy to lose touch with pastoral realities.
- It reflects a love of ministry. I have enjoyed being a pastor. In spite of some tough times, there was scarcely a day when I did not thank God for the privilege of calling me to be a pastor.
- It reflects a critical ability to learn from the experience and writings of others. This is not a book which tells the story of a pastor and his two churches. Rather, I have engaged with what others have had to say. The book reflects an unusual breadth of reading and academic robustness called for by an MA module.
- Not surprisingly from one who is still a member of the Society of New Testament Studies, it reflects a delight in relating much of my thinking to Scripture where that is appropriate.
- As one who is Chairman both of Ministry Today as also of the College of Baptist Ministers, it reflects a desire to offer something which will encourage and stimulate today's pastors. I genuinely want to help those who are finding ministry tough to live out the call.
- As befits my personality, the style is clear, passionate and straightforward!

The initial intention was to produce just one book with the title of *Living Out the Call: Rising to the Challenge of Ministry Today.* However, my enthusiasm for ministry ran away with itself, so that in the end it became necessary to publish *Living Out the Call* in four volumes:

1. *Living for God's Glory*
   Ministry today
   The passionate professional
   The exemplary pilgrim

2. *Leading God's Church*
   The inspirational leader
   The empowering team player
   The effective manager

3. *Reaching Out to God's World*
   The missionary strategist
   The charismatic preacher

4. *Serving God's People*
   The creative liturgist
   The compassionate pastor

It has been an interesting challenge dividing up what initially was one large book into four volumes – and not least grouping individual chapters under four different headings. The results, however, have been pleasing.

- In the first volume, *Living for God's Glory*, the topics of professionalism and spirituality go surprisingly well together and reinforce my conviction that professionalism is all about giving God our best.
- *Leading God's People* naturally encompasses the different ways in which pastors are called to be leaders.

- *Reaching Out to God's World* proved a little more problematic: along with the need to develop a missionary strategy I felt preaching could also be included, for preaching at its best always has the world in mind.
- Although the leading of worship and the exercise of pastoral care must never be restricted to the church, nonetheless to a large extent the focus for both is on the people of God, and so they are naturally grouped under the title of *Serving God's People*.

Over the years I have enjoyed sharing the fruits of my experience and learning with pastors and theological students in many different countries. Some of the material in *Living Out the Call* represents courses I taught in 2010 and 2013 at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut, Lebanon. However, the immediate inspiration for *Living Out the Call* was invitations to teach Master's courses at Laidlaw College in Auckland, New Zealand in 2014; and at the Colombo Theological Seminary in Sri Lanka, and at Vose Seminary in Perth, Western Australia, in 2015. I dare to believe that the diversity of these settings indicates that the principles underlying these four volumes, although for the most part drawn from ministry in England, are of relevance to pastors wherever they exercise their ministry.

One further introductory comment needs to be made. Unless otherwise specified, the version of the Bible quoted is the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV). Other versions used are the *Good News Bible* (GNB), the *New International Version* (NIV) and the *Revised English Bible* (REB). I have also quoted from time to time from *The Message* by Eugene Peterson.

Finally, in producing these four volumes I am most grateful to my youngest son, Benjamin, who has helped with various technical and editing matters.

Paul Beasley-Murray, July 2015

PART 1: THE INSPIRATIONAL LEADER

1. The call to lead

Leadership is the key pastoral task

"Leadership", declared George Barna, is "the indispensable quality" for pastoral leadership.[1] Leadership is indispensable, because without leadership churches engage in maintenance rather in mission. Without leadership churches die.

Peter Wagner's first vital sign of a healthy growing church is leadership[2] – and rightly so. Without leadership, all the other vital signs are of no effect. True, it is ultimately God who gives the growth (1 Cor 3.7), but it is the task of the leader to ensure that the sails of the church are set to catch the wind of God's Spirit. Leadership is of the essence of the pastoral task.

This view of the pastor as the primary catalyst for growth was confirmed by Alan Wilkinson and myself in our study of 350 English Baptist churches, in which we tested the relevance of Peter Wagner's thinking within an English context. We established that leadership, vision, and possibility thinking all represent key gifts of a pastor in a growing church. Even the gifts of preaching and pastoral care were less significant for growth than the gifts of administration, leadership and vision. [3]

In similar vein, the veteran American church consultant Lyle Schaller defined leadership as the key role of pastors who want to see their churches grow: "The pastor must have a strong future-orientation. The pastor must be able to see opportunities where others see problems and conflicts. The pastor must be willing to accept and fill a strong leadership role and serve as the number-one leader in the congregation."[4]

At a time when the church in the West is facing massive decline, leadership is all the more important. Over the years I have frequently quoted the words of Lloyd Perry, written from within a North American context: "There are three requirements for a good programme within the church. The first is leadership, the second is leadership, and the third is leadership. A lack of leadership may be part of the reason that in a typical year, an average of at least eight protestant congregations disappear every day… Churches need more leaders, not more members."[5]

Of course, not all forms of leadership are acceptable. "Some misleaders", wrote Al Gini and Ronald Green, "are simply pathetic egocentric scoundrels or selfishly adolescent narcissists, full of bluster and pomposity, who enjoy a bright moment and then are quickly and happily forgotten or dismissed."[6] In this regard they instance such figures as Benito Mussolini, the strutting peacock and Italian dictator; King Farouk, the corpulent playboy and pharaoh of Egypt; Joseph McCarthy, the Wisconsin senator and self-styled inquisitioner of all things communist; and Donald J. Trump, a television personality and an outrageous pompadour. "Other misleaders", they write, "are pathological liars, completely sociopathic in their interactions with others and utterly Machiavellian in their use of power."[7] In this regard they instance such villains as Joseph Stalin, who caused the death of at least 20 million of his own people; Pol Pot of the Khmer Rouge, who created the 'killing fields' of Cambodia; and Robert Mugabe, who ended up destroying the agriculture, financial and social structure of one of the richest nations in Africa.

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[1] George Barna, *Today's Pastors* (Regal Books, Ventura, California 1993) 117.

[2] C.Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Regal Books, Glendale, California 1976) 55-68.

[3] Paul Beasley-Murray & Alan Wilkinson, *Turning the Tide: an assessment of Baptist church growth in England* (Bible Society, London 1981) 35, 36.

[4] Lyle E. Schaller, *Growing Plans* (Abingdon Press, Nashville 1983). Although Schaller was here writing specifically about larger churches, he later makes the same point more generally in *44 Steps Up Off the Plateau* (Abingdon, Nashville 1993) 61 as he talks of the need for "visionary initiating leadership".

[5] Lloyd Perry, *Getting the Church on Target* (Moody Press, Chicago 1977) 3.

[6] Al Gini and Ronald M. Green, *10 Virtues of Outstanding Leaders: Leadership and Character* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 2013) 18.

[7] Gini and Green, *10 Virtues of Outstanding Leaders* 18,19.

"Misleaders" are to be found not only in the world beyond the church, but also in the church itself. In churches large and small leaders abuse their power. When Lord Acton declared that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely", he was referring to power within the church.[8] The church, wrote Joel Gregory, "is an institution divine in its original foundation but tethered to this celestial ball by every frailty to which humans are subject. Covetousness, littleness, jealousy, lust for power, ego, sacrilege, and a hundred other demons all lurk within the hallways."[9] Any form of acceptable leadership needs to go hand-in-hand with character. However, the fact that there are forms of unacceptable leadership does not rule out the need for leadership within the church.

Sadly, there has been a good deal of resistance to the importance of leadership in the church. For instance, Steven Croft, the Bishop of Sheffield, has expressed his unhappiness with those who have been attracted to "leadership models drawn either from the church growth movement or from secular management philosophy". He criticises those for whom "to be a leader becomes more central than to exercise a priestly or presbyteral model of prayer, preaching and pastoral care. One of several dangers which follow is that prayer and preaching can become little more than servants of the leaders' vision. The continual temptation is for sermons to become exhortations towards a particular goal and prayer to become more and more directed to a similar end."[10] But there is an equal danger that the prayer, preaching and pastoral care of the church fail to engage with the major missionary challenge the church faces.

Some Baptists have hesitations about the pastor spearheading leadership in the church. Robert Ellis, for instance, wrote: "Leaders should offer insights to the congregation as they seek together to discern their part in God's mission in the world. But leaders should rarely communicate a full vision, complete in every part… A key role of leaders is to be servants in the process of discernment."[11] Similarly Andy Goodliff wrote that "leadership may come from the minister of deacons, but equally it may come from the church meeting as it deliberates and explores its life and mission… We need to continue to explore and reflect on how we can create good processes that allow leadership, but which do not confine it to one or two people."[12] Without leaders exercising their God-given gifts of leadership no church will grow.

Stephen Pattison, the pastoral theologian, cautioned churches against the uncritical acceptance of management ideas and techniques: "Ever since the pharaohs plotted the construction of the pyramids, there has been a need for coordination, leadership and administration to ensure that things get done… I want to suggest that, while management theories and practices may often be useful and to a large degree inevitable in any organisation such as a church, they should not be uncritically accepted as an uncontroversial, universal panacea that has no negative effects."[13] He went on to remind his readers that "Jesus advises his followers to be as cunning as serpents and as innocent as doves."[14] However, such cautions do not rule out the vital need for godly leadership!

If today's churches are to face up to the challenges offered by contemporary culture, then it desperately needs leaders who will think through those challenges and who will offer strategies for enabling their churches to fulfil Christ's mission today. If such strategies are to be effective, then churches will need leaders who will help enable churches to make the necessary changes to their life in order to adopt the necessary strategies.

Today's ministers need to be leaders. For where the right leaders are not only present, but also exercising their power to lead, there the church will grow and new members will be found. What is more, these new members will not just be Christians 'recycled' from other churches, but converts whose lives have truly been turned around by the Gospel of Christ. But this will only happen as leaders exercise their 'powers' of leadership. Chaplains have a valuable role to play in hospitals and in prisons – however ministers have a very different role to play in their local churches. One reason why many churches are making little impact on their communities is that their ministers have felt trapped by the personal needs and expectations of their members. They have assumed the role of their church's personal chaplain. But there is more to ministry in the local church than caring for the pastoral needs of church people – ministry also

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[8] Acton, a devout Roman Catholic, was concerned about the promulgation of papal infallibility in 1870. See John E.E. Dalberg Acton, *Essays on Freedom and Power* (Thames & Hudson, London 1956) 335-336.

[9] Joel Gregory, *Too Great A Temptation* (The Summit Group, Fort Worth, Texas 1994) 324.

[10] Steven Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions: Ordination and Leadership in the Local Church* (Darton, Longman & Todd, London, revised edition 2008) 109.

[11] Robert Ellis, 'The leadership of some… Baptist ministers as leaders?' 84 in *Challenging to change: dialogues with a radical Baptist theologian* (Spurgeon's College, London 2009) edited by Pieter J. Lalleman.

[12] Andy Goodliff, 'Leadership among Baptists', *Baptist Ministers' Journal* 303 (July 2009) 18.

[13] Stephen Pattison, 'Management and Pastoral Theology' 284, 285 in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2000) edited by James Woodward & Stephen Pattison.

[14] Stephen Pattison, 'Management and Pastoral Theology' 292

involves caring for those outside the church. Ordination to the Christian ministry places a call on ministers to mobilise their people for ministry and mission not only in the church, but also beyond the confines of the church.[15]

Leadership makes things happen

Andrew Le Peau, in his book *Paths of Leadership*, quoted a number of great leaders of the past. Harry Truman, for instance, once said: "A leader is a person who has the ability to get others to do what they don't want to do, and to like it." Mahatma Gandhi identified tenacity as the key element: "To put up with misrepresentation and to stick to one's guns come what may – this is the essence of leadership." Hannibal, as he contemplated crossing the Alps, typified this attitude: "I will find a way or make one." Other definitions include that of Napoleon, who believed a leader is "a dealer in hope", while the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-tse said: "A leader is best when people barely know he exists." Le Peau himself defined leadership as "any influence any person has on an individual or group to meet its needs or goals for the glory of God".[16]

Which is right? Which is wrong? All are right! All are fascinating insights into leadership. All have something to say to those of us involved in Christian leadership.

I personally like the definition: "leaders make things happen". The question then arises: What things are we making happen? Another helpful definition is: "leaders make a difference". The question then arises: What difference are we making?

A few years ago I was visiting the Auckland Maritime Museum, where was there a display featuring the work of Sir Peter Blake, the man behind New Zealand's successful Admirals Cup bid. Following his death, a Blake medal is issued every year for outstanding leadership. I noted with interest the leadership qualities that the Sir Peter Blake Trust looks for:

> Determination and the will to succeed
> Belief in achieving extraordinary things
> Willingness to learn
> Desire for constant improvement
> Trusting and empowering team-mates
> The initiative to pursue an idea
> Ability to have fun

2. Principles of New Testament leadership

Leadership is a gift

The Bible has much to say about leadership.[17] It is highly significant that in all three lists of spiritual gifts in Paul's writings the gift of leadership is to be found: Rom 12.8, 1 Cor 12.28 and Eph 4.11.

It is interesting to reflect on the various translations of Rom 12.8: "If leadership, [exercise the gift with] diligence" (NRSV); "if it is to lead, do it diligently" (NIV); "if you are a leader, lead with enthusiasm" (REB); or "Whoever has authority should work hard" (GNB). Some have suggested that there is no reference to leadership here, but rather the underlying Greek verb (*proistemi*) should be translated "to care for", "to aid". I am not convinced. It may be that we should not distinguish too clearly between those two meanings, which actually interrelate. For true pastoral leadership is not about the exercise of power, but rather about the exercise of care. Christian leaders exercise their influence for the good of others.

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[15] See Eddie Gibbs, *Leadership Next: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* (IVP, Leicester 2005) 332, 333: "The primary task of the leader is to reconnect ecclesiology with missiology in order that the church be first and foremost defined by its God-given mission. So much ministerial training has focused on caring for the flock of God and maintaining the 'shop'."
[16] Andrew Le Peau, *Paths of Leadership* (Scripture Union, London 1984) 9-10.
[17] A most imaginative approach to leadership in the Bible is provided by Robert D Dale in *Good News from Great Leaders* (Alban, Washington D.C. 1992) which involves an overview of twenty key leadership incidents in the Bible in the light of modern leadership theory.

In 1 Cor 12.28 Paul refers to "forms of leadership" (NRSV), also translated as "power to guide" (REB), "guidance" (NIV) or "those who are given power to direct" (GNB). The underlying Greek noun (*kubernesis*) literally means 'helmsmanship', a word often used metaphorically in Greek literature of the art of government: the statesman guiding the 'ship of state'. Here the ship in question is the church. Leaders keep their hands on the tiller and ensure that the ship is kept on course. In this respect John Gunstone had some perceptive comments to make on this metaphor:

> "The leader... is the man at the helm. The gathering (i.e. the church) is driven along by the wind of the Spirit, but unless the leader's hand is firmly on the tiller, there is every danger that the ship's course may be deflected by the cross-currents of human emotions and ambitions that move not very far below the surface of the sea over which she sails."

Gunstone went on to argue that this gift is basic to every pastor's ministry:

> "The spiritual gift of the ordained ministry is seen to be that of 'presidency' (i.e. helmsmanship'). He is not the one who has every spiritual gift necessary for the congregation..... But what he has above all is the charisma of leadership which enables him to preside over a congregation in its worship, life and mission, in such a way that he enables individuals and groups in that congregation to minister with the gifts that God gives them."[18]

Gunstone ended his exposition of this image by commenting that a ship with no one at the helm is a frightening place to be. How right he was. Just think of the Costa Concordia! Another thought is that in a storm the helmsman often needs a good deal of strength to keep the ship on course. Although this may not be true of a modern cruise-liner where the ship can be controlled with the touch of a finger; in an old-fashioned sailing boat, a degree of strength and toughness is certainly needed by the person at the helm.

In Eph 4.7-13 the ascended Christ is said to give gifts to his church. Unlike the gifts in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, these gifts are seen primarily in terms of 'office' rather than activity: "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." The very term 'pastor' implies leadership, for it is derived from the Latin word for shepherd. As the shepherd goes ahead and leads his flock, so too pastors should go ahead and lead God's people. The church was not the first group of people to use this metaphor to describe leadership. In the ancient world generally the term 'shepherd' was used as a title for kings and as a result was used in the Old Testament for leaders.[19]

Clearly, leaders need to be gifted – otherwise they should not be in positions of leadership in the Christ's church. As Price Pritchett wrote: "Putting a man in charge and calling him a leader is like giving a man a Bible and calling him a preacher. Bestowing the title doesn't bestow the talent."[20]

But how gifted should leaders be? In this respect I find the words of the Apostles to the church at Jerusalem significant: "Select from yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6.2). Leaders need to be liked and respected by the church and the community at large; they need to be men and women on fire for God because God's Spirit has invaded their lives; and they need to be blessed with "wisdom", what Eugene Peterson calls "common sense" (*The Message*), or what Ben Witherington calls "the ability to discern the right thing to do when choices must be made"[21]. Within the context of the need to see to the needs of the Greek-speaking widows, it is clear that this wisdom involved "organisational talent",[22] or what we might term management skills. Clearly, not every group of leaders can have the kind of exceptional ability represented by Daniel and his friends who were "versed in every branch of wisdom, endowed with knowledge and insight, and competent to serve in the king's palace" (Dan 1.4), but at the very least church leaders need have the ability to make wise decisions.[23]

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[18] John Gunstone, *A People for his Praise* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1978) 39.

[19] See Psalm 78.70-71 where David is described as chosen by God to be the "shepherd" of his people; and Isaiah 63.10 where Moses is similarly described. In Micah 5.4 there is a promise of a new leader who will "shepherd" the flock of Israel.

[20] Quoted by Gini & Green, *10 Virtues of Leadership* 4.

[21] Ben Witherington, *The Acts of The Apostle* 250.

[22] Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall, *Called to be Church: The Book of Acts for a New Day* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2006) 93.

[23] In a secular context John Adair (*Effective Leadership*, Pan Business/Management, London 1983, 12-13) suggests that the 25 qualities for leadership are – in order of importance – as follows: ability to take decisions, leadership, integrity, enthusiasm, imagination, willingness to work hard, analytical ability, understanding of others, ability to spot opportunities, ability to meet unpleasant situations, ability to adapt quickly to change, willingness to take risks, enterprise, capacity to speak lucidly, astuteness,

Does leadership necessarily involve 'charisma'? The difficulty here is that 'charisma' can have more than one meaning. Within the New Testament 'charisma' is "a special gift bestowed by the grace of God on individual Christians", whereas today 'charisma' means "a capacity to inspire devotion and enthusiasm".[24] As the title of this chapter indicates, I believe that Christian leaders need to have the capacity to inspire their people – leadership without inspiration will not get a church very far. Common to the 'job purpose' of every member of the ministry team at Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, was the call "To excite fresh hope and faith in God, encouraging God's people to embrace others with 'love of another kind', enabling individuals to change and to grow, and empowering the church for witness and service." Although we had a wide range of personality types on the team, the expectation was that they would all "excite" others. However, every member of the team did it in a different way: some were what Brian Harris has called 'quiet leaders' – and some were not![25] According to Brian Harris, the success of quiet leaders "is linked more to their persistence, tenacity and flexibility than to their charisma".[26] Indeed, the title of his book, *The Tortoise Usually Wins*, is taken from Aesop's fable of the tortoise and the hare in which ultimately the tortoise wins: "Steady plodders", he writes, "knowing the route they need to go, keeping at it in spite of the odds, and declining the seductive detours that the hare finds irresistible, they make it across the finishing line, and do so time and time again."[27] However, I would maintain that for any long-term influence these qualities are necessary for all leaders, however 'magnetic' some might appear to be! All leaders need some kind of leadership gifting.

Leadership is a gift for women too

Women are clearly gifted, but are they gifted to lead? This has been – and in some places still is – a burning issue. The clear, biblical answer is: yes! The hierarchies of Jew over against Gentile, of slave over against free, of male against female, no longer exist in Christ (Gal 3.28). In Christ a revolution has taken place. The old order has passed, a new order has come!

In recent years the Church of England has had a series of long-running debates on the place of women in the church, which has culminated in the ordination of women bishops. I find it interesting that in a recent guide to these issues, Steven Croft and Paula Gooder begin with the resurrection of Jesus:

> "Ponder this truth for a moment. What does it say about the place of women in the Christian faith that they were beyond doubt the first witnesses of the resurrection and the first to carry the good news. Remember that in the culture of the day, women were not considered equal to men in terms of politics or law or social status. They were regarded as less reliable witnesses. These passages from the Gospels are remarkable as a testimony to the importance of the role of women in the life and ministry of God's people and in the Church of Jesus Christ."[28]

The evidence of Scripture is that women can and should expect to play varying roles within Christian leadership. In the church at Rome, for instance, women as well as men took the lead: Phoebe was a deacon (Rom 16.1-2); Prisca was a teacher (Rom 16.3) and Junia was even an apostle (Rom 16.7). From Acts 21.9 (see also Acts 2.17-18) we learn that women were also prophets.

What then of the passages most frequently quoted in defence of all-male leadership (1 Cor 11.3-16; 14.33-36; 1 Tim 2.11-15)? How are they to be understood? To my mind all three passages are culturally bound and were addressing particular situations which are not relevant to us today.

This is certainly true of 1 Cor 11.3-16, where Paul states not only that the "man" or "husband" is head of "the woman" or wife", but also that "any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head". If 1

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ability to administer efficiently, open-mindedness, ability to 'stick at it', willingness to work long hours, ambition, single-mindedness, capacity for lucid writing, curiosity, skill with numbers, and capacity for abstract thought.

[24] These two definitions come from Arndt & Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (Cambridge University Press, 4th edition 1952) and *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 4th edition 2002).

[25] See Brian Harris, *The Tortoise Usually Wins: Biblical Reflections on Quiet Leadership for Reluctant Leaders* (Paternoster, Milton Keynes 2013).

[26] Brian Harris, *The Tortoise Usually Wins* xiii.

[27] Brian Harris, *The Tortoise Usually Wins* xiii.

[28] Steven Croft and Paul Gooder, *Women and Men in Scripture and the Church: A guide to the key issues* (Canterbury Press, Norwich 2013) viii.

Corinthians 11 rules out women's leadership today, then consistency demands that women do not cut their hair and that they wear veils for worship. You cannot have the one without the other: there is no middle ground.

In 1 Cor 14.33b-35 Paul appears to say that women should keep silent in church, which is strange as in 1 Cor 11 Paul happily allows women to prophesy and pray in meetings of the church. The most radical explanation, accepted even by many evangelical scholars is that vv33b-35 do not belong to the original text of 1 Corinthians; rather we have here a 'gloss' or addition by some later anti-feminist Christian scribe.[29] Although these verses are not omitted by any of our earliest MSS, they do appear in different places: most place them here, but one very important early MS puts them at the end of the chapter. Certainly the passage in its present position does not fit the general flow of Paul's thought. Furthermore, it appears to contradict what he wrote earlier. If, however, they do belong to the original text and do reflect the mind of Paul, almost certainly they are not to be understood as a universal prohibition on women speaking in church. Rather Paul was addressing a particular situation. To understand the situation, we have to bear in mind that in the early churches, men and women probably did not sit together; as is still the custom in Jewish synagogues today, men and women were separated. Furthermore, if public worship was conducted in the main formal language of the day – in Corinth, obviously, mainstream Greek – many women might not have been able to grasp what was being said, for being less educated than the men they might have only understood local dialects. Maybe the women, not understanding what was being said, started calling out to their husbands to explain what had been said. Alternatively, they might have got bored and begun to chatter among themselves. Significantly, the word translated as "speak" (*lalein*) was never used for preaching or teaching; rather it was used for chattering; and also in 1 Cor 12-14 for speaking in tongues. Indeed, there are some who think Paul was ticking off the women for interrupting the service by speaking in tongues.

Another point to consider is that the GNB is misleading when it says "they must not be in charge" (1 Cor 14.34): literally, Paul says that they must 'submit' (*hupotasso*). The question arises to whom or to what must they submit? According to Ben Witherington: "Women are not being commanded to submit to their husbands, but to the principle of order."[30] Furthermore, Witherington argues that the law to which Paul refers is Job 29.21 which speaks of "the silence of respect for a teacher, the silence of someone who is a learner".

This is a complex and obscure passage, and New Testament scholars have had a field day with widely differing interpretations. The vast majority accept that, if this passage is authentic, then it must be understood as addressing a particular situation, rather than giving general guidance for Christians everywhere. We cannot deduce from this passage that women must keep silence in church today. For the general thrust of Scripture is that women, where appropriately gifted, may and should exercise ministry within the church.

But what about Paul's teaching in 1 Tim 2.11-12? Doesn't that argue for women keeping silence? At first sight it certainly does: "Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent." In fact this passage is not a blanket ban on women speaking in church:

1. It is an encouragement to women to "learn" (*manthano*). Paul is encouraging women to be true disciples (*mathetes*) by learning from God's Word.
2. It is an encouragement to women to learn "quietly". The NRSV and GNB are misleading when they translate "in silence" – it is the same word (*hesuchia*) found earlier in the chapter where Paul says that petitions and prayers should be offered to God for all who are in authority "that we may live a quiet life" (1 Tim 2.1). Later in 1 Tim 5.13 Paul writes that younger widows should cease being "gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say." Concentration, not chatter, is needed if women are to learn – the same is also true of men.
3. It is an encouragement to women to submit themselves to the Word of God "with [literally 'in'] full submission". This is often taken to mean that they should be "in full submission" 'to men' or 'to their husbands'. It is more probable that Paul has God in mind: as learners they need to submit to the authority of God expressed through his Word.
4. Paul rules out spiritual dictatorship: "I permit no woman to teach or have authority over a man." They key word is "have authority" (*authento*). Paul uses an unusual word, which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is not the normal word for exercising authority, but has the meaning of being domineering, of throwing one's weight around. Here, the context is all-important. From a general reading of 1Timothy it is clear that in the church at Ephesus, where Timothy was a leader, there were false teachers, described by Paul as "liars, whose consciences are seared with a hot iron" (4.2). We do not know who these false teachers were, but this passage suggests that a number of them were women. We know that women played a key role at Ephesus: in the great Temple of Artemis, for instance, all the priests were women – "they ruled the show and

[29] See, for instance, Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* 700.
[30] Ben Witherington, *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John* (Apollos, Nottingham 2006) 226.

kept the men in their place."[31] It would appear that in a similar fashion there were women trying to exercise a similar role in the church by throwing their weight around. Paul says 'No': they must not teach or dictate, instead they must be "quiet".

It is clear that Paul was addressing a particular situation in which some women had abused their position. This was not a blanket-ban on women teaching in general: rather, Paul was seeking to deal with a particular difficulty in the church at Ephesus.

A number of years ago my father wrote a little booklet on *Man and Woman in the Church*. Let me quote from his concluding paragraph:

> "For centuries [the church] has been under the bondage of a clouded understanding of the Scriptures, wherein the glory of the gospel has been restricted through a Judaism framed apart from the revelation and redemption wrought by Christ; and church order as interpreted by male clergy has taken precedence over the kingdom of God and salvation for the world. Man and woman, created for partnership, have been redeemed for partnership in service. It is high time to make that partnership truly effective in the service of God in his church and in his world."[32]

Leadership is a gift that needs to be developed

Leadership may be a gift, but it is a gift which needs to be developed. In the debate of whether leaders are born or made, my own conviction is that leaders are both born and made. As John Stott wrote: "God's gifts have to be cultivated and leadership potential has to be developed."[33] Jesus not only called the twelve apostles, he trained them – he taught them not least the importance of servant leadership. When John Mark went with Paul and Silas on their first missionary journey, he went as an apprentice, as one who had skills to learn. Later Paul was a mentor to men like Timothy and Titus. When Paul told Timothy "what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well" (2 Tim 2.2) there was surely an element of training involved.

As Brian Harris rightly says: "Leadership is not magical… When we break leadership down into the component parts, it is a step-at-a-time process."[34] But even those for whom "leadership comes spontaneously and easily" can become far better leaders by understanding the principles and processes of leadership. In that training I would include the 'six key qualities for pastoral leadership': viz. vision, enthusiasm, industry, perseverance, humility and love.[35]

Leadership is always servant leadership

On a number of occasions Jesus emphasised the necessity of the servant role if a person would be a leader. Thus, when James and John asked if they might sit at his right and left hand in glory, Jesus replied: "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mark 10.42; Matt 20.25-27; see also Luke 22.24-26).

Jesus defined leadership in terms of service, and in doing so turned upside down all previous preconceptions of leadership. As James Edwards commented: "At no place do the ethics of the kingdom of God clash more vigorously with the ethics of the world than in the matters of power and service. The ideas that Jesus presents regarding rule and service are combined in a way that finds no obvious precedent in either the OT or Jewish tradition. In a decisive reversal of values, Jesus speaks of greatness in service rather than greatness of power, prestige and authority… The preeminent virtue of God's kingdom is not power, not even freedom, but service… The pre-eminence of service in the kingdom of God grows out of Jesus' teaching on love for one's neighbour, for service is love made tangible."[36]

Jesus went on: "Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all" (Mark 10.44; similarly Mark 9.35 & Luke 9.48). From the perspective of Jesus' hearers this was a preposterous idea. To quote Edwards again: "The idea of a slave being first

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[31] N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone – The Pastoral Letters: 1 & 2 Timothy & Titus* (SPCK, London 2003) 25.
[32] G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Man and Woman in the Church* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, London 1983) 13.
[33] John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Marshalls, Basingstoke 1984) 327.
[34] Brian Harris, *The Tortoise Usually Wins* xviii.
[35] See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Dynamic Leadership* 182-193.
[36] James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According To Mark* (Apollos, Leicester 2002) 325.

is as absurdly paradoxical as a camel going through the eye of a needle (v25) – and it probably induced smiles and shaking heads from Jesus' audience. The desire for power and dominance focuses attention on self and this is love, for love by nature is focused on others."[37]

Frederick Bruner in his commentary on the parallel passage in Matt 20. 27 drew attention to the question of Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*, 491E: 'How can anyone be happy when he is the slave of all?', and went on: "Jesus turns this aristocratic ideal on its head, and in one of cultural history's dramatic reversals he asks, in effect, 'How can anyone be happy unless one is the slave of everyone else?' Because culture so ceaselessly directs us in exactly the opposite direction, *up*, believers must pray almost daily for the wisdom and courage to go culturally *down*. But seeking to be a great 'downer' in all imaginative service and with all created and charismatic ambition is so right that it comes close to being Jesus' definition of a happy life."[38]

Jesus was the Servant *par excellence*. He said that service was the hallmark of his mission: "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10.45). Again the comments of James Edwards are most insightful: "The life to which the gospel calls believers is not an ethical system but 'the way of the Lord' (1.3) of which Jesus is the pattern and incarnation. This model of ministry cannot come from the secular order, but only from the unique way of Jesus, which defies the logic of this world and its fascination with dominance, control, yields, results and outcomes. The key to the model both incarnated and commanded by Jesus is in the verbs 'to serve' and 'to give'. The reason why a servant is the most preeminent position in the kingdom of God is that the sole function of a servant is to give, and giving is the essence of God."[39]

Nowhere more clearly do we see Jesus as the Servant than when he washed his disciples' feet in the upper room (John 13.1-20). It is impossible to overemphasise the menial nature of this act. For the rabbis it was a task which could not be required of a Jewish male slave (Mekh. Exod 21.2.82a, based on Lev 25.39). Washing the feet of another person was seen as an undignified action, a job reserved for Gentile slaves, wives and children.

> "The action of Jesus in removing his outer garment and tying a towel around him underscores the humiliation of his action; the Midrash on Gen 21.14 states that when Abraham sent Hagar away he gave her a bill of divorce and took her shawl and girded it around her loins, that people should know she was a slave."[40]

We are so familiar with this incident that we do not always sense the degradation of the scene. Jesus, "knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God" (John 13.3), humiliated himself beyond measure by taking upon himself the role of a slave as he washed his disciples' feet. In a very real sense this was a "scandalous" act.[41] Today's leaders would do well to heed his words: "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13.15).

It may well be that the Apostle Peter has the incident of the foot-washing in mind when, after giving instructions to the elders, he said to the church as a whole: "All of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another" (1 Pet 5.5). The Greek verb translated 'clothe' (*egkombousthai*) is derived from the word *egkomboma*, which denoted the 'apron' or 'overall' which slaves fastened in front of their sleeveless vest to keep it clean. Some commentators believe that Peter may be hinting that they should imitate Jesus who tied a towel around himself in order to wash his disciples' feet.[42] As a result the GNB translates this verse: "All of you must put on the apron of humility, to serve one another." This call to serve others includes leaders, who must put others first; for the 'humility' of which Peter speaks is "an attitude which… thinks of the desires, needs, and ideas of others as more worthy than one's own."[43]

The metaphor Peter employs here may well have yet even further significance for church leadership. For in the ancient world what people wore was a sign of their social position: "one's garment announces what one is for another, not

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[37] James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* 325.

[38] Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook: Matthew 13-28* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, revised edition 1999) 333.

[39] James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* 326, 327.

[40] G.R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Word, Waco, Texas 1987) 233.

[41] So Rodney A. Whitacre, *John* (IVP, Leicester 1999) 329.

[42] So, for instance, J.N.D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and Jude* (A.C. Black, London 1969) 206. J. Ramsey Michaels (*1 Peter*, Word, Waco Texas 1988, 283) was not convinced and pointed out that in John 15.3 another Greek word (*lention*) is used, but to my mind this does not rule out an allusion to the foot-washing.

[43] Wayne Grudem (*1 Peter*, IVP, Leicester 1988) 194. The term 'humility' (*tapeinophrosune)* is defined in Paul's introduction to the great Christ hymn of Philippians 2: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility (*tapeinophrosune*) regard others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others" (Phil 2.3-4).

what one is in and for oneself."[44] In the light of this, writes Joel Green, "Peter's directive to everyone counters the possibility of blind submission to authority just as it sabotages all attempts to exercise authority on the basis of status."[45] That Peter would instruct everyone (*pantes*), leaders included, "to wear the same garment, irrespective of its colour or quality or texture, is itself a startling negation of the social distinctions that among people in Roman antiquity would have been worn like uniforms in a parade." Green notes that the word for 'humility' (*tapeinophrosune*) is related to the Greek word 'to think' (*phroneo*) and draws from this the conclusion that "Peter thus concerns himself, and his audience, with a frame of mind or pattern of thinking that belongs to persons who have done with positioning themselves in the world's social hierarchy in order to ensure that they are treated with appropriate esteem by their social underlings."[46] Here we see again that leadership in the church has nothing to do with status, but everything to do with service.

This teaching on the importance of being a servant must not lead us to underplay the importance of leadership itself. Leadership, rightly understood, does not stand in opposition to service. Leadership can be an expression of service. If leadership is undertaken for the sake of others, rather than for the sake of personal ego, then such leadership is service in the cause of Christ.

The key to Christian leadership is servant-leadership. Servant-leadership focuses on the people to be cared for rather than just the job to be done. There is therefore a very real difference between servant-leaders and some high-powered executives. Servant-leaders cannot trample on people even in pursuit of the kingdom. Leaders may not be doormats – but neither may they use others as doormats. But for all these necessary caveats, servant leadership must still lead – it must not become an excuse for no leadership.[47] For that reason the suggestion has been made that we should speak of 'leading servants' rather than 'servant-leaders'.[48]

Leadership is always relational

Leadership based on the pattern of Jesus does not operate on an impersonal basis from afar. Leadership involves relationships, in which leaders relate with people, and people with leaders. This is suggested in the emphasis Jesus put on the fact that the Good Shepherd knows his sheep: "He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out… and the sheep follow because they know his voice" (John 10.3-4). A little later Jesus repeated the same thought: "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father" (John 10.14-15).

To fully appreciate the imagery here, we have to remember that in the time of Jesus sheep were kept not for their mutton but for their wool. Whereas today most sheep live only a brief life before they are slaughtered for their meat, in Palestine sheep used to be looked after by a shepherd for many years. Shepherds could meaningfully get to know their sheep, and vice versa. Over a period of time a relationship of trust could develop. It was only on the basis of this relationship that the shepherd could meaningfully lead his flock.

Here are clear lessons for Christian leadership. Christian leadership is always concerned for individuals, and not just for the church at large. Effective Christian leadership can never just be task-orientated, it must also be people-orientated too. Within a voluntary organisation such as a church the task or mission of the church can only be achieved as the members of the church come together as a team to fulfil the agreed goals of the church. But for this working together to happen members must feel valued for themselves, and not just for the work they may achieve. It is only as people sense that they are loved and cared for that they will at all cooperate in seeking to fulfil whatever the task might be.

One sign that leaders care for people is that they know their people. They know them by name. They know their individual circumstances. To know people's names is to show that they count. Not to know a person's name is a sign that we do not really care, that they do not really have value. In smaller churches knowing a person's name may be no problem. In larger churches, where visitors may often be present, this may pose a challenge. But how would we feel if

[44] Klaus Berger, *Identity and Experience in the New Testament* (Fortress, Minneapolis 2003) 42.

[45] Joel B. Green, *1 Peter* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2007) 170.

[46] Joel B. Green, *1 Peter* 170.

[47] John Drane, *After McDonaldization: Ministry and Christian Discipleship in an Age of Uncertainty* (Darton, Longman, Todd, London 2008) 106 commented: " 'Servant leadership' often leads to a situation in which there is no effective leadership at all."

[48] John Ortberg, formerly an associate pastor at Willow Creek Community Church, quoted by Eddie Gibbs & Ian Coffey, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in Christian Ministry* (British edition: IVP, Leicester 2001) 106. Gibbs and Coffey suggest that the emphasis on 'servant leadership' espoused by some pastors has more to do with their insecurity rather than with their humility.

God did not know us by name? Those who play power games end up treating people as pawns who can be moved around the board at will; but Jesus – and those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus – treated people as people, whose concerns are more important than any church programme. One sign that people count is that they are known.

Is it significant that not only does the shepherd know the sheep, but also that the sheep know the shepherd? A meaningful relationship has to be mutual. Leaders do not have to be perfect, but they do have to be seen to be trustworthy. Furthermore, the fact that leaders may be perceived as vulnerable and as frail as others does not necessarily make them less trustworthy. What counts is that God is seen to be at work in their lives. There is no place for pretence in Christian leadership, as indeed in the Christian life in general. It is precisely when leaders are real with their people and when God is seen to be real in leaders' lives, that leadership can be effective. Christian leaders who are truly concerned for the welfare of those in their charge have nothing to hide. It is leaders whose motives are questionable and whose eye is on power, who have far more to lose.

Leadership is always non-coercive

It is precisely because Christian leadership is servant-leadership, that Christian leadership may never be coercive: i.e. it can never force others to do something over which they are unhappy. In this context the words of 1 Pet 5.2-3 are relevant: leaders are not to "lord it over those in their charge". There is a fundamental difference between 'leadership' and 'lordship'. Leadership may be authoritative, but it may never be authoritarian.

The difference between leadership and lordship may be seen in the difference between leading sheep and driving sheep. The story is told of how an Arab guide was once showing a group of tourists around the Holy Land. On one of their coach trips he alluded to the tradition of the Palestinian shepherd walking in front of his flock. While he was speaking, the tourists spotted a man in the distance driving a small flock of sheep with a rather menacing stick. Just as all school children love to prove their teachers wrong, they pointed out the figure to the guide. He immediately stopped the bus and rushed off across the field. A few minutes later he returned his face beaming. He announced: "I have just spoken to the man. Ladies and gentlemen, he is not the shepherd. He is the butcher!"[49]

Christian leadership does not involve 'driving'. It is always a servant ministry which leaves people free to accept to not to accept its direction. True, in Hebs 13.17 we read: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority", but this does not refer to blind and unthinking obedience. The root meaning of the verb translated "obey"is 'to persuade' (*peithesthe*): what is in mind therefore is not an authoritarian command, but reasoned exhortation. [50]

Furthermore, 'submission' by the church to Christian leadership always goes hand-in-hand with 'service' by those who lead. This is brought out by Paul in 1 Cor 16.5-16: "the household of Stephanas have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work and labours at it." Here authority is linked directly to love expressed in Christian service.[51] Confidence and trust in leaders develop in proportion to the extent to which leaders are perceived to love and care for their people. Ultimately people obey their leaders not because of what they say but because of who they are.

Leadership is always shared

The apostolic churches always had more than one leader.

We see this in the Acts of the Apostles.
- Initially the Twelve were responsible for leading the church forward. In the early days the Apostle Peter assumed the key leadership role: however, after the persecution of the church in Jerusalem by Agrippa I (Acts 12.1-3) and the resulting death of James, son of Zebedee, Peter seems to have left Jerusalem, and in due course James, the brother of Jesus, took over responsibility for the leadership of the church. So at the Council

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[49] See also Kenneth E. Bailey, who commenting on Peter's use of the term *katakuriein* wrote: "The good shepherd does not direct his sheep with a stick and a bag full of stones gathered to arm his sling and drive them in their desired direction. Rather he leads them from the front with a gentle call, inviting the sheep to follow him" (*The Good Shepherd*, SPCK, London 2015, 256).

[50] William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* (Word, Dallas, Texas 1991) 554: "It is rather the obedience that is won through persuasive conversation."

[51] Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament patterns for pastoral leadership* (IVP, Nottingham 2008) 125 draws attention to "the amazing transformation that has taken place in the role Stephanas plays as patron. Patrons were usually served by clients: it was the responsibility of others to serve them." But here Stephanas and his household are commended for their service.

of Jerusalem it was James who after allowing everybody to have their say, drew things to a conclusion by saying, "I have reached the decision" (Acts 15.19). Here, James was clearly exercising his authority as the leader of the church: in the light of all that had been said he 'judged' (*krino*) that non-Jews did not need to become Jews in order to be saved. However, his leadership was exercised within the context of a leadership 'team' composed of 'apostles and elders', and was supported by the church as a whole.

- Acts 13.1 implies that the leadership of the church at Antioch was in the hands of a group of five 'prophets and teachers'. What is striking is the ethnic and social diversity of the church at Antioch: Barnabas was from Cyprus; Simon called Niger was almost certainly an African, for Niger is a Latinism meaning 'black'; Lucius of Cyrene came from North Africa; Manaen was a man of some considerable social standing for he was "a member of the court of Herod";[52] and Paul, of course, came from Tarsus.
- In Acts 14.23 we read that in Asia Minor Paul and Barnabas "appointed elders… in each church".[53] There is much debate as to the origin of the 'office' of elder, if it was an office at all. There is a growing consensus that "elders were simply older men in the congregation who were respected and recognised for their experience and wisdom."[54]
- In Acts 15.3, 23, as we have already seen, by the time of the council of Jerusalem the leadership of the Jerusalem church was made up of 'apostles and elders'.
- In Acts 20,17, 28 the church in Ephesus was led by a group of 'elders' (20.17) who are later described as 'overseers' or 'bishops' (20.28). Again, there has been a good deal of discussion relating to the difference between the terms 'elder' (*presbuteros*) and 'overseer' (*episkopos*). David Peterson suggested that "perhaps 'elders' described Christian leaders from a sociological point of view, and 'overseers' described the same people from a functional point of view."[55] On the other hand, Andrew Clarke argued that the two terms were not synonymous: "Whereas not all elders are required to teach, preach or manage a house-church, those duties are essential for the position of an overseer."[56] For us the important point to note is that there was a team who shared the responsibility of pastoral leadership in the church.

We see this also in Paul's writings:
- According to Phil 1.1 the church at Philippi had what the NRSV calls "bishops (*episkopoi* – literally,' overseers') and deacons (*diakonoi* – literally 'servants'); the GNB speaks of "church leaders and helpers." There has been a good deal of scholarly debate as to whether Paul was speaking of two groups of leaders – or just of one. The phrase itself is 'anarthrous', i.e. without a definite article: literally Paul greets the church "with 'overseers and deacons'. It has been suggested that the second word is 'epexegetical' of the first, i.e. the 'overseers' are defined as 'servants', and that the phrase should therefore be translated as 'the overseers who serve'.[57] One thing, however, is certain: there was a plurality of leadership of Philippi.
- In Thessalonica there was more than one leader, for Paul urges the church "to respect those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you" (1 Thess 5.12). The underlying Greek has one definite article linking three participles, which in turn makes clear that Paul is referring to one group of

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[52] The underlying Greek word (*suntropos*) literally means that he had the same wet nurse as Herod Antipas, but it was a common word to refer to an intimate friend, and in this case a friend in Herod's court: see Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Paternoster, Carlisle 1998) 392, 393.

[53] The historicity of this account has been disputed. James Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (SCM, London 1975) 182, for instance, wrote: "Luke suggests that Paul followed the Jerusalem pattern by appointing elders in his churches (14.23; 20.17); but we have absolutely no confirmation of this from Paul himself." It is true that, with the exception of the Pastorals, Paul never used the word 'elder' for a church leader. However, as F.F. Bruce, *Acts* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2nd edition 1988) 280 rightly argued: "The language may be Luke's but it is plain from Paul's letters that he made provision for spiritual guidance in the churches which he founded and encouraged the members to recognise and respect their leaders" (see 1 Cor 16.15-18; Gal 6.6; Phil 1.1; 2.29; 1 Thess 5.12-13). C.K. Barrett, *Church, Ministry and Sacraments in the New Testament* (Paternoster, Exeter 1985) 52 somewhat quaintly made the same point: "It would not… be wide of the mark to say that what Luke means in his use of the word is that when Paul took leave of the churches… he said to his earlier and best trusted converts (see 1 Cor 16.15), 'Please keep an eye on things for me till I return', and that such people were, in Luke's day and in the churches known to him, described as presbyters (elders)." Whatever the name, therefore, Paul certainly appointed leaders.

[54] So Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book* 94. See also the long discussion by Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The importance of household structures in Early Christianity* (English Translation: Hendrickson, Peabody, Massachusetts 2004) 102-105 who concludes that the term 'elder' (*presbuteros*) was "at least in the beginning, an honorific title that had a fairly flexible range of connotations. It is also within the realm of possibility that, analogously to the synagogue, some of the Christian elders in the Jerusalem church grew out of a collection of householders or house church leaders."

[55] David Peterson, *The Acts of Apostles* 563.

[56] See David Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership* 58.

[57] So, for instance, Ralph P. Martin & Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (Word Commentary; Thomas Nelson New York, revised 2004) 12. A parallel may be drawn with Eph 4.11, where in the phrase 'pastors and teachers' there is a definite article attached to 'pastors', but the following word 'teachers' is anarthrous (i.e. without article) with the result that the phrase is often translated as "pastors who teach".

people. As we have already noted in our discussion of Rom 12.8, the word 'have charge of you' (*proistamenos*) has been translated in various ways: the REB speaks of "your leaders"; the GNB speaks of those who "guide you"; the NIV of "those who care for you". In some contexts this verb can be used of people who 'govern and lead'; and in other contexts of people who 'care for and protect'. It is probably impossible to make a true distinction between the two roles: "Those who exercised leadership within towns and villages, as well as the empire itself, were those who served the population as benefactors… Those who governed the church were at the same time the ones who sought her benefit."[58] In other words, we have here a reference to shared leadership. Do note, however, that here leadership cannot be equated with status and position; rather leadership at Thessalonica involved 'hard labour'[59] and was an expression of sacrificial service.

We find shared leadership too in the non-Pauline letters.
- Three times in Hebrews 13 we read of "leaders" (13.7; 13.17; and 13.24). The recipients of this letter are told to "obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will have to give account" (13.17). The Greek term found in all three verses is *hegoumenoi*, a term which although used of leaders among the disciples of Jesus (Luke 22.46; Acts 14.12), within a broader Greco-Roman context was also used to describe state officials, along with political and military leaders.[60] Derek Tidball commented: "Hebrews has no embarrassment about taking up a secular word and using it of those who lead the church."[61] Whatever, the point we need to make is that no one individual is highlighted as leader.
- In 1 Pet 5.1, 2 "the elders among you" are exhorted to "tend the flock that is in your charge". Here the issue is the style of leadership, rather than that leadership is shared.

Shared leadership does not mean that there is no team leader. A leader of the leaders is called for and will almost always emerge. The leaders in the church at Jerusalem, for instance, were first led by Peter, and then by James. Although there are some churches where 'co-ministry' is exercised and where no one minister is the overall leader, the dynamics involved can be challenging, not just for the ministers involved, but also for the church. Furthermore, for 'co-ministry' to function well, so much more time has to be given to planning and decision-making.[62]

Leadership is always accountable

In the first instance, leaders are accountable to God: the day will come when they will have to give an account of their 'care of souls' (Hebs 13.17). When some members of the church at Corinth began to criticise his ministry, Paul wrote: "You should think of us as Christ's servants… I am not at all concerned about being judged by you… The Lord is the one who passes judgement on me" (1 Cor 4.1a, 3a, 4b; see also Gal 1.10).

Leaders are also accountable to the church. Just as Paul and Barnabas gave an account of their missionary activities to the church at Antioch which had set them apart for this particular work (Acts 13.1-3; 14.27), so today's Christian leaders should be prepared to give an account of their ministry to the people of God. Although in some church structures this accountability may involve trans-local figures such as bishops and moderators, I believe that ministers should be accountable to their local church. In Baptist churches ministers are ultimately accountable to their 'church meetings', but such accountability often has little 'bite'. For accountability to have meaning, ministers need to have to give account of their ministry to a 'board' or eldership or diaconate, who can ensure that their leadership is in line with the agreed mission of the church.

These concepts of authority, responsibility and leadership must be held together. Paul Borden put it this way: "Any individual who is given responsibility must be given adequate authority to accomplish the task. That individual must then be held accountable to ascertain that the responsibility has been fulfilled."[63] Rightly understood, such accountability should not be viewed as a restriction of ministry, but as an encouragement to ministry.

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[58] Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (IVP, Leicester 2002) 148. So also Roger Gehring, *House Church and Mission* 197-200.
[59] According to Gene Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* 148 "difficult or exhausting labour".
[60] Peter T O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Apollos, Nottingham 2010) 515.
[61] Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book* 171.
[62] See Jeannie Kendall, 'Co-ministry: a reflection', *Baptist Ministers' Journal* 321 (January 2014) 7-11: "We meet weekly for a whole afternoon (up to six hours) for planning, discussion and prayer".
[63] Paul Borden, *Hit the Bullseye: How Denominations Can Aim the Congregation at the Mission Field* (Abingdon Press, Nashville 2003) 127.

Leadership always necessitates character

In 1 Tim 3.1-13 the Apostle Paul lists the qualities for those aspiring to leadership in Ephesus: first there is a list of qualifications for bishops (3.1-7), and then for deacons (3.8-13). As has often been observed, the emphasis is on 'graces' rather than 'gifts' – on 'character' rather than 'charisma'.

Significantly, none of the items in the lists is distinctively Christian – nothing is said, for instance, about love, faith, purity and endurance, instead the list reflects the highest ideals of Hellenistic moral philosophy.[64] Gordon Fee commented that "this suggests that the false teachers were, by their behaviours bringing the gospel into disrepute. Therefore Paul is concerned not only that the elders have Christian virtues (these are assumed) but that they reflect the highest ideals of the culture as well."[65] So Paul declared: "Now a bishop must be above reproach" (1 Tim 3.1) – or as the GNB renders it: "a church leader must be without fault." As Witherington notes, Paul here is referring to "observable conduct".[66] No leader can be perfect. Paul's concern, however, was that there should not be a massive gap between what leaders profess and the lives they lead. In our terms, leaders should be men and women of integrity.

Under this general umbrella concern for 'blamelessness', Paul then listed a further eleven virtues which should characterise any leader: viz.
- Faithful to his marriage vows: literally "married only once"
- Self-controlled: I.e. "Temperate, sensible, respectable"
- Hospitable: the Greek word (*philoxenos*) literally means 'friendly to strangers'
- "An apt teacher": significantly the Greek word (*didaktikon*) implies a willingness to learn as well as an ability to teach (see 2 Tim 2.4)
- "Not a drunkard", although not necessarily a 'total abstainer' (see 1 Tim 5.23)
- "Not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome"
- "Not a lover of money", i.e. not greedy like many of the so-called 'philosophers' of the day (see also 1 Pet 5.2)
- "He must manage his sown household well": we need to remember that in the ancient world a father's authority was so absolute that he could even kill his child for disobedience!
- "Not a recent convert": people who move up the leadership 'ladder' too quickly run the risk of "conceit"
- "Well-thought of by outsiders": church leaders need to exercise a positive 'witness' (*marturia*); "to be highly respected, a real credit to this Jesus faith" (Eugene Peterson, *The Message*)

Somewhat frustratingly from our perspective, little is said about the duties of a bishop as over against those of a deacon. Paul appears to be more concerned to write of what these leaders should *be*, rather than to *do*. It has often been noted that a bishop should be "an apt teacher" (1 Tim 3.8) – this in turn tell us something of their role. Less attention, however, has been devoted to the fact that both the bishop and the deacon should be able to "manage" their own households well (3.4; 3.12), for, says Paul, "If someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?" (3.5). This implies not just people skills – but also leadership skills; or as Andrew Clarke puts it, this implies "being able to lead and care for at least a small community."[67] This is significant, for the first churches were small 'family-sized' communities, whose members Paul described as "members of the household" (*oikeios*) of faith (Gal 6.10) or of God (Eph 2.19); interestingly the GNB translates this phrase "members of the family".

Character, together with competence, is key to Christian leadership. Rick Warren wrote: "You really need both character and skills to be a good leader. If you have character without competence what you have is sincere ineffectiveness. But far worse is when you have competence without character. If you have competence without character you become a menace – a menace to a church, a menace to a small group, and a menace to society."[68]

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[64] The list of qualities is not too dissimilar to what Onoasander (*De Imperatoris Officio* 12) said are the requisites of a good general: "We must choose a general… because he is temperate, self-restrained, vigilant, frugal, hardened to labour, free from avarice, neither too young nor too old, indeed a father of children if possible, a ready speaker, a man with a good reputation."
[65] Gordon Fee*, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Hendrickson, Peabody, Massachusetts 1984) 87, 88.
[66] Ben Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians I: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Titus, 1-2 Timothy and 1-3 John* (Apollos, Nottingham 2006) 236.
[67] Andrew Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh 2008) 32.
[68] Rick Warren www.pastors.com/charisma-vs-character June 2014.

Leadership varies from church to church

There was no set pattern of leadership in the New Testament churches.
- At Philippi there were both 'bishops' and 'deacons' (see Phil 1.1).
- At Ephesus, where Timothy exercised a key pastoral role, there were bishops (sometimes called 'elders') (1 Tim 3.1, 2) and 'deacons' (1 Tim 3.8, 12, 13).
- At Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas appointed 'elders' in each church (Acts 14.23), but nothing is said about deacons.
- Paul commended to the church at Rome 'our sister Phoebe', who is described as 'a deacon of the church at Cenchreae' (Rom 16.1).

Today many churches have appointed elders as well as elected deacons on the ground that this is the pattern for church life laid down in Scripture. But although this was the pattern operating in the churches of Ephesus for which Timothy was responsible (see 1 Tim 3.1-13), as we have seen, it was by no means the universal pattern. To complicate matters, we have no sure knowledge of the precise role which deacons played over against elders at Ephesus. When he wrote to Timothy, Paul was more interested in the qualities necessary for deacons as distinct from their duties. However, a Baptist tradition has developed whereby elders are seen to have a leadership role in the spiritual and pastoral affairs of the church, while the deacons are seen as responsible for the more practical tasks. But, as Andrew Clarke has pointed out, there is no ground for this in Scripture: "The popular association with the temporary difficulties associated with the Jerusalem church in Acts 6.1-6 is an unhelpful background that has led many to hold that the duties of deacons were practical or administrative. There is nothing in the Pauline corpus to suggest this; on the contrary, being an accomplished head of a household, an ability also required of the overseer, suggests people skills."[69]

This Baptist tradition has some very real drawbacks.

1. It is not always easy to distinguish between the spiritual and the practical: the handling of money, for instance, normally seen as a 'practical' task, actually calls for a high degree of spirituality. Many a pastor has reason to thank God for a godly church treasurer, endued with the spiritual gift of wisdom.
2. This distinction between the spiritual and the practical almost always leads to connotations of 'first' and 'second'-class leaders, for the former are inevitably viewed as more spiritual than the latter.
3. There is a tendency for elders to be in the same mould as their pastor – indeed, often the elders are chosen by the pastor. The result is that elders often fail to complement their pastor.

The trend to create elders is a throw-back to a past culture and smacks of irrelevancy today. At the very least the term 'elders' is positively quaint when applied today to middle-aged men (and they do tend to be men). In Paul's day there was no such thing as middle-age: in Roman society a man was called a young man (literally a 'juvenile', *iuvenis*) when he was under forty, and an 'old man' (*senex* – the word from which we get 'senile') when he was forty or over.

Leadership was exercised primarily within small communities

Before we begin to seek to apply New Testament principles of leadership to church life today, we need to appreciate that our context today is very different. The word 'church' conjures up today a very different image from what it did in the first century. As Andrew Clarke points out: " The dominant contemporary model for a local church is one whose principal meeting is as a unified congregation in a single location, and accordingly has a core leadership structure that is congregational. Where the Pauline communities were predominantly based in homes, rather than a centralised meeting place, their leadership and authority structures must be identified and assessed in regard to a multiplicity of smaller units… Early Christian gatherings were normally small, and distributed over a number of domestic settings within a town, as opposed to large, and normally meeting together."[70]

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[69] Andrew Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership* 76.
[70] Andrew Clarke, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership* 44-45.

A sermon: The five marks of leadership

Tom Wright told of how he was chatting with a friend who had recently become a bishop.[71] He was and is a wonderful man, said Wright, scholarly, wise, outgoing, full of ideas and devotion and love and goodness. You might have thought any church would be glad to have him as a leader. 'How are you finding it, then?' Wright asked. 'Trying to be a leader in this church', he replied, 'is like trying to take a cat for a walk'. The bishop was finding it an impossible task: the people in his diocese weren't like dogs, happy to be taken for a walk, but like cats with a mind of their own, who tended to respond badly to any attempt to lead them in any particular direction.[72]

Yet a church without leadership is a church which is going nowhere. If our church is to grow and develop, then we need leaders. By leaders, I don't mean ministers, but deacons too. For deacons together with the ministers are called to exercise leadership in the church. Hence we refer to the meetings of the ministers and deacons as being meetings of the leadership team.

Today we begin the process of nominating new deacons. The question arises: for what kind of men and women should we be looking to serve as deacons? I want to answer that question by focusing on two verses in Hebrews 13, which give some clues.

1. Leaders have a servant heart

Three times in Hebrews 13 the author speaks of leaders: in v7 ("remember your former leaders"); then in v17 ("obey your leaders"); and at the end of the chapter in v24 ("give our greetings to all your leaders"). Although there is no specific reference to a 'servant heart', I find it significant that the underlying Greek word (*hegoumenos*) is the same word used by Jesus when "an argument broke out among the disciples as to which one of them should be thought of as the greatest." Jesus said to them: 'The kings of the pagans have power over their people, and the rulers claim the title 'Friends of the People'. But this is not the way it is with you; rather, the greatest one among you must be like the youngest, and the leader must be like the servant" (Luke 22.24-28). For Jesus, leadership was about service – about having a servant heart.

Christian leadership is not about the pursuit of power. It has nothing to do with the dictatorial power exercised by Hitler, who styled himself *der Fuhrer*, the leader; nor has it anything to do with the autocratic power exercised by Benito Mussolini, who styled himself as *il duce*, the leader. Christian leadership has everything to do with Jesus, who said: "The leader must be like the servant." In the previous chapter the writer wrote: "Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus" (12.2). Christian leaders are men and women who look to Jesus, and to his model of leadership.

The very terms we use for leaders in our church are significant: we have ministers and deacons. 'Minister' comes from a Latin word, which means servant; and 'deacon' comes from a Greek word which means servant too. These terms are a reminder that leaders must have a servant heart. This doesn't mean that leaders don't lead. If God has called a person to leadership, then they are doing their Lord a disservice if they don't lead. But it is not enough to simply lead. Our leadership must be patterned on the leadership of Jesus, who "gave up all that he had" (Phil 2.7) to come and serve. Leaders can never impose their leadership on others. True, in Hebs 13.17 the author writes: "Obey your leaders", but this does not denote unthinking obedience – the underlying Greek makes it clear that the author is referring to an obedience brought about by persuasive argument.

2. Leaders are rooted in God's Word

"Remember your former leaders, who spoke God's message to you" (Hebs 13.7) – literally, who spoke God's 'word' to you. The temptation is to link these words solely with the 'professional' minister. Clearly they do apply to ministers who are called to speak God's word every Sunday, but they are capable of a more general interpretation. For along with God's word being preached from a pulpit, God's word can also be spoken within a small group as also within a one-to-one conversation. So Paul wrote to the Colossians: "Christ's message (lit. word) in all its richness must live in your hearts. Teach and instruct each other with all wisdom" (Col 3.16). Not all church leaders have to be preachers; but they do all have to be people whose lives are rooted in God's Word, so that in turn they can relate God's word to

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[71] This sermon was preached at Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford on April 3, 2005. Scriptures quoted are from the GNB.
[72] N.T. Wright, *Hebrews for To*day (SPCK, London 2003) 176.

others, whether it be in a fellowship group or in individual pastoral conversations. It is this rootedness in God's word which enables them to give a spiritual lead. Without that rootedness in God's word, then all they may have to offer to the church are management skills, but no more. When it comes to looking for new deacons, we need to be looking for men and women who are at home in God's word, and are able to apply God's word in a sensitive and helpful fashion to others.

3. Leaders are marked by integrity

The writer, referring to their former leaders, says: "Think back on how they lived and died" (Hebs 13.7). These first generation leaders not only spoke God's Word, they also lived out God's Word in their lives. I.e. their lives matched their message. They were people of integrity.

Leaders are not called to be perfect, otherwise none of us could lead. But they are called to demonstrate a degree of consistency in the way in which they live their lives. They are called to be people of integrity. It is because our lives are so important that Paul in his lists of qualifications for church leaders in 1 Tim 3 says very little about gifting, but far more about character. Paul says of deacons that they must "have a good character and be sincere" (1 Tim 3.8). If deacons are half-hearted in their commitment; if their attitude is critical toward others; if their love for Jesus is lukewarm; if their homes are not open to strangers; if their attendance at services is spasmodic; then people will take note, they will imitate, and the church will be the weaker. When it comes to new deacons, we need to look for character as well as charisma.

4. Leaders are men and women of bold faith

Still with their past leaders in minds, the author says: "Imitate their faith" (Hebs 13.7). What in particular is there to imitate? For Christians are by definition people of faith, people who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus. Hebrews doesn't have saving faith in mind. Rather, when he speaks of imitating their faith, the author is thinking of the faith that leads to action. He is speaking of the kind of faith, of which he tells in Hebrews 11, the chapter of faith *par excellence*, where the heroes are people who did not just believe in God, but put their faith into action. So in Hebs 11.32-38 we read: "There isn't enough time for me to speak of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. Through faith they fought whole countries and won… They shut the mouths of lions, put out fierce fires, escaped being killed by the sword. They were weak, but became strong; they were mighty in battle and defeated the armies of foreigners…" Their faith in God led them to do great things for God.

So too, the first-generation leaders of the Christian church had done great things; they in their turn had defied the powers of their day, whatever the personal cost. What was true of them, should be true of Christian leaders today. They too should be leaders of bold faith, who put their faith into action. David Prior commented on this passage: "Leaders are meant by God to blaze a trail in living and operating from faith. Faith necessarily includes risks and launching out into the deep. It means sailing in uncharted seas and quietly moving ahead into the unknown – because God says so. There is wise caution in leadership, but there is also bold faith." Leaders should have something in common with the SAS whose motto is 'Who dares, wins,. When it comes to new deacons, we need to be looking for men and women who are prepared to give a bold lead to the church, precisely because they are men and women of bold faith themselves.

5. Leaders care for others

Finally, we need to be looking for men and women who are concerned for individuals, and not just be interested in the big picture. The writer to the Hebrews encourages his readers to support their present leaders, for "they watch over your souls without resting, since they must give God an account of their service" (13.17).

"Am I supposed to take care of my brother" asked Cain (Gen 4.9). Yes, was the answer; and yes too is the answer as far as leaders are concerned. I find it significant that one of the words the New Testament uses for a leader, the word "elder", was used synonymously with the word "bishop" which literally means a 'watcher over' or 'the one who exercises oversight'. Leaders have a responsibility to care for those in their charge. Or in the words of Hebs 13.17, they are to "watch over their souls".

What does it mean to "watch over people's souls"? What does it mean to "exercise oversight"? Hebs 12.15 gives the clue: exercising oversight (*epiksopountes*) is defined as "seeing to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God" (NRSV). Pastoral care is not just about visiting the sick and the hurting. It is also ensuring that individual Christians keep growing, and that they are not derailed in their Christian life by pressures of one kind or another. When it comes to nominating people to stand for the diaconate, they need to be people who are "tireless in their concern for" (REB) others.

Here then are five marks of Christian leadership: leaders with a servant heart, who are rooted in God's Word, whose lives are marked by integrity and faith, and who care for the spiritual welfare of others. Such a shopping list of qualities is enough to make any potential deacon rule out all thought of accepting nomination! The role seems too daunting. With that in mind, let me end my sermon by pointing to the prayer found at the end of the letter: "God has raised from the death our Lord Jesus… May the God of peace provide you with everything good you need in order to do his will" (Hebs 13.21). None of us is perfect, but where there is a willingness to serve, then God can take us and transform us. There is no limit to what the God who raised Jesus from the dead can do with each one of us.

3. Three models of leadership

Proclaim, lead, care

This first model of leadership, was developed by Ernest Mosley[73] and popularised by Robert Dale.[74] It revolves around the three tasks of proclaiming, leading and caring:
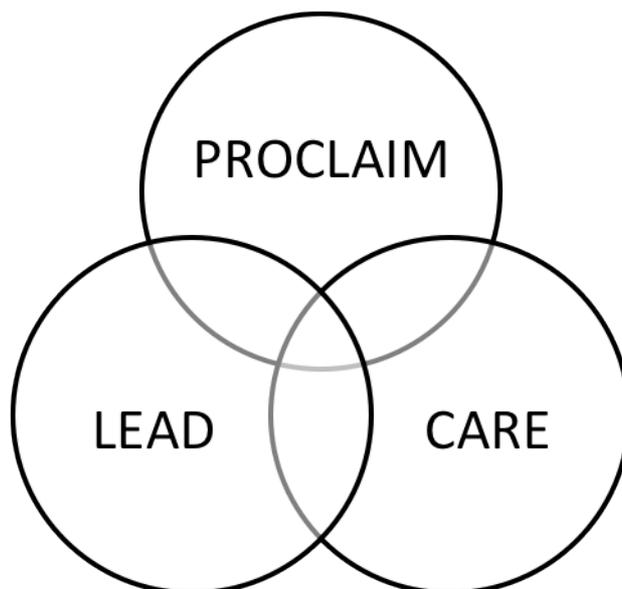
> "Christian ministry calls on us to (1) proclaim the gospel to believers and unbelievers by means of preaching and worship as well as evangelism and nurture, (2) care for the church's members and other persons in the community through pastoral counselling and visitation as well as through family ministries and grief support, and (3) lead the church in the achievement of its mission."

Undoubtedly Christian ministry involves all these three activities. However, in the way in which this model is presented, leadership seems to assume a secondary role to preaching and caring. In the way in which the three circles are drawn 'proclaim' is set above 'lead' and 'care', whereas in our estimation 'lead' should be set above 'proclaim' and 'care'.

A similar point was made by John Finney in a perceptive article on 'Patterns of Ministry', where he explored the same three aspects of ministry under three separate categories: pastor, evangelist, and leader.[75] He gave for each category a description. As far as the pastor and evangelist are concerned, they are a mirror image of one another.

> *The pastor*: centre of interest inside church; adaptor of other's ideas; interested in ongoing relationships; routine is a necessary framework for life; probably introvert; abhors conflict; steady, reliable; limited ambition; happy to live within structures; works well in a team.

> *The evangelist*: centre of interest outside church, creative innovator; interested in the stranger; routine is irksome; probably extrovert; not frightened of conflict; mercurial, unpredictable; ambitious for Christ; impatient of structures; individualistic.

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[73] Ernest E. Mosley, *Called To Joy: Design For Pastoral Ministries* (Convention Press, Nashville 1973) 12-28.
[74] Dale, *Pastoral Leadership* 17-23.
[75] John Finney, 'Patterns of Ministry' 88-90 in *Treasure in the Field* edited by David Gillett & Michael Scott-Joynt (Fount, London 1993).

The leader: analytical and strategic thinker who can convey vision; administrator; team builder who gets the best out of others; deep personal spirituality; able to face conflict and enable change; warm personality with a heart for mission.

Of these three, Finney rightly maintained that what a modern congregation most needs is leaders.

> "A pastor will give them a sense of well-being and of being cared for. A pastor's church is like a warm bath, but it can be enervating for the personal growth of the members of the congregation. It feels as though it is not going anywhere and those who see the church as serving the community feel frustrated... An evangelist's church will be so orientated towards the outside that those inside feel unloved. The fish are being brought in but then left to flap on the deck until they expire.
>
> On the other hand, a church run by a leader will have a sense of vision and cohesion. It will be truly 'collaborative' for the gifts of everyone will be being honoured and developed. It will balance the need to move outwards in mission with the need to care for the personal needs of the congregation."[76]

Vision, passion, character and gifting

This second model of leadership has been developed by Terry Calkin, the founder-pastor of Green Lane Christian Centre, Auckland – one of New Zealand's 'mega' churches. Calkin's background is in management and business, and this is reflected in his rigorous approach to leadership.

Although Calkin has gone all over the world teaching leadership seminars, he has never set out his approach within a conventionally published book. Instead he had just produced an 'in house' manual on leadership, *Becoming a Leader in Life*. As a result, with his blessing, I wrote up and developed some of his insights in *The Passionate Leader: The Four Foundations of Leadership for Growing Churches*, and it is from this booklet that I shall quote.[77]

Calkin's passion is to see churches grow – and for that to happen, leadership is vital: "Without leadership churches lose direction and ultimately die." Pastors therefore need to be leaders? But what is the essence of leadership? For him the four basic principles of leadership are vision, passion, character and gifting. Or to use the metaphor he has developed over the years, there are four 'foundations' or 'corner-stones' of 'the house of leadership'. Each is vital: to keep the subsequent building stable, they must all play an equal role in the life of the leader.

VISION	PASSION	CHARACTER	GIFTING

The way in which Calkin relates these four principles or foundations of leadership seems to me to be quite distinctive, and most helpful.

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[76] Finney, 'Patterns of Ministry' 90, 91.
[77] Terry Calkin with Paul Beasley-Murray, *The Passionate Leader: The Four Foundations of Leadership for Growing Churches* (Auckland 2015) – available from Green Lane Christian Centre, 17 Marewa Road, Greenlane 1051, Auckland.

1. Vision

If pastors are to inspire, they need to be leaders with vision. In spite of the many demands made upon them, they need to make time to gain a clear sense of God's direction for their church. Prayerful thinking and planning are vital if churches are to grow.

For Calkin the mission of the church is 'to make churched people fully devoted followers of Christ'. His vision as pastor of Greenlane was to fulfil that mission by dividing the church into cells and releasing people into their ministries. Vision, however, is not enough. A more detailed strategy is called for to implement the vision, and then goals need to be set.

There is nothing novel about these statements. What is novel is the rigorous way in which Calkin applies this principle. Indeed, much of his manual was devoted to the practical outworking of vision.

2. Passion

Leadership demands passion.[78] As a leader, says Calkin, your implementation of your vision will attract other people to follow you in your vision. If you have no passion for your God-given vision, your enterprise will falter an eventually fail. Passion is the ability to communicate that common objective (or vision) to others, to motivate them to achieve that objective.

This link between vision and passion is of utmost importance for Calkin. Vision needs passion – passion needs vision. Vision gives direction to passion – passion motivates vision. The two are inseparably intertwined in a successful leader. With tongue no doubt somewhat in cheek, Calkin states that vision without passion is a day-dream, while passion without vision is a nightmare. Or as he put it in one of his sermons:

> "Vision comes from God. Passion comes from you. When passion and vision mix you have fulfilment. If you have vision without passion you have a daydreamer. If you have passion without vision you have a wheel spinner. All action and nowhere to go. Passion is a strong desire, a drive to see vision come to fulfilment."

Passion is deeper than enthusiasm – it is an emotion rooted deep in the soul. This deeper aspect of passion comes to clear expression in Terry's exposition of the three meanings of the English word 'passion':

1. "'Deep excitement'. This is the contagion of leadership. This is what makes other people want to follow the leader. This is what makes the leader 'charismatic'. People crave a sense of excitement in their own lives, and when they recognise is in the leader's life, they intuitively want to follow it.
2. 'Deep desire'. This is the element of passion that keeps the leader committed to his objective, even when the 'going gets tough'. Commitment to the task ahead comes directly from the deep desire within the heart of the leader to achieve the common objective. Vision is always tested. It goes with the territory of leadership. If objectives were easy to attain, then leadership would not be required. The deeper the vision is held in the leader's heart, the deeper the commitment will be in the heart of the leader to see it achieved. The task of leadership is to take people through tough times.
3. 'Deep suffering'. We talk about the Passion of Christ, i.e. Christ's suffering upon the cross. Leadership is often a lonely existence. Anyone aspiring to leadership should recognise this. One of the most successful ways of reducing the impact of suffering upon leadership is to build a team around the leader, thus enabling the burdens of leadership to be shared."

Passion is ultimately 'cruciform' in shape. Passion is what we see in the Garden of Gethsemane; passion is what we see on the Cross of Calvary.

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[78] See 1 Peter 5.2 where Peter says to a group of leaders, "Tend the flock of God… not for sordid gain, but eagerly." The underlying Greek word (*prothumos*) is a strong word which other English translations variously render as "out of sheer devotion" (REB) or "from a real desire to serve". Wayne Grudem comments that it denotes "a positive emotional desire" (*1 Peter* 188), while J.N.D. Kelly notes that "it expresses enthusiasm and devoted zeal" (*The Epistles of Peter and of Jude* 202): i.e. it speaks of the necessity of passion. So Kenneth Bailey writes: "The shepherds should lead their flocks eagerly (*prothumos*) and passionately. Peter was passionate about many things. He wanted the shepherds of God's new flock to engage in leading his sheep with the same enthusiasm. Passion for the gospel was of utmost importance" (*The Good Shepherd* 264).

This link between passion and vision is not unique to Calkin. Steve Moore, the President of the American 'Mission Nexus' has written: "If vision is 'what you see' as a leader, passion makes what you see important… Most leaders intuitively understand that effective communication calls for both passion and vision. So if passion is limited, a common temptation is to substitute intensity. Followers know the difference. Intensity communicates, 'I really want *you* to believe this'. Passion communities, '*I* really believe this'. Intensity is marked mostly by *emotion*; passion is marked mostly by *conviction*. Intensity is often packaged with *hype*; passion comes with *authenticity*. Intensity comes across as *superficial*; passion comes across as *natural*. Intensity is community by talking *loudly*; passion is communicated by talking *plainly*. There's a place for intensity in leadership, but that is no substitute for passion."[79] All this is undoubtedly true. However, passion for Calkin is more than conviction – passion for him is rooted deep in the soul.

3. Character

Character for Calkin is "the integrity" with which leadership is exercised. Hitler was initially a very successful leader. He had a defined vision which was implemented with passion, but it had a distinct lack of integrity, Calkin says. This led to his ultimate downfall (and to the most horrific atrocity of the modern era). It leads, too, to the downfall of Christian leaders.

Character reflects the inner life of the leader. It shapes the way a person acts or reacts. It is the filter through which a person's thoughts values and motivation come to be expressed to the outside world. In essence, character is a leader working in obedience to God's Word. The development of character involves the exercise of discipline in a leader's life so that Christ's character is demonstrated to his followers.

Character is about inner integrity: it is what a person truly is, as distinct from what he or she may appear to be. Calkin distinguishes between 'personality' and 'reputation' on the one hand, and 'character' on the other. Personality is what we are born with – character is the result of choice. Reputation is what people think of us, character is what we are when no one is looking. In this respect Proverbs 4.23 has some good advice: "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life", or in the words of the GNB: "Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts."

For Calkin integrity in leadership is best defined as selflessness. By contrast selfishness is the prevailing human condition. Indeed, sin can be defined as selfishness. Sin is putting self before God. Sin is egocentricity of the first order. Not surprisingly, selflessness is the major issue that all Christian leaders have to struggle with as it just does not come naturally. In this context integrity is the ability to lead without personal prejudice or bias or self-interest. This is probably the key challenge of Christian leadership.

Jesus is the greatest example of a selfless leader; Jesus who in the Upper Room said: "Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down his life for his friend" (John 15.12 NKJV). Calkin comments: "This He did himself and by doing so exemplified integrity in his leadership and mission and life."

At a time when there is so much leadership failure in the church, I find this a welcome emphasis.

*4. Giftin*g

Leaders need to be gifted. Sadly there are many who claim leadership, but it is evident by their lack of leadership ability that it is the power or status of leadership which attracts them rather than the call or gifting of leadership. Calkin believes that leadership is both a gifting we receive at birth and is an acquired skill. But what is vital is that this ability is combined with vision, passion and character.

The beauty of this model is its simplicity. Furthermore, these four foundations of leadership are universal, in the sense that they can be applied within any cultural context. Perhaps not surprisingly Calkin has found a ready audience for his foundations of leadership in a wide variety of churches in Africa and Asia.

I particularly appreciate his emphasis on passion. True, others have emphasised the necessity of passion. Dan Black, for instance, has written that there are five benefits of leadership passion:

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[79] Steve Moore, 'Passion and Leadership' growingleaders.com 12 July 2014.

1. Passion produces energy. A leader who has passion is driven forward from the energy it produces. Donald Trump said, "Without passion you don't have energy; without energy, you have nothing."
2. Passion drives vision. If a leader wants to see their vision and goals being accomplished, then the leader's passion is the fuel that drives the production and results of the vision.
3. Passion ignites others. A person's passions can ignite other people's passions and brings energy into their lives. In this respect Black could have quoted Montgomery who said that a leader "must exercise an effective influence, and the degree to which he can do this will depend on the personality of the man – the *incandescence* of which he is capable, the flame which burns within him, the magnetism which will draw the hearts of men toward him."[80]
4. Passion raises influence. John Wesley said, "When you set yourself on fire, people love to come and see you burn." This is what happens when a leader has passion. The leader starts gaining more influence with others and people want to be a part of what is going on.
5. Passion provides potential. A leader's passion brings new opportunity and opens the door to (personal) success![81]

But passion is more than enthusiasm – although enthusiasm certainly helps pastors lead their church to growth,[82] Passion for Calkin involves perseverance and suffering. Passion is cruciform in shape. To my mind this is a very important insight.

Achieve the task, build the team, develop the individual

Much as I appreciate the insights of Calkin, the model of leadership I have worked with is one developed by John Adair, an Anglican layman who in 1979 became the world's first university Professor of Leadership Studies at the University of Surrey. His model of leadership is based on three interlocking circles relating to the three functions of achieving the task, building and maintaining the team, and developing the individual.[83] This model is then linked to his definition of leadership: "The good leader evokes or draws forth leadership from the group. He works as a senior partner with other members to achieve the task, build the team, and meet individual needs.."[84]

Adair commented:

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[80] See further Bernard Montgomery, *The Art of Leadership* (Collins, London 1961; reprinted 2009).
[81] Dan Black, *Are You A Passionate Leader?* (2014 blog: www.churchleaders.com).
[82] See Peter Brierley, 'Anglican Growth' (*Future First* December 2014). Brierley cites research published in January 2014 under the title 'From Anecdote to Evidence': "Lack of enthusiasm and decline go together, because apathy demotivates… 35% of churches with ministers generating enthusiasm grew substantially while only 8% without such did the same. Similar percentages resulted from ministers with a clear vision for the future and being focussed on achieving it."
[83] John Adair, *Effective Leadership* (Pan, London 1983) 33.
[84] John Adair, *Effective Leadership* 51.

"The three circles diagram suggests that the task, group and individual needs are always interacting upon each other. The circles overlap but they do not always sit on top of each other. In other words, there is always some degree of tension between them. Many of an individual's needs – such as the need to achieve and the social need for human companionship – are met in part by participating in working groups. But he can also run the danger of being exploited in the interests of the task and dominated by the group in ways that trespass upon his personal freedom and integrity.."[85]

Adair went on to argue that each of the circles must be seen in relation to the other two. Thus, if a group fails in its task, this will intensify the disintegrative tendencies present in the group and diminish the satisfaction of individual needs. If there is a lack of unity or harmonious relationships in the group, this will affect performance on the job and also individual needs. If individuals feel frustrated and unhappy, they will not make their maximum contribution to either the common task of the life of the group.

Adair was writing of leadership in general. However, when I read his book, I immediately saw that this model of leadership could have great relevance to the local church. Translated into language associated with the church, Adair's model provides a number of helpful insights.
- In a Christian frame of reference, the task is *the mission* of the church. This mission can be interpreted in large general terms relating to the overall implementation of the Great Commission. However, within the context of a local church the mission needs to be interpreted in more specific terms, relating to the particular mission of that church at a given time. One of the roles of leadership is to define that task, and to keep the church focused on the task.
- *The team* can be interpreted in various ways: the term can be applied to the church as a whole, on the basis that all God's people are called to play their part in the ministry and mission of the church; the term can also be applied to a church's team of lay leaders, as they seek to manage the mission and ministry of the church; it also applies to a group of church staff, who have been called to work with the senior leader in implementing the vision of the church.
- As for *the individuals*, in the first place they are the individual members of the church. They have a variety of needs, and it is the task of the leader to ensure that those needs are met. What are those needs? It seems to me that they are five-fold. Individuals need:
  1. To be led in worship
  2. To be taught
  3. To receive pastoral care
  4. To experience fellowship
  5. To find avenues of service.

The model also draws out helpfully the need for balance.
- There are some churches which are so task-orientated (whether it be evangelism or social action) that the needs of the church, as also the needs of members, are neglected.
- There are other churches which are so concerned to meet the needs of the team (through, for instance an overemphasis on small groups: in church growth jargon *fellowshipitis in extremis*), that the needs of the wider world are forgotten.
- There are yet other churches which are individual-orientated: 'teaching', for instance, becomes the be-all-and-end-all of the church's life, with the result that mission and fellowship are neglected.

Leaders should always be aware of both the group and the individual, see to their needs, and yet at the same time ensure that they are harmonised in the service of the common task. Leadership in these terms is very much a balancing act. Yet on reflection, to use such language is not helpful. Balance implies maintenance: whereas if the task of the church is not to be forgotten, direction is necessary too.

4. Leadership and team

Within evangelical circles there has been a sea-change in people's approach to ministry. Today we tend to talk about 'leadership' rather than 'ministry'.[86] We also now talk about 'the ministry of all and the leadership of some' – and

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[85] John Adair, *Effective Leadership* 38.
[86] See Robert Ellis, 'The leadership of some… Baptist ministers as leaders' 71.

rightly so. There is much to be said for the recognition that 'ministers' are leaders, not least because it introduces a new dynamic to the mission of the church.

'Heroic' or 'corporate' leadership gives pastors too much power

As we shall see later, this recognition of the importance of leadership was one of the helpful insights of the church growth movement. Peter Wagner was right when he said that the first 'vital sign of a healthy growing church' is "a pastor who is a possibility thinker and whose dynamic leadership has been used to catalyse the church into action for growth".[87] However, as is often the case, sometimes when people argue for change the 'pendulum' swings too far. Wagner overstated his argument when he headed his chapter on leadership 'Pastor don't be afraid of your power!' This kind of language is reminiscent of an earlier age when people talked of the divine right of kings. As a result, pastors began to claim too much for themselves. So David McKenna claimed that the pastor is "the cerebellum, the centre for communicating messages, coordinating functions, and conducting responses between the head and the body"; he is the "authoritative communicator of the truth from the Head to the Body" and the "accurate communicator of the needs from the Body to the Head"![88] But there is no support in the New Testament for such an understanding of the role of the pastor in the body of Christ: indeed, Paul in 1 Cor 12 was arguing that in the body of Christ we all need one another.

Within North America in particular a new model of one-man leadership in the local church was developed. This model became known as the 'corporate' model, in which the pastor essentially became the church's all-powerful CEO. But not only does this model of high-powered entrepreneurial leadership not reflect the spirit of leadership in the New Testament, it has not delivered what it promised: "There is increasing evidence demonstrating that such high-profile, charismatic leadership is not sustainable in the long-term and ultimately has a debilitating effect on the entire organisation over which it has been imposed." [89]

Post-heroic and authentic leadership encourage teams

There has been a marked shift in current leadership thinking in the wider world of business: instead of the so-called 'heroic' model of leadership, there is now the 'post-heroic' model where the emphasis is on 'collective achievement' or 'shared leadership', concepts which are nearer the New Testament model of leadership:

> "Post-heroic leadership transforms the notion of leaders and followers, recognising that influence flows in two directions. This means that those in authority learn from others, listening to and being 'led' by others. Individuals without the authority and title must be able to speak up, advocate their ideas and assume responsibility outside their job descriptions."[90]

Related to the post-heroic model is what is termed 'authentic leadership', which

> "emphasises building the leader's legitimacy through honest relationships with followers which value their input and are built on an ethical foundation. Generally, authentic leaders are positive people with truthful self-concepts who promote openness. By building trust and generating enthusiastic support from their subordinates, authentic leaders are able to improve individual and team performance."[91]

These new business models have affected thinking about leadership in the church. To quote Gibbs again: "Leadership is about connecting, not controlling. It is about bringing people together for the purpose of creative synergy. Team based ministry allows them to draw strength from each other and to contribute to the common good from their God-endowed gifts and life experience."[92] Or to return to the model developed by John Adair: "The good leader evokes or draws forth leadership from the group. He works as a senior partner with other members…"

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[87] Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* 4.
[88] David L. McKenna, 'The Ministry's Gordian Knot', *Leadership* 1.1 (1980) 50-51.
[89] Eddie Gibbs, *Leadership Next: Changing leaders in a changing culture* (IVP, Leicester 2005, 23-24).
[90] Rosie Steeves, *The CEO Refresher: Post-Heroic Leadership* www.refresher.com
[91] 'Authentic leadership', Wikipedia.
[92] Eddie Gibbs, *Leadership Next* 93.

Leadership needs to be shared

The New Testament principle of shared leadership is as relevant today as ever. My ministry has been enriched as a result of working with other leaders, whether they have been deacons or members of a ministry team. I have shared my dreams and visions with my leaders, and in the subsequent discussion have been blessed by their creative thinking which often caused me to re-think and re-shape the ideas I brought to the meeting.

Time and again I found the truth of the proverb, "Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another" (Prov 27.17). As Bruce Waltke noted: "The analogy infers that the friend persists and does not shy away from constructive criticism. This persistent friend, whose wounds are faithful (v6), is the opposite of the fawning neighbour (v14) and the cantankerous wife (vv15-16), and performs an indispensable task. As a result of his having a 'hard' friend – a true one – a man develops the capacity to succeed in his tasks as an effective tool, and in the end he will thank his friend for being hard as flint."[93] This is also of relevance not least to the context of a leadership team. No pastor has a monopoly of the Holy Spirit. Even the most gifted of leaders need a leadership team round them.

As Joseph Hellerman, has written: "No individual has a corner on the truth. We all know this in theory. Yet the way we implement the senior pastor model too often results in one person's vision and teaching style determining the practical realities of day-to-day ministry in the local church. The model works marginally well, if the pastor happens to be an emotionally healthy person who opens up his life to a handful of other persons in the congregation. Unfortunately this kind of relational maturity is less and less common among young seminarians preparing for the ministry."[94] Toward the end of his hard-hitting book he writes: "The corporate approach to congregational life has led all too often to an insecure, narcissistic leader acquiring unilateral authority over the rest of the community, enabled by a church board whose metrics for ministerial success does nothing to curb the unhealthy behaviour of their gifted but relationally challenged leader. The systemic weaknesses of what we might call 'corporate ecclesiology' have converged to open the door to the abuse of power and authority by numbers of persons in vocational Christian service."[95] I would love to say that this is just a North American problem. Sadly it is a problem found in Britain too – and not just among senior pastors.

I confess that because of the way in which some senior pastors have abused their position, I sometimes felt unhappy with my title of 'senior minister'. The idea of being a 'senior servant' (for 'minister' comes from the Latin word for 'servant') to my mind runs counter to Jesus' understanding of servant-hood: "Whoever wants to be first must place himself last of all and be the servant of all" (Mark 9.35). True in the world outside the church we have a 'prime' minister and 'senior' civil servants, but somehow the concept of a 'senior' servant in the church of God grates. As a result I often said when introducing myself in church worship services: 'I am one of the ministers of the church'. And yet that was misleading: the church had called me to be its leader!

Leadership works best in community

Leadership needs to be shared in a context of genuine community. For this reason I do not like the term 'board' for a leadership team, which suggests a secular business model of leadership. The term 'team' sounds much better, for it is much more conducive to the concept of New Testament community, where 'one-anotherness' can be practised. Churches need leaders who love one another, and as a result pray for one another, encourage one another, forgive one another, speak the truth to one another, bear one another's burdens, and fulfil all the other familiar one-anothers from the Bible.[96] Inevitably this presupposes that everybody is real and open to one another – including the team leader.

In my own case there were times when I felt it right to share something of my struggles with my team. Without knowing it, I modelled a form of leadership popularised by Dan Allender in his book *Leading with a Limp*: "The more honestly I name what is true about myself, the less I need to hide and defend and posture and pretend… So a successful leader names his failures – without being a confession junkie or inviting pity from others."[97] Allender was not the first to coin the phrase. In an article entitled 'Leaders with a limp', Wimber quoted a friend who said, "I don't trust any leader who doesn't walk with a limp." The reference is to Jacob's encounter with God at Peniel (Gen 32.22-

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[93] Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2005) 384.
[94] Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry* 235.
[95] Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry* 292.
[96] See John 13.34; 1 Thess 4.18; 5.11; Eph 4.32; Eph 4.13; Gal 6.2.
[97] Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp: take full advantage of your most powerful weakness* (Waterbrook Press, Colorado Springs 2006) 152.

32), after which Jacob developed a limp.[98] Referring to this incident, Wimber went on to say: "I do believe a remarkable quality comes into the lives of leaders after they have wrestled with God and life. And the resulting limp is a reminder to themselves and a sign to others that God has humbled them."[99] However, the point I particularly wish to make in this context is the importance of pastors being real with their leaders, acknowledging that they too have faced trials of one kind or another (see Jas 1.2-4).[100]

Not only does this sense of community with a leadership team enhance decision-making; it also revolutionises the church's attitude to its leaders. In this respect we need to listen to Australians Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch:

> "We need to recognize that an authentic community can only be founded on changed relations between people; and these changed relations can only follow the inner change and preparation of the people who lead, work, and sacrifice for the community. In other words, it must begin with the leadership. We must embody our visions and our values in such a way that people can 'see' the vision in and through our existence. It will take sacrifice on the part of the leader. It must, especially if he or she is asking for sacrifice! We simply don't believe that people in the 'crap-detector' generation, savvy people who understand what it means to be constantly targeted by hundreds of thousands of clever sales messages, are going to follow other people who don't live out their messages. If leadership fails to embody the message, no one is going to follow."[101]

This sense of community in which leaders relate to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ does not just happen as a result of coming together for a monthly 'business' meeting. It is engendered by the less formal and less agenda driven meetings. Over many years I have found annual weekends away for deacons and ministers have made a fundamental difference to the way in which we have inter-acted with one another throughout the rest of the year. In a large church pastors cannot assume that their leaders, when they are appointed, know one another: often they do not. They may know one another in terms of names and roles; but they do not know one another in terms of who they really are. Once people have begun to bond with one another at a leadership weekend away, then leadership-team prayer breakfasts and other leadership team events take on another dimension: people begin to pray not only for the church, but also for one another.

In a larger church, where there is a staff team, the ministers and other members of staff also need to be given opportunities to relax together and to relate with one another. In addition to the weekly staff meeting, at the very least there need to be termly away-days where people have time not just to listen to God together, but also just to have fun together. I thank God that, with one exception,[102] over the years I enjoyed good relationships with my colleagues.[103]

Within the context of a staff team it is vital for the senior pastor not only to give away responsibility for different areas of church life, but also to trust staff members even when the senior pastor may well see things differently. There have been times when a fellow minister in the team proposed a certain course of action and I said "I am not convinced that is a good idea. But if you feel strongly that God is leading you to do this, then go ahead. We can then later review and see which one of us is right!" Leadership is not about dictating to a team, but about encouraging the team to exercise their God-given gifts of leadership. To quote Hellerman once again: "The way back to Paul's cruciform vision for authentic Christian leadership begins with a group of pastors who share life together, who genuinely love one another, and who lead their church, as a team, out of the richness of the soil of those peer relationships."[104]

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[98] John Wimber, 'Leaders with a limp', *Renewal* 160 (September 1989) 6 – reprinted from *Equipping the Saints*, Winter 1989.

[99] Wimber, 'Leaders with a limp' 6.

[100] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (John Knox Press, Atlanta, Georgia 1982) 271 commented: "This same theology of weakness in power and power in weakness turns this text toward the New Testament and the gospel of the cross. This same dialectic stands behind Jesus' encounter with his disciples (Mark 10.35-45). They want thrones, an equivalent to asking the name. Jesus counters by asking them about cups, baptisms, and crosses."

[101] Michael Frost & Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church* (Hendrickson, Peabody, Massachusetts 2003) 156.

[102] The exception was a person who should have remained a solo minister. He had already made shipwreck of his previous church, and so was grateful to find a 'haven' with us. Sadly he proved to not to be able to work in a team. For more general reflections see an anonymous article entitled 'Losing a staff member', *Ministry Today* 45 (Spring 2009) 3-10.

[103] I much appreciated an article written in our church's *Team Talk* (March, 2014) on the occasion of my retirement from stipendiary ministry by Martin Hills, a long-term ministerial colleague, which was entitled: 'Minister, Mentor and Mate'.

[104] Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Ministry* 306.

5. Leadership and vision

Vision is key to leadership

"Where there is no vision, the people perish" declares Prov 29.18, and how true that is![105] Vision is vital – not least in church life. George Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote: "I discovered a common malaise in churches that were in advance stages of ecclesiastical terminal illness – lack of vision. Unless the minister and at least some of the people have a spiritual vision which sees beyond the difficulties of the human situation, everything will seem hopeless. Vision thus becomes the driving force of prayer and the wheels of change are set in motion. It is important also for this vision to be shared with others, so that it may gently permeate the life of the church, creating expectancy and awareness of what is possible."[106]

If leaders are to inspire, they must be men and women of vision. Leaders are those who are imbued with the spirit enshrined in the words of George Bernard Shaw: "You see things as they are and ask 'why?'. But I dream things that never were, and ask 'why not?'."[107] Or in the words of Robert Dale, a Southern Baptist minister: "In essence, leadership involves vision and initiative. More comprehensively, pastoral leaders see visions of ministry, communicate our dreams clearly, gain consensus and commitment to common objectives, and multiply our influence by transforming followers into new leaders."[108] In other words leadership is first and foremost pro-active. It begins with the dreaming of dreams and the seeing of visions, and then moves on to share those dreams and visions with the church with a view to implementing them in the life of the church and of the wider community.

George Barna in a survey of over 1,000 senior American pastors (i.e. leaders of pastoral teams) found that "fewer than 4% of all senior pastors were able to communicate a clear vision for their ministry."[109] By vision Barna did not mean some general mission statement, such as "to evangelise the lost" or "to be God's agents of change in a world that needs to be transformed by his love, compassion and grace".[110] Rather Barna was referring to "a detailed sense of why God wants a church to exist in the community and how it is unique in comparison".[111] In this sense vision is equivalent to *God's particular plan for a church*. Barna went on: "Why is the Church struggling in America? Because we do not have visionary leaders championing the cause. Is the problem that pastors today are incapable of being visionary leaders or that they have not invested themselves sufficiently in the process to grasp God's vision for their church?"[112]

I believe that Barna was saying something significant. If pastors are to inspire, they need to be leaders with a purpose. It is not sufficient for a pastor to have a general philosophy of ministry, but rather time needs to be taken to gain a clear sense of God's direction for one's particular church. I am reminded of John Wimber, who told of how every Friday morning he used to lie down by his swimming pool, with a glass of Coke in one hand and a Bible in another, and dream dreams! We may not all have our own swimming pool, but this is no reason why we cannot make time to dream dreams and discover God's vision for our church. A weekly dreaming session may seem a luxury, but the principle of taking time out for prayerfully thinking and planning is vital. One reason why churches in England do not prosper is that many pastors are so busy chasing their tails in their pastoral duties that they never make time to find the 'vision'.

Dreaming, of course, is not the monopoly of the pastor. The pastor has no exclusive rights on the Holy Spirit. Indeed, leadership within any given church is always called to be a corporate affair: the leadership is to be shared with other suitably gifted people, be they deacons, elders, or whatever. I for one have benefited greatly from the insights and ideas of my leaders. However, it is the pastor who has the task – and the privilege – to share the vision with the congregation and then lead the church in implementing the vision.

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[105] The precise translation of this verse is disputed. J.G. Janzen has pointed out "the conviction in Prov 29.18a semantically parallels that in Prov 11.14a, 'Where there is no guidance, a people falls'." However, the guidance in question relates more to God's revelation as expressed in the Torah. See Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2005) 445-447.

[106] Unfortunately I cannot find the precise source of this quotation.

[107] See George Bernard Shaw, *Back to Methuselah* (1921) Part I: Act 1 where these words are spoken by the serpent to Eve.

[108] Robert W. Dale, *Pastoral Leadership* (Abingdon, Nashville 1986) 14.

[109] Barna, *Today's Pastors* 118.

[110] Barna, *Today's Pastors* 117, 118.

[111] Barna, *Today's Pastors* 119.

[112] Barna, *Today's Pastors* 120.

Ten characteristics of a good vision

Since vision is a key function of leadership, understanding what makes a vision a good one is important. I have found the following list of 'ten characteristics of a good vision' to be most helpful:[113]

1. A vision is related to mission but different. All congregations have the same mission, which is to fulfil our Lord's Great Commission. Vision is insight into how a particular congregation will carry out its mission in its context in the next five to ten years.
2. A vision is unique. Each vision, like a fingerprint, fits the individual congregation that has adopted a vision of how God will work in its situation. The vision not only reflects the contextual surroundings of the congregation but the personality and giftedness of the congregation.
3. A vision focuses on the future. While visions honour the past and what God has done to bring a congregation to the present, they focus on a preferred future for each congregation. It is the view of the future that changes the present life of the congregation in order to achieve the preferred future stated in the vision.
4. A vision is for others. The focus of a vision is what it will do for others who are not a part of the group stating the vision. A good vision is quite unselfish in its intent. It places as primary the needs of people not currently being served by the congregation.
5. A vision is realistic. All good visions stretch the imaginations of people, yet they are realistic enough to be achieved if God intervenes. Good visions are not statements of presumption; instead they are statements of faith.
6. A vision is lofty. Good visions inspire people to high standards and targets not easily achieved. The lofty statements force congregations to be clear about their values while forcing them to choose which values they will honour and implement and which ones they will ignore.
7. A vision is inviting. Passive 'ho-hum' visions do not produce passion, commitment to service and the giving of resources. Visions helps people see how the future can be better and how they can, with God's help, make that happen. Good leaders have the ability to help people see what their good deeds will produce and how corporately the group can achieve so much more than what individuals alone can make happen.
8. Vision is a group vision. All visions are shared by the group. They ring true for a majority of the people.
9. A vision is good news and bad news. It is good news in that it is a promise of a better future. It is bad news because it provides judgement on the past and the present. Therefore a vision always gets mixed reviews.
10. A vision is a sign of hope. Faith, hope, and love are crucial to God's congregations. It is vision that provides a congregation with hope. Vision gives the leader hope and it gives followers hope of what God will do through them.

Vision for a local church: a case study

At Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford we created a short vision statement entitled '*Our vision for the church*':

1.   Our mission

We exist to 'go Christ's way and make disciples'.

2   Our purposes

Our mission to 'go Christ's way and make disciples' breaks down into five 'purposes':
- Worship
- Evangelism
- Care for one another
- Growth in the faith
- Service to others[114]

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[113] This is a slight adaptation of a list produced by Paul Borden, which in turn was an adaptation of a list produced by Lovett Weems, *Church Leadership* (Abingdon Press, Nashville 1993).

[114] Essentially these five purposes are the same as Rick Warren's. However, the terms we have used are different and – from our perspective – clearer: e.g. worship rather than 'magnify'; evangelism rather than 'mission'; care for one another rather than 'membership'; growth in the faith rather than 'maturity'; and service to others rather than 'ministry'.

3.   Our vision

We want to be a strong and vibrant city-centre church As a city-centre church, we are different from most other churches. We have no particular neighbourhood to minister to – instead we see the whole city as our 'parish'. At a time when most city-centre churches are in decline, our vision is to be a vibrant seven-day-a-week city-centre church, witnessing in word and deed to the love of Jesus We want to be strong, not for the sake of growth, but for the sake of making a greater impact on our city for Christ: certainly if we are to expand our service to the community then we will need more people.

In particular we want to be a strong and vibrant city-centre church where everybody is:
- Passionate for God [worship]
- Passionate for others [evangelism]
- Passionate for one another [pastoral care]
- Passionate to grow in the faith [nurture]
- Passionate to serve Jesus [social action]

We want to be a church where every member is on fire for God. For only where we are passionate for God and for others will be effective in our mission.[115]

4.   Our values

Our values are drawn from our mission 'to go Christ's way'.[116] In our life together we seek to reflect the following aspects of a genuine Jesus community:

- Warm and welcoming
- Risk-taking and God-trusting
- Excited and enthusiastic
- Sacrificing and resourcing
- Transforming lives and changing culture[117]

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[115] Here again, we differed from Rick Warren. Although I saw the need to be 'purpose-driven', purpose did not seem to me to be sufficient of a driver: passion is required, as Terry Calkin in his model of leadership has made clear.

[116] At one stage we adopted the 'Five Core Values for a Gospel People' developed by the Baptist Union of Great Britain following the 1996 Denominational Consultation to help Baptists "grapple afresh with issues of living justly in our contemporary world". We said that "We are a Gospel people called to be: 1) A *prophetic* community. Following Jesus in... confronting evil, injustice and hypocrisy; challenging worldly concepts of power, wealth, status and security. 2) An *inclusive* community. Following Jesus in... transcending barriers of gender, language, race, class, age and culture; identifying with those who are rejected, deprived and powerless. 3) A *sacrificial* community. Following Jesus in... accepting vulnerability and the necessity of sacrifice; seeking to reflect the generous, life-giving nature of God. 4) A *missionary* community. Following Jesus in... demonstrating in word and action God's forgiving and healing love; calling and enabling people to experience the love of God for themselves. 5) A *worshipping* community. Following Jesus in... engaging in worship and prayer which inspire and undergird all we are and do; exploring and expressing what it means to live together as the people of God, obeying his Word and following Christ in the whole of daily life." But it was all so wordy and uninspiring. There was nothing wrong with it – but it failed to grab us. So we created a shorter set of values which were simpler and easier to remember.

[117] These values are a re-writing of a set of values which I came across in 2006 at New Hope Baptist Church, Blackburn North, Melbourne, Australia: viz. 1) *Passion*. We are a dynamic spiritual community. We are vibrant in our prayer life and worship. We expect God to be present and we speak openly of his actions among us. We are excited about God, passionate about life in the Spirit and aflame with love for Jesus. 2) *Care*. We care for one another deeply and support one another consistently. We speak up for justice and foster active partnerships with those addressing real community needs. We serve joyfully together in the cause of Jesus. We complement one another using our gifts. 3) *Invitation*. We are enthusiastic about inviting people to share life with us and actively introducing others to Jesus. We are growing numerically and celebrating diversity as many different people come to faith in Jesus. 4) *Sacrifice*. We are selfless and recklessly abandoned to the mission cause of Jesus locally and worldwide. We are attentive to the places of the world's greatest needs. We give generously and cheerfully. We resource the mission of Jesus fully. Our buildings are a gift to the community, purpose built for the current opportunities of local mission. 5) *Faith*. We are innovating effective new avenues of ministry and outreach. We are people of bold faith, risk takers, God-trusters, who go forward together daring to believe that God is changing the world through us. We plant churches and partner with other followers of Jesus who share our commitment to his mission. 6) *Transformation*. We are a movement, not an institution, which is transforming lives and changing culture in Melbourne. We have transformed fear to trust, despair to hope, nominalism to faith and legalistic religion to vibrant intimacy with God. We are transforming the wider secular community to a community that functions on godly principles and values.

5.   Our strapline

Although it is important for the church to be clear about its mission, purposes, vision and values, such statements are of little significance to the public. With the public in mind we created the following strapline: 'Central Baptist Church – a place to belong', in the belief that this would cause many to want to try out our church. The fact is that many people outside the church are lonely and long for community.[118]

Vision is dependent upon God

In the larger development plan which includes the vision statement of Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, we acknowledged that "First and foremost our greatest resource is God himself."

> "We are his people, gathered together in Jesus' name, who seek to be led by his Spirit. In drawing up this development plan we have consciously sought to discover God's will for our life together.
>
> We recognise that without God all our efforts are as nothing. As God himself said through the prophet Zechariah: "You will succeed… not by your own strength, but by my spirit" (Zech 4.6). It is only as we abide in the vine that we can bear fruit (John 15. 5).
>
> We recognise too that with God all things are possible to those who believe (Mark 9.23). Faith is the catalyst through which God can work (see Matt 13.58). We need therefore to cultivate a culture of expectancy, as we look to God, who "by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or think of" (Eph 3.20). In the words of one of our values, we need to be 'risk-taking and God-trusting'.
>
> It is precisely because of our total dependence upon God, that we have sought to put prayer at the heart of our life together as a church."[119]

Vision needs to be communicated

Rick Warren, the founding pastor of Saddleback Community Church, Orange County, Southern California, is a great communicator. He has a great way of words in defining the five purposes of his church. In his book, *The Purpose Driven Church* he keeps on stating and re-stating the church's five purposes:

> "A purpose driven church is committed to fulfilling all five tasks that Christ ordained for his church to accomplish:
>
> 1. Love the Lord with all your heart (worship)
> 2. Love your neighbour as yourself (ministry)
> 3. Go and make disciples (evangelism)
> 4. Baptising them (fellowship)
> 5. Teaching them to obey (discipleship)
>
> Five key words to summarise Christ's five purposes for his church:

However, I felt that in our context this set of values was too wordy. Also, the adoption of the present tense suggested that the church in Chelmsford had already achieved these values, which we had not.

[118] As I expressed it in the lead-up to *Looking for Love*, a programme we adopted from Green Lane Christian Centre, Auckland: "In a world where many are lonely, we offer friendship. In a world where many long for community, we offer fellowship. In a world where many feel without worth, we offer affirmation. We want to be a church where love is real – tangible – and all-inclusive. Here all are welcome – children and young people, young singles and young couples, people in mid-life and seniors too. We want to be a genuinely multicultural church – where internationals find a special welcome. We want to be a church where people, looking for love, wanting love, needing love, find love. We want people to discover God's amazing love for each one of us as a result of experiencing God's love amongst us."

[119] I have a plaque given to me in 2013 by the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary based in Beirut which reads: "It is not reputation or fame, but our vision that drives us… Where the Lord guides, *He provides!"*

MAGNIFY: We celebrate God's presence in worship
MISSION: We communicate God's Word through evangelism
MEMBERSHIP: We incorporate God's family into our fellowship
MATURITY: We educate God's people through discipleship
MINISTRY: We demonstrate God's love through service

Saddleback's purpose statement: "To bring people to Jesus and *membership* in his family, develop them to Christlike *maturity*, and equip them for their *ministry* in the church and life *mission* in the world, in order to *magnify* God's name."[120]

I confess that I have difficulties with the way in which Warren uses words. To my mind, mission involves both evangelism and service. Evangelism is part of the discipleship making process. There is a looseness in language which I do not like. However, I admire the way in which Warren develops alliteration to communicate his message. You could well argue that effective communication is more important than theological niceties.

Warren believes in regularly communicating the purposes of his church to his people. He wrote: "In Nehemiah's story of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, we learn that halfway through the project the people got discouraged and wanted to give up. Like many churches, they lost their sense of purpose and, as a result became overwhelmed with fatigue, frustration, and fear. Nehemiah rallied the people back to work by reorganising the project and recasting the vision. He reminded them of the importance of their work and reassured them that God would help them fulfil his purpose (Neh 4.6-15)."[121] From this story Warren developed what he called the 'Nehemiah Principle': "Vision and purpose must be restated every 26 days to keep the church moving in the right direction."[122] He went on: "Don't assume that a single sermon on the church's purposes will permanently set the direction of our church. Don't suppose that by printing your purposes in the bulletin everyone has learned them, or even read them."[123] Warren constantly reviews and reiterates the five purposes of his church. I am sure that Warren is absolutely right. Communication is vital.

When pastor of Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, I too tried to ensure that the vision we had developed was communicated regularly with the church. Three times a year, at the beginning of each 'term', we had a Vision Sunday, when we looked ahead to our vision for the coming term. For the first month or two of each calendar year I would often preach a series of sermons based on our vision and values – always rooting the vision and the values within Scripture. At newcomers evenings we always spent time explaining the vision and values of the church. We produced fridge magnets, bookmarks, car stickers, and all kinds of leaflets reflecting our vision and our values. As a result everybody knew our mission statement by heart – and everybody too knew our strap line by heart. In part influenced by Terry Calkin of Green Lane Christian Centre, Auckland, who urged us to 're-state the vision every week', most weeks we had an 'excited spot' at which we reported on what God had been doing that week.[124]

Vision can be communicated through a dream

Vision statements can be useful, but sometimes it is helpful to express the vision in terms of a dream.[125] On my return from my last sabbatical, I expressed my vision in terms of a dream, elaborating on our mission statement, 'to go Christ's way and make disciples':

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[120] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* 103-107.
[121] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* 111.
[122] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* 111.
[123] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* 117.
[124] It has occurred to me that whenever the Law is summarised within the context of the Eucharist, Anglicans are reminded of the two-fold 'purpose' God has for life: viz. to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; and to love our neighbour as ourselves.
[125] A well-known example of vision expressed in terms of a dream is Martin Luther King's 'dream' of 1963. "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal'. I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today." What's more, such dreams are not an exercise in escapism – rather they motivate action. In the words of A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, 11th President of India (2002-2007): A "dream is not that which you see while sleeping, it is something that does not let you sleep" (*Wings of Fire: An Autobiography*, Universities Press, Delhi 1999).

1. I have a dream of a worshipping church
   Where God is at the centre of our life together
   Where Sunday is a day not to be missed
   Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

2. I have a dream of a multi-congregational church
   Where God is praised in a variety of forms
   Where everybody belongs to one congregation
   Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

3. I have a dream of a multi-cultural church
   Where people from many nations come to worship God
   Where internationals find special welcome
   Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

4. I have a dream of a non-sexist church
   Where women play their full part
   Where men can truly be men
   Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

5. I have a dream of a community church
   Where family life is strengthened, but also
   Where singles are valued and find friendship
   Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

6. I have a dream of a praying church
   Where the needs of our town and of the world are remembered
   Where the church and its leaders are prayed for too
   Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

7. I have a dream of a multi-age church
   Where there is a place for young and old
   Where people of all ages feel at home
   Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

8. I have a dream of a church full of children
   Where every month there is a children's special
   Where children come to know the Saviour
   Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

9. I have a dream of a church reaching out to young adults
   Where the evening service is contemporary in style
   Where the needs of students and the new city-dwellers are met
   Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

10. I have a dream of a church growing with seniors
    Where a growing number of seniors find the Saviour
    Where seniors grow in grace and in understanding of their Lord
    Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

11. I have a dream of an empowering church
    Where the focus is on the world, and not just the church
    Where those in mid-life are resourced for their life in the world of work
    Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

12. I have a dream of a stress-free church
    Where diaries are freed up from unnecessary meetings
    Where people have time to make friends with their neighbours

Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

13. I have a dream of a ministry-led church
     Where the ministry teams get on with their tasks
     Where the leaders are free to lead
     Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

14. I have a dream of a vibrant town-centre church
     Where the strong and powerful are challenged
     Where the needs of the weak and vulnerable are met
     Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

15. I have a dream of a welcoming church
     Where the welcome is such that newcomers want to return
     Where a smile is accompanied with the offer of a meal
     Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

16. I have a dream of an evangelising church
     Where people want to bring their friends
     Where baptisms are a frequent event
     Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

17. I have a dream of a growing church
     Where the crowds necessitate yet another congregation
     Where growth dictates yet further building
     Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

18. I have a dream of a church made up of small groups
     Where everybody feels they belong
     Where everybody feels free to share and not to feel ashamed
     Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

19. I have a dream of a church served by an ever-expanding staff
     Where young and old volunteer to be interns
     Where part-time as well as full-time staff serve their Lord
     Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

20. I have a dream of a generous church
     Where people are eager to give to vision
     Where finance is a servant of the church's mission
     Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

21. I have a dream of a visionary church
     Where faith dreams
     Where faith dares
     Where people go Christ's way and make disciples

6. Leadership, strategy and goals

I shall never forget Bill Tanner, a former Executive Director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, saying at a meeting at which I was present: "God is going to hold us accountable for the stewardship of our vision." If God gives his leaders a vision, then he expects them to be serious in implementing the vision. Churches need to know not only the general direction, but also the way that leads in that direction. Strategies and goals need to be formulated.

From a secular perspective Alastair Campbell, the political strategist who helped Tony Blair to three successive general election victories, similarly talks of the importance of 'The Holy Trinity' of Objective, Strategy and Tactics:

> "If you do not have a clear objective, you have no definition of winning. If you do not have a clear strategy, you have no chance of winning. And if all you have are tactics, you have no right to win."[126]

For Christians our mission ('objective') is clear: we are called to go Christ's way and make disciples. But it is the 'how' which many churches are no good at. Every church needs a clear strategy, which in turn demands a clear strategy document. For in the words of Alastair Campbell: "It's not strategy until it's written down". Or as Marilyn Monroe wrote in one of her poems: "Think in ink."[127]

Creating a strategy demands thought and effort

According to Terry Calkin, there are five keys to an effective organisation: vision, passion, a mission statement, strategy and goals. Vision is not enough. A strategy is called for in order to implement the vision; and goals then need to be set. It is not enough to say that we want to want to win people for Jesus Christ and his church – we need to have a plan.[128]

In the introduction to the development plan of Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, I wrote:

> "According to the Book of Proverbs, it is wise to plan: "Plan carefully what you do and whatever you do will turn out right" (Prov 4.26). Yet at the same time we need to recognise that "we may make our plans, but God has the last word" (Prov 16.1). With the help of God's Spirit we have sought to set out a plan for the mission and ministry of our church – but the plan is not set in stone. We know that as a church we need constantly to listen to God, and to follow his direction, even if this means changing our plans."

Some people are fearful of creating a strategy and setting goals because they believe it will lead to the Holy Spirit being organised out of the church. This is a false spirituality. God wants us to use our minds as well as to look to him in prayer. As Psalm 32.8,9 clearly indicates, God expects us to use our minds in his service: we are not to be like horses and mules, which have no understanding, and who must be curbed with bit and bridle. God's guidance in this context is received through the use of one's mind. God has created us to think – and not to think is in fact to spurn his gifts.

The importance of the use of the mind has been emphasised by a number of Christian leaders. John Stott, seeking to counter anti-intellectualism in the church, wrote: "Scripture tells us that our rationality is part of the divine image in which God has created us. He is a rational God who has made us rational beings and given us a rational revelation. To deny our rationality is therefore to deny our humanity, to become less that human beings."[129] Similarly Richard Lovelace said: "To relinquish the guiding and superintending function of the intellect in our experience seems pious at first, but in the end this course dehumanises us by turning us into either dependent robots waiting to be programmed by the Spirit's guidance, or whimsical enthusiasts blown about by our hunches and emotions."[130] The gift of the Spirit is to transform the faculty of our mind, not to replace it. Eddie Gibbs also developed that point: "In defining objectives and formulating plans, church leaders must both recognise their utter dependence upon the wisdom and resources of God, and shoulder their responsibilities in handling the freedom of operation entrusted to them by God. Living with this tension is a fact of life and is to be welcomed."[131] The pragmatic approach, therefore, may be far from being unspiritual. It may in fact involve simply using the gifts of intellect that God has given. A failure to use one's mind is not a sign of spirituality – but rather the reverse. A pragmatic approach to the church and its mission is not a sign of expediency, but a necessary aspect of Christian stewardship.

If using the mind is not a sign of unspirituality, neither is the use of elbow grease. The temptation today in some circles is to 'leave it to the Spirit', as if leaving it to the Spirit effectively discharges us from all responsibility. But this is far from the truth. The words of Rob Roxburgh, a Canadian Baptist who at one stage pastored Guildford Baptist Church, need to be heeded: "Renewal [and I would add "and church growth"] is not all a matter of being 'blessed'. It is the hard work of implementing dreams through organisation, structures and strategy through the empowering and

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[126] Alastair Campbell, *Winners And How They Succeed* (Hutchinson, London 2015) 53.
[127] Alastair Campbell, *Winners And How They Succeed* 21.
[128] Some popular preachers believe that Habb 2.1-3 contains four principles in developing a vision: viz. watch – write – work – wait. But this is somewhat misleading. Habakkuk's vision is summed up in the statement "the righteous live by faith" (NRSV) or to follow the word order both in the Hebrew and in the LXX "the righteous by faith shall live."
[129] John Stott, *Balanced Christianity: A call to avoid unnecessary polarisation* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1975) 18.
[130] Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of the Spiritual Life: an Evangelical theology of renewal* (Paternoster, Exeter 1979) 265.
[131] Eddie Gibbs *Ten Growing Churches* (Marc Europe, London 1984) 17.

enabling of the Holy Spirit... Most church success stories have as much perspiration as inspiration behind them in the sense that members have worked hard to establish structures and strategies that will fulfil the prompting and vision of the Spirit."[132] There is no substitute for hard work – just as there is no substitute for the use of the mind. For a church to grow God demands our all.

Creating a strategy: a case study

The broad vision statement found in the development plan of Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, was followed by a detailed strategy.

Initially we set out an 'outline strategy':

"In the light of our mission and vision, we have developed the following five-fold strategy to achieve the five purposes of our church.

Through worship and prayer, through teaching and preaching, through meeting together in small groups and through reflecting together in church meeting, through paper and through electronic forms of communication:

We will excite fresh hope and faith in God
• By creating services which are relevant to people's lives
• By striving for excellence in every aspect of our Sunday worship
• By encouraging people to pray expectantly

We will ensure every member feels they belong
• By making home groups the essential core of church life
• By linking every member to a home group
• By caring for those who for one reason or another cannot be present at home groups

We will empower God's people to witness
• By creating a culture of people inviting friends to church activities and services
• By making our church a place where people of all ages and cultures feel welcome
• By encouraging people to share their faith wherever they are

We will help every member to grow in their faith
• By mentoring new members
• By encouraging every member to set aside at least 10 minutes a day for God alone
• By offering specialised teaching in growth groups
•
We will help every member reach their potential to serve others
• By inviting every new member to identify and use their gifts both in the church and in the wider community
• By encouraging longstanding members to develop their gifts and abilities to serve Christ both in the church and in the wider community
• By offering training and ongoing support to all."

Later in the process we sought to strengthen the outline strategy with a list of further objectives still based around the five key tasks:

To excite fresh hope and faith in God
• We will ensure that the morning service continues to be relevant to people's lives.
• We will work at developing the evening service, so that it meets the needs not just of younger adults (25-40), but also of the young people and young adults (16-24).
• Within the context of worship we will ensure that members not only understand, but are excited and enthused by our vision for Central Baptist Church.

To empower God's people to witness

[132] Robert L. Roxburgh, *Renewal Down To Earth* (Kingsway, Eastbourne 1987) 110.

- In our Sunday services we will regularly include interviews both with people talking about what it means to be a Christian at work and how they share Christ in that situation; as also with new Christians sharing their testimony.
- We will encourage home groups to maintain an outward focus, with members praying not just for their non-Christian friends, but also for opportunities to share their faith story with their friends, and invite them to Alpha and special services at church.. Indeed, there might be some home groups to which people could invite neighbours and non-Christian friends.
- We will encourage members of the congregation to make time to develop friendships with people outside the church, with constant encouragement to invite non-Christians into their homes for meals.

To ensure every member feels they belong
- We will encourage the church to be warm and welcoming, and so live up to our 'strap-line', 'Central Baptist Church – a place to belong'.
- We will encourage members of the congregation to get to know more people through such events as Name Tag Sundays. Support for one another can only come if we know one another's names.
- We will continue to challenge our church to be 'the friendliest church in Chelmsford' – where a smile is accompanied with the offer of a meal (hospitality); where family life is strengthened, and where also single people are valued and find friendship; where people from many cultures feel at home among us and are integrated into the church. Our goal is to integrate into our church 100% of newcomers, whatever their culture or background.[133]

To help everybody grow in their faith
- We will actively encourage an increasing commitment to Jesus and his church as we seek to implement Rick Warren's model of the five circles of commitment[134]
- As one aspect of Christian discipleship, we will help people to develop into generous givers.

To help every member reach their potential in Christ
- We will develop 'discovering your SHAPE courses' for everybody[135]
- We will particularly encourage young people and young adults to discover their 'SHAPE' and take on roles and responsibilities within the life of the church.
- We will identify leaders at every level who have a passion for sharing their faith: they need to be trained, grounded in the Scriptures, and supported through regular supervision and mentoring
- We will identify potential leaders of home groups, and – along with present home group leaders – provide support and training.

Setting SMART goals

A strategy is not enough: SMART goals need to be developed. SMART goals have been variously defined as:

S – **specific**, significant, stretching
M – **measurable**, meaningful, motivational
A – agreed upon, **attainable**, achievable, acceptable, action-oriented
R – realistic, **relevant**, reasonable, rewarding, results-oriented
T – **time-based**, timely, tangible, trackable

At Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, we created SMART goals to go alongside our strategy. Page after page of such goals were set – and next to each goal was put the name of the person or the 'task' team responsible for each goal, together with a date when we expected the goal to have been met. At the end of the set of goals there was a brief paragraph: "As leaders we commit ourselves to monitor the activities of the church. Those activities which do not actively contribute to the overall purpose and vision of the church we will shut down."

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[133] For monitoring purposes we said that a newcomer is someone who has attended worship on at least five occasions.
[134] See Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* 307.
[135] See Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* 369-375. See also Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002) 234-255. SHAPE is an acronym derived from Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality and Experiences. According to Rick Warren, we need to do five things: unwrap our spiritual gifts; listen to our heart; apply our abilities; use our personality; and employ our experience.

The leadership team committed itself to reviewing every month the goals and the progress being made. This review was always a significant agenda item of the monthly meeting of the leadership team. The leadership team held to account the ministry team and the various 'task' teams of the church.

7. Leadership and governance structures

Governance and the church meeting

Baptist churches by definition are self-governing churches.[136] Baptists are 'congregationally' governed. For them the ultimate authority is to be found in the 'church meeting', when the members of the church gather together in the name of Christ. The church meeting, however, is no ordinary democratic assembly, rather it is "the occasion when as individuals and as a community, we submit ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and stand under the judgement of God that we may know what is the mind of Christ".[137] As far as Baptists are concerned, this form of church governance is rooted in the New Testament. Attention is drawn to the way in which, when matters of fundamental importance had to be decided, the whole church was involved in seeking the mind of Christ: e.g. the appointing of leaders (Acts 6.3, 6); the administering of finance (Acts 11.29-39); and the admitting of members (Acts 15.22, 28, 30).[138] Above all, attention is drawn to the teaching of Jesus: the ultimate recourse in church discipline is not the elders or other church leaders, but the church itself (Matt 18.15-19). In particular the words of Jesus that "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there with them" (Matt 18.20) form the theological basis for the church meeting: it is as Christ's people consciously meet in his name and seek his will in prayer that authority is to be found. In terms of church governance, it is therefore the church meeting which appoints leaders and to whom leaders are ultimately accountable. However, in appointing leaders, the church delegates them authority, which the leaders are free to exercise until the church withdraws its recognition of them.[139]

Christ rules his church through the church meeting. This model of the church meeting is an exciting one: every member has a part to play, every member counts. Yet at the same time it is a highly demanding model. It expects much from the membership, and it expects much from the church meeting.[140] Sometimes Baptist church meetings get bogged down in trivia; and sometimes, too, church meetings fail to allow their leaders to lead. Furthermore, there needs to be a good deal of flexibility if the church meeting is to work in larger churches. The question which Baptists and other congregationally governed churches need to face is: what are the 'foundational' issues with which the church meeting needs to deal? What matters can be rightly delegated to the leaders of the church?

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[136] So the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Declaration of Principle states as its first basis of union: "That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each church has liberty under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer his Laws."

[137] This definition is taken from the Baptist Union's *Statement of the Church* (approved by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain & Ireland, March 1948).

[138] See Jeff Brown, *Corporate Decision-Making in the Church of the New Testament* (Pickwick Publications, Eugene, Oregon 2013) 187: "The church leaders of the New Testament led their churches to handle controversial issues as they arose... The size of a church apparently was not an issue in determining whether a church could make a corporate decision... The Jerusalem church had five thousand men in its membership as it handled corporate, the introduction of a new ministry and the election of new leaders. If a church today is too large to allow corporate decision-making, it should likely re-think either its size or its inner structures."

[139] See further Paul Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers: the Baptist way of being the church* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, Didcot, 2nd edition 2006) 77-95.

[140] See my 'dream of a church meeting' (*Radical Believers* 94,95) "where everybody comes prayerfully prepared; where members have to struggle to find a seat; where there is an overwhelming sense of family; where the voice of praise is never absent; where Scripture is allowed to speak; where 'prophets' are heard; where experiences of God are shared; where people listen with discernment; where feelings are balanced with reason; where faith is vibrant; where everybody expects God to speak; where business flows out of worship and worship flows out of business; where the needs of the world are uppermost; where Kingdom issues prevail; where details are happily delegated; where there is a genuine seeking after the mind of Christ; where debate has been replaced by discussion; where personal prejudices are set aside; where the leadership is trusted; where the voices of the few no longer dominate; where nobody feels they have to speak on behalf of 'other people'; where angels' advocates constantly look for good things to say; where nobody ever feels uptight; where nobody seeks to win; where differing viewpoints are shared in love; where the old are prepared to learn from the young; where the young are able to share their dreams; where constitutional niceties recede into the background; where God has his way."

Governance and ministry

A good deal of thinking on these issues has been done in the USA, as also in Australia and New Zealand.

Dan Hotchkiss of the American Alban Institute, for instance, usefully defined governance and ministry in the following terms: "Governance includes the top-level tasks of articulating the mission, selecting a strategy for getting there, making sure it happens, and ensuring that people and property are protected against harm. Ministry is everything else: the daily practical work of the congregation, including the rest of the decisions that must be made about what to do and how."[141] Instead of governance being the task of the church meeting, he argues that 'governance authority' should be given to a board of six to eight people. "Such a board is small enough to engage in serious discernment work and so small that it should be obvious to everyone that it can't legitimately do its work in isolation. The congregation exercises its control not by making many small decisions but by making a few large ones well. An essential part of the board's responsibility is to choose wisely which few subjects merit congregational attention, and to host a rich, reflective dialogue among the members on those subjects."[142] In my experience the leadership teams in British Baptist churches, tend to be too large; and the teams themselves often have no clearly thought-through perception of their leadership role.

By contrast many Baptist churches in Australia and New Zealand have undergone a revolution in terms of their structure and adapted a system of church governance developed by the 'American Baptist Churches of the West' under the leadership of their chief executive Paul Borden. Borden, together with his colleague John Kaiser, took over the so-called 'Carver' model of governance[143] and adapted it to Baptist church life with such success in California that he doubled the number of growing churches from 37% to 74%, growth which was accompanied by a massive increase in baptisms.[144] Let me quote his three foundational principles:

1. The concepts of 'authority, responsibility, and accountability' must be held together: "Any individual who is given a specific responsibility must be given adequate authority to accomplish the task. That individual must then be held accountable to ascertain that the responsibility has been fulfilled."[145]
2. "Leaders must be given the freedom to lead. God expects those who are given gifts, talents, skills and a call, to lead with excellence. This means that leaders must be given broad authority to take strong leadership roles over areas for which they are responsible. Those same leaders should also expect to provide specific, measurable, behavioural, and tangible goals relating to outcomes and then be held accountable for these goals. However, in the pursuit of these goals leaders should be given wide latitude, flexibility, and protection by those to whom the leader is accountable. Leaders also need the freedom to fail so they be willing to risk. Obviously, too much failure indicates a lack of wisdom and leadership. On the other hand, without risk and failure the organisation is doomed to eventual decline and death."[146]
3. "It is impossible to hold groups of people accountable, unless you are willing to dismiss the entire group when expectations are not met." [147]For Borden the mission of the church is more important than the hurt feelings of individuals. "Leaders should be training congregations to expect health and growth. Congregations should be upset when a year goes by if conversions and baptisms decrease. The church exists for others, and when others stop coming and cease experiencing eternal changes, congregations should start asking their leaders why they continue to meet, since their purpose is not being realised."[148]

Borden's third principle in particular has proved to be controversial. There is a radical edge to his thinking which many find uncomfortable. However, in the context of the massive missionary challenge in the West, maybe radical measures are called for. What needs to be noted is that Borden and others are not interested in developing a management model *per se*. Instead the tools of management are put at the service of the mission and ministry of the church. So Borden wrote:

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[141] Dan Hotchkiss, *Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership* (Alban Institute, Herndon, Virginia 2009) 99.
[142] Dan Hotchkiss, *Governance and Ministry* 70.
[143] See John Carver, *Boards That Make a Difference* (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco 2nd edition 1997) for the most thorough explanation of the policy governance. See too www.carvergovernance.com
[144] See Paul Borden, *Hit the Bullseye: How Denominations Can Aim the Congregation at the Mission Field* (Abingdon Press, Nashville).
[145] *Hit the Bullseye* 127.
[146] *Hit the Bullseye* 127.
[147] *Hit the Bullseye* 127.
[148] *Hit the Bullseye* 142.

"Congregational transformation and all the pain that accompanies change make sense only because congregational leaders are willing to love those who need God's love the most: lost people. Congregational reproduction, which means giving away resources in order to initiate a congregation, makes sense only if it is motivated by love. Congregations that make a decision to sacrifice that which they often prize the most, their comfortableness, do so only when they fall in love again with their Lord and Saviour and make a decision to love those for whom He died."[149]

Governance and ministry-led churches

To their great credit, Baptists in New Zealand were prepared to be radically minded in order to become more effective in Christ's mission, and they developed a model of 'ministry-led' churches. Since this model is relatively unknown in the UK, I will quote at length from their position paper on 'the ministry-led church':

"The local church is our primary agent of mission. To be effective in that mission, our churches need to be healthy. The outcome of healthy churches is usually growth. One of the key areas to be addressed in helping churches become healthy is that of leadership and the decision-making processes that go with it.

The experience of many of our churches is that their current leadership and church meeting patterns create as much ill-health as they do health
- with the processes of decision-making (leaders constantly having to ask permission and members meetings being adversarial and unrepresentative),
- with the balance of big picture versus details (getting bogged down in trivia and being finance driven)
- with election of leaders for position versus giftings
- structures and models that are too institutional, too 'business' in their orientation or too loose
- inward versus outward focus (the priority of mission).

To help with the above, a model of leadership is being encouraged, based on principles that separate out responsibilities of leaders, and give priority to the work of ministry and the call to mission. This is called the 'ministry-led church model'. The principles are as follows:

1. Clearly differentiate between governance, leadership and ministry. There is a governance role for the whole church (church members' meeting), of agreeing to the 'boundaries' e.g. doctrine, vision, leadership, finance, property. There is a governance role for a group of leaders of upholding the boundaries and outcomes agreed to by the whole church, development, support and protection of the mission and vision, setting policy and providing spiritual oversight. There is a leadership role for the pastor as the primary church visionary and team leader of the ministries. There is a leadership role for each of the ministry leaders to form teams, set vision and goals and ensure the outcomes of that ministry are happening. There is a ministry role for every person in the church as they participate in the various ministries. These include core ministries of the church gathered, and in being a follower of Jesus in the midst of the work place, neighbourhood and society at large.
2. Clearly define the lines of responsibility, authority and accountability. Responsibility without authority creates bureaucracy. Many Baptist churches work on this structure. The person doing the work has responsibility to do it but has no authority. This is 'safe' but it is not effective. This approach has, as its ethos, a basic lack of trust in people, so those given responsibility for ministry have committees or church officers over them (authority), and no one is held accountable for the ministry. You cannot hold a committee accountable for anything. Responsibility with authority but no accountability creates authoritarianism. It is a common structure in independent churches where the pastor runs the church and is not answerable to anyone. This is effective but it is not safe. Too often things go off on a tangent or power becomes an issue. Responsibility married with authority and accountability is a safe and effective model for the fulfilling of ministries. The person is set free to do the task for which he/she is responsible and has the authority to do it in the best way possible but is accountable for the outcomes.
3. Empower people and place ministry at the centre. The first two principles are designed to enable people to get on with the work of ministry effectively and efficiently. They also create an expectation that the church is serious about what it does, and wants to see the Kingdom advanced. The majority of the effort and the participation of people need to be at the ministry level. Whatever structures are put in place need to help not hinder this task. People need the freedom to take risks, explore new ventures and engage in their passion and giftings.

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[149] Paul Borden, 'Faith Hope and Love' (February 1, 2006), article on his website growinghealthychurches.com.

4.   Expect Mission Outcomes. This is a call to re-prioritise the call to mission… The major component in determining the effectiveness of a church's ministry, will be in the achievement of mission outcomes. These need to be written into the goals of each ministry in appropriate ways.

To implement the above principles, the following are required:

i.   A governance leadership group: called primarily to govern the church by providing spiritual oversight, and development, support and protection of the mission and vision of the church. State and enforce the guiding principles that authorise and empower pastor and ministry leaders in achieving the mission and vision of the church. The governance leadership group is accountable to the church members.

ii.   The pastor: Called primarily to be the visionary, pastoral and directional leader of the church… is directly accountable to the governance leadership group. Active member and participant of the governance leadership group.

iii.   Staff: Additional staff head up ministries and therefore come under the description below… Their role is like that of an 'inner circle' within the ministry leaders' team… involvement in the ongoing decision-making and vision.

iv.   Ministry leaders: leading a variety of 'core' ministries that the pastor and governance leadership group has put in place. Anyone who fills a ministry leadership role is generally accountable to the pastor. Ministry leaders can be paid or volunteer, full or part-time… There could be anywhere from 5 – 10 core ministry areas. These areas relate to the normal expectations of what a church needs to provide to both grow disciples and engage in effective mission."

This model, adopted by the New Zealand Baptist Union in 2000, was subsequently taken over by the Baptist Union of Western Australia in 2004, and is also used by many large Baptist churches in the Eastern states of Australia. In Australia, however, instead of talking about 'ministry led' churches, the strap-line is 'staff-led, but congregationally governed'. Those Baptist unions and churches which have adopted this model are enthusiastic about the difference the new structures have made to their mission and ministry. The New Zealand Baptist Union, for instance, attributed a major increase in baptisms to the adoption of this model.[150]

There is no doubt that the model has much to commend it – especially as churches begin to grow. The traditional model of the Baptist church meeting where all the members participate in every aspect of the church's decision-making process may work well in a church with less than eighty members, but it has to change as churches grow larger. Don McClellan of Queensland, Australia, for instance, stated that it is only "in the church of 100 or fewer that congregationalism can be shown to be fully viable".[151] I believe that there is a lot to be learnt from the positive way in which pastors are being held accountable by their leadership teams.

Reframing governance in Baptist churches

The need to reframe governance in Baptist churches has been cogently argued by Brian Winslade, a former leader of the Baptist Union in New Zealand, in his book, *A New Kind of Baptist Church: Reframing Congregational Government for the 21st Century*.[152] Since this important book is scarcely known in the UK, it is helpful to examine the case that is made.

Winslade believes that as a church grows there comes a point when decision-making processes have to change. He wrote: "As Baptist churches become large, there is an inevitable drift toward a nuanced Presbyterian type of polity, with more delegated authority placed in the hands of a few, and the need to develop alternative means of congregational participation."[153] It is important to understand that Winslade is not saying that larger Baptist churches cannot be congregationally governed, but rather that the form of congregational government changes. Church members can no longer deal with the nuts and bolts of church life; in a large church there is no place for members raising matters under AOB. Instead, in a larger church, only important decision are made by the church meeting: for example, "appointment of the pastor (presumably from time to time only), setting of the church's budget (as an expression of the church's vision), appointment of governance leaders, major capital expenditure items (e.g. that

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[150] In the year 2003-2004 baptisms increased by 24%.

[151] Don McLellan, 'Is congregational government truly biblical?' 150 in *Leadership and Baptist Church Governance* (Morling Press, Sydney, Australia 2005) edited by Graeme Chatfield.

[152] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church: Reframing Congregational Government for the 21st Century* (Morling Press, Sydney, Australia 2010) 191.

[153] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 209.

require significant support from the constituency), fiscal reporting, alterations to the church's constitution or by-laws (presumably from time to time only) and reporting on progress in the church's missional endeavour."[154]

Whereas in smaller churches there may be a monthly church meeting, in larger churches there are fewer church meetings. Furthermore, in larger churches these meetings tend not to be 'business meetings', but rather meetings for "information, inspiration, and the casting of vision". He goes on to make the interesting point that "it is questionable whether the earliest meetings of Baptist churches countenanced decision-making as their reason for gathering. Rather, congregational meetings were for the purpose of discipleship and mutual accountability."[155]

Another difference between smaller and larger churches is that in the former the nomination of potential candidates for leadership is normally left to church members in general. However, in the latter, an observable trend is "the formulation of systems of vetting of prospective candidates for eldership (for their suitability) by a leadership grouping before being submitted to the church for appointment…. Likewise there is a greater acceptance that the pastor should have a strong say in the names nominated to the members meeting."[156] The fact that in larger churches there is limited participation in the process of decision-making, does not mean that their views are not heard. Winslade argues for larger churches providing "multiple opportunities for church members to contribute their views in the formulation of policy" through such things as focus groups and congregational surveys.[157] He also talks about the importance of communication in a larger church. "Considerable damage to the perception of confidence in church leaders is done when church members are not well and fully apprised of information pertinent to their decision-making. Effective leadership of change requires communication to the point of redundancy."[158]

It is important to realise that this system of governance is not about disempowering church members. What it does is to shift "the focus of church members onto their primary responsibility before God: namely ministry".[159] The task of the board is "to ensure that the culture and environment of the church is such that every member is able to exercise their ministry and contribute to the correct functioning of the body".[160]

In relation to the senior pastor and the staff, the board refrains from "meddling in ministry minutiae in the life of the church, in favour of empowering leaders with authority that is commensurate with their responsibility".[161] The board's primary concern is for the 'big picture' as it seeks to define the mission policy of the church, and then to support and resource the senior pastor in the exercise of his or her visionary leadership.[162] As part of that support the board "ask their pastor hard questions that ensure adequate space is provided for emotional, physical, and spiritual renewal. They stand alongside their pastor in times of conflict and tension in the life of the church."[163]

This concept of governance which supports and resources the senior pastor amazingly releasing. The accountability of pastors for their performance is not to feared, but rather encouraged. Pastors are much more likely to be effective if their lay-leaders take a close interest in the way in which they exercise their ministry. I confess that I do not warm to the description of the senior pastor as the 'CEO' (chief executive officer). Winslade, however, argues that "shepherds in biblical days were not actually there for the sake of the sheep. They were businessmen, not animal-care advocates!"[164] Certainly what is true is that pastors are called to lead their churches, which inevitably means that they have to be 'business-like' and 'professional'. Even although it is God alone who gives the growth, nonetheless in our planting and watering there is no place for incompetency in ministry.

It is important to note that Winslade's passion throughout his book is for mission. "At the end of the day, it is our effectiveness in missiology that will count in our favour far more than the processes by which we made decisions or governed the church."[165] He maintains that "it is evangelistic mission that defines Baptist identity, rather than its social system of community and its methodology in collective governance or decision-making."[166] It is this passion for

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[154] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 229.
[155] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 229.
[156] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 221.
[157] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 233.
[158] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 234.
[159] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 181.
[160] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 217.
[161] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 218.
[162] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 218.
[163] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 219.
[164] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 226.
[165] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 204.
[166] Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* 207.

mission which has caused him – rightly so in my opinion – to challenge larger Baptist churches to reframe congregational government for the 21st century.

Developing a ministry-led church in the UK: a case study

In the final seven years of my ministry at Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, I sought to incorporate some of the lessons from 'down-under' in our way of doing church. The church became a 'ministry' or staff-team led church. Most of my 'task teams' were led by staff members. It was their task to set the agenda and in this way to spearhead the mission of the church. Far from stunting the ministry of other members of the church, they equipped and encouraged church members in their various ministries (see Eph 4.16).

Although ultimately accountable to the church, in the first place the staff were accountable to the deacons, whose task it was to hold the staff to account for the way in which they defined and implemented the agreed vision and strategy of the church.

Like any other Baptist church, we were congregationally governed. The 'church meeting', made up of committed members of the church, met four or five times a year, and was the body to which ultimately the ministers, deacons, and all the 'task' teams were accountable. The church meeting was responsible for key issues such as the doctrine of the church, the adoption of the annual budget, and major policy relating to the church's mission and ministry. It called ministers and appointed deacons. In many Baptist churches the church meeting also admits people to membership, but – as is the case with most larger Baptist churches – at Chelmsford the admission of members was delegated to the leadership team.

One key area where we differed from the 'down-under' model was in the size of the leadership team. There was a degree of reluctance on the part of my deacons to reduce their number – not surprisingly, because in some ways it would have been like turkeys voting for Christmas! This leadership team consisted of 12 deacons and 4 ministers: although a very useful size when it comes to allocating tasks, it can be a cumbersome size for brain-storming and decision-making. Time is needed for every voice to be heard.[167] Fortunately, the leadership team did not have to deal with the detail of church life: this was delegated to a sub-committee of the leadership team, entitled the personnel, support and management group. Made up of the senior deacon, the church treasurer, the leader of the church centre management team, and the senior minister, it was in this meeting of four people where the 'nuts and bolts' of church life were sorted out, which in turn freed up the leadership team to focus on the key issues of ministry and mission.[168]

When it came to 'dreaming dreams and seeing visions', the key group was 'the ministry team'. It was made up of six people: the four ministers plus our children's and families' worker and our seniors outreach worker. At our weekly meetings on a Monday morning we were also blessed with the presence of our senior deacon and our pastoral deacon, both of whom were retired. This was a much more manageable meeting: with eight people present, there were only 56 relationships taking place. In such a relatively small group, it was so much easier to share ideas and to work out strategies. True, the ministry team was accountable to the leadership team, but the reality was that in many ways this was the true leadership team!

One final word. There are two ways in which this model can be represented. The first is 'top down': viz.

GOD
The church meeting
The board/leadership team
The (senior) past
The staff
Ministry leaders
The congregation engaged in ministry

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[167] See *Determining Ideal Board Size* (Alban Paper) by Susan Beaumont: "Most of us cannot imagine reducing our governing bodies down to five individuals, but the closer we can get to that number, the more effective our problem solving will be. Larger groups require skilful leadership and formal structures in order to function effectively. Formal structures, such as parliamentary procedures, work by deliberately stifling many of the possible social interactions. Unfortunately, this can also stifle creativity which is critical for strategic and generative work, and it also ensures that most decision-making will be dominated by the most politically influential individuals in the room, whether or not they have the best ideas."
[168] See Paul Beasley-Murray, 'A great way to deal with the nuts and bolts of church life', *Blog* February 27, 2014.

This representation of the model may appear somewhat 'hierarchical': on the other hand, good Baptists should note that the board or leadership team is accountable to the church meeting – and that all that is done is 'under God'.

Alternatively, the 'spiral' model of the church developed by Alan Wilkinson and myself can be adapted to include this model, whereby the board/leadership team, the (senior) pastor and the staff, are 'at the hub', equipping, supporting and enabling the ministry leaders together with the congregation to 'fulfil their ministry'.[169]

Whether we represent the model 'top down' or 'spiral round', the underlying essence of the model is entirely Baptist: viz. the leadership of some and the ministry of all.

Leadership and the leading of meetings

"Taking the chair in committees and at meetings is a leadership role", wrote John Adair.[170] Would that every Baptist minister realised that! In all too many churches the task of the chairman is to see that the church decision meetings "are conducted as efficiently, productively and smoothly as possible".[171] The emphasis is on the 'chairman' being "neutral", and not about influencing decisions. I believe that this is a false understanding of the minister's position. Yes, as chairman, the minister has to allow all points of views to be expressed; yes, the chairman may not dominate, but rather should seek to ensure that a consensus is reached. But the minister is still the leader, the 'helmsman', actively guiding and encouraging the meeting alone.

Apart from my very first deacons' meeting when I was beginning ministry, I always took responsibility for preparing the agenda. That preparation in itself is an act of leadership, not least in ensuring that matters related to the ministry and mission of the church come at the top of the agenda; as distinct from items such as finance, fabric and 'correspondence'. What is more, it is important before the meeting to think through what one wishes to achieve. Apart from anything else, this can save a good deal of time.

As the years went by, I found it helpful to have an expanded agenda. Instead of just the agenda 'headings', I included background information, detailing the issues involved, as also the direction that as leader I felt it would be helpful to take. In my last full year as pastor of Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, the agenda for the leadership team meetings averaged just over five sides, and the agenda for the church meetings averaged just under five sides. The preparation of the expanded agendas took time, but it resulted in better and quicker decision-making.

8. Leadership styles and the size of the church

An American analysis of leadership and church size

Leadership styles inevitably differ according to the size of church. Drawing upon the foundational work of Arlin Rothauge,[172] Roy Oswald grouped American churches into four distinct sizes of church:[173]

First, there is the cell or family-size church – also called the patriarchal or matriarchal church – which has fewer than 50 people in attendance at worship on a Sunday.

> "This small church.... functions like a family, with appropriate parental figures. The patriarchs and matriarchs control the church's leadership needs. What family-size churches want from clergy is pastoral care, period. For clergy to assume that they are also the chief executive officer and the resident religious authority is to make a serious blunder. The key role of the patriarch or matriarch is to see that clergy do not take the congregation off on a new direction of ministry. Clergy are to be the chaplain of this small family. When clergy do not understand this, they are likely to head into a direct confrontation with the parental figure. It is

[169] See Paul Beasley-Murray & Alan Wilkinson, *Turning the Tide* 61-74.
[170] John Adair, *Effective Leadership* 107.
[171] Fred Bacon, *Church Administration: A Guide for Baptist Ministers and Churches* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, Didcot revised edition 1992).
[172] Arlin Rothauge, *Sizing up a congregation for new member ministry* (Seabury Press, New York, undated 1996).
[173] Roy Oswald, 'How to minister effectively in family, pastoral, program and corporate sized churches' 31-46 in *Size Transitions in Congregations* (Alban Institute, Virginia 2001) edited by Beth Ann Gaede.

generally suicide for clergy to get caught in a show-down with the patriarchs and matriarchs within the first five years of the particular church."[174]

As with families in general, family or patriarchal churches incorporate new members by birth, marriage or adoption.

Secondly, there is the congregation or pastoral-size church, which has 50 to 150 active members.

> "Clergy are usually at the centre of a pastoral-size church. There are so many parental figures around that they need someone at the centre to manage them. A leadership circle, made up of the pastor and a small cadre of lay leaders, replaces the patriarchs and matriarchs of the family-size church... A key feature of a pastoral-size church is that laity experience having their spiritual needs met through their personal relationship with a seminary-trained person. In a pastoral-size church it would be rare for a Bible study or a prayer group to meet without the pastor. The pastor is also readily available in times of personal need and crisis... A second feature of the pastoral-size church is its sense of itself as a family in which everyone knows every else... Clergy begin to feel stressed when they have more than 150 active members whom they try to know in depth. In fact, this is one of the reasons why clergy may keep the pastoral-size church from growing up to the next larger size... 150 active members are about all one person can manage."[175]

People tend to join – or indeed leave – the church because of the pastor.

Thirdly, there is the programme-size church, which typically has 150 to 350 active members:

> "The program-size church grows out of the necessity for a high-quality personal relationship with the pastor to be supplemented by other avenues of spiritual feeding. Programmes must now begin to fill that role. The well-functioning program-size church has many cells of activity, which are headed up by lay leaders. These lay leaders, in addition to providing structure and guidance for these cells, also take on some pastoral functions... Clergy are still at the centre of the program-size church, but their role shifts dramatically. Much of their times and attention is spent in planning with other lay leaders to ensure the highest quality programs. The pastor must spend a lot of time recruiting people to head up these smaller ministries, training, supervising, and evaluation them, and seeing to it that their morale remains high. In essence the pastor must often step back from direct ministry with people to coordinate and support volunteers who offer this ministry... To be sure, a member can expect a hospital or home call from the pastor when personal crisis or illness strikes. But members had better not expect this pastor to have a lot of time to drink coffee in people's kitchens."[176]

People tend to be attracted to pastoral-size churches not just because of the pastor but because of the programmes the church runs.

Finally, there is the corporate-size church with 350 or more active members.

> "The quality of Sunday morning worship is the first thing you usually notice in a corporate-size church. Because these churches usually have abundant resources, they will usually have the finest organ and one of the best choirs in town. A lot of work goes into making Sunday worship a rich experience. The head of staff usually spends more time than other clergy preparing for preaching and leading worship. In very large corporate-size churches, the head of staff may not even remember the names of many parishioners. When members are in the hospital, it is almost taken for granted that they will be visited by an associate or assistant pastor, rather than the senior pastor... Key to the success of the corporate-size church is the multiple staff and its ability to manage the diversity of its ministries in a collegial manner."[177]

A British analysis of leadership and church size

How does this relate to the British scene? The family-size church is what we in Britain would call the 'small' church. With the continued decline of churchgoing, sadly most English churches have less than 50 people in worship on a Sunday. Indeed, as far as my own denomination is concerned, over half of the churches belonging to the Baptist Union of Great Britain have less than 40 members.

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[174] Roy Oswald, 'How to minister effectively in family, pastoral, program and corporate sized churches' 32.
[175] Roy Oswald, 'How to minister effectively in family, pastoral, program and corporate sized churches' 35, 36.
[176] Roy Oswald, 'How to minister effectively in family, pastoral, program and corporate sized churches' 39-40.
[177] Roy Oswald, 'How to minister effectively in family, pastoral, program and corporate sized churches' 41, 42.

The pastoral-size church is what we might call a 'medium' size church. Most churches of this size would hope to have their own theologically trained pastor. Unlike the picture painted by Oswald, in Britain many of these churches would be quite used to meeting for Bible study and prayer without the pastor. Unlike family-size churches which tend to be one cell churches, pastoral-size churches in Britain are likely to have a number of small groups meeting during the week for fellowship. Nonetheless the pastor is the king (or queen) pin to whom everybody relates. The pastoral-size church is a very comfortable place to be. Although in larger pastoral size churches not everybody will know one another, on the basis that most people can with relative ease know the names of 60 to 75 people, the likelihood is that there will be more people who are known than are not known. Nobody feels a stranger in a pastoral-size church. Furthermore, from the perspective of the pastor, it is an eminently manageable size of church. Once, however, the congregation grows beyond 150, that moment the effectiveness of most pastors is seriously decreased. For instance, in a survey of 350 English Baptist churches, Alan Wilkinson and I discovered that "A full-time pastor could cope with the demands of a growing church with a membership of under 150. But beyond that point, the strain and limitations begin to have an adverse effect on the potential for growth of the church."[178]

I am not sure what we in Britain would call a programme church. The Baptist Union of Great Britain, in developing a network for larger churches, decided that churches with a membership of 200 or more are 'larger' churches. Strictly speaking, this is true: churches with more than 200 active members are larger than others. However, I prefer to stay with the American nomenclature: a programme-size church, for it is the programmes of such a church which are often the great attraction. People will often begin to attend programme-size churches because of the activities which they run for children or for young people or for young adults. These churches tend to have a second member of staff – in the British scene this second member is often a youth minister or worker. To my mind, a programme church begins to become a 'larger' church when it begins to seek to develop its staff team beyond just the minister, a youth worker, and perhaps a part-time church administrator. That seems to me to be the point when some programme churches begin the process of becoming a corporate church. At a guess I would therefore say that a 'larger' church is likely to have at least 250 people in worship on a Sunday, if not 300.

Finally, there is the corporate-size church. We tend to call them the 'large' churches. Corporate churches have got beyond the vicar and curate stage. They have staff teams – both pastoral staff (i.e. ministers) and office staff. There are, of course, different graduations among these corporate churches – clearly a mega-church with 1,000 or more members is a very different animal from a church with 500 members. However, within the British scene, there is probably little reason to refine these distinctions. Some people in Britain would define a large church as a church with over 300 in worship, in which case around 6% of all English churches fall into this category. If, however, we define a large church as a church with over 400 at worship, then only 4% of churches may be described as large – and many of these churches would be Roman Catholic churches. According to Peter Brierley, 1% (150) of Anglican churches and 2% of Baptist churches have 350 or more attending on a Sunday. These 200 churches respectively accounted for no less than 10% of all Anglican and 13% of all Baptist churchgoers in 2005.[179]

As we have seen, the Baptist Union of Great Britain has defined a 'larger' church as a church with more than 230 members.[180] But there are massive differences between a church with 230 in Sunday worship, and a church with 450 in Sunday worship. Furthermore, those differences do not simply relate to Sunday worship – they relate too to ministerial staffing. My working definition of a 'larger' church is that it is a 'programme' church which is in the process of becoming a 'corporate' church.[181] Part of this process relates to the development of church staff. No longer content with a 'vicar and a curate', the church is actively seeking to develop its staff team, both ministerial and administrative. A 'larger' church is therefore likely to have at least 250 people in worship on a Sunday.

A Welsh analysis of leadership and church size

John O'Keith, working within the Anglican Church in Wales, believes that a better analysis of the sizes of Christian congregations in England and Wales would be:

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[178] Paul Beasley-Murray & Alan Wilkinson, *Turning the Tide* 57.
[179] Peter Brierley, 'Pulling out of the Nosedive', *Ministry Today* 38 (Winter 2006) 10-11.
[180] In 2007 the Baptist Union formed a network of 'larger churches', which involved taking the largest 70 churches, which went down to churches with about 230 members.
[181] In some contexts, of course, it may not be right or indeed feasible for a programme church to become a corporate church. Some would argue that once a church gets to 280 it should be thinking about 'planting' or 'grafting' rather than getting any bigger itself. Personally, I believe that there is a place for larger churches – indeed, Peter Brierley in his research has shown that the larger the church, the more likely it is to attract worshippers. For a 'defence' of the larger church see Paul Beasley-Murray, '"Honey pots": a response', *Baptist Ministers' Journal* 304 (Oct 2009) 12-17.

- Cell (or family) – up to about 30 people
- Congregation (or pastoral) – 30-120 people
- Celebration (or programme) – 120-300 people
- Corporate – more than 300 people

Since his article is of interest, especially to those from within an Anglican church setting, I am taking the liberty to reproduce much of it. He comments: "For Anglicans, the situation is complicated considerably by the fact that many parishes consist of several congregations meeting in different buildings, often some distance apart, served by the same (often part-time) cleric. A typical example would be a parish of four former parishes in which, if all the regular worshippers turned up on the same day, they would number just over 100, which would put them close to the top end of the 'Pastoral' category. So the (probably part-time) incumbent of that parish has to answer an important question: do I treat them as one, large, pastoral congregation? Or do I treat them as three cell (family) congregations and a small pastoral one?"[182]

However, it is his description of how size affects leaders which is of particular interest. Let me quote from his article:

The Cell or Family Church usually functions "like an extended family, in which everyone knows everyone else reasonably well, newcomers are immediately noticeable, and the business of the church is usually done fairly informally. That all sounds fine: the church clearly has all the advantages of smallness, including being the most likely size to actually grow in numbers. But it also has the disadvantages of a family. Disputes within such a small congregation affect everyone in a very negative way. There is often not enough money nor people to do everything which needs to be done. And it is all too easy for the cell-sized congregation to become dominated by one patriarchal or matriarchal family.

This is a potential trap for unsuspecting clergy. These little congregations expect their clergy to give them pastoral care, but do not expect them to effect any significant change. In reality, if the often long-serving leaders of this congregation decide against an idea, it almost certainly won't happen. Not that there'll be any nastiness about it. All that will happen is that nothing will happen, because nothing can happen without the approval of these leaders. Even more difficult is when those same lay leaders are unpopular and others encourage the new vicar to confront them. A wise vicar declines to do so, knowing that, in reality, he or she probably can't win, and probably won't be able to win such a confrontation until they've been in post for at least five years. Meanwhile, the role of the vicar is to act as a guide and consultant to the lay leaders, winning their confidence, and nudging them in the direction he or she feels the church should go.

Small churches like this are often where newly ordained clergy are sent to gain experience before moving on to bigger and better things. Stuffed with ideas and enthusiasm, they arrive in a church where both are resisted with non-activity. After a few years of frustration, they either burn out or leave (or both) and often leave pastoral ministry altogether."[183]

In *the Congregation or 'Pastoral' church* (30-120 active members) "Clergy are usually at the centre of a Pastoral church. There are more potential leaders around, so they need someone at the centre to manage them. A leadership group, made up of the minister and a relatively small group of lay leaders usually run this kind of church. The ability of the leadership to lead usually depends on good communication with the congregation, but also on the ability and willingness of the leaders to delegate their ministry. In this kind of church, the role of the leader is to define reality and say 'Thank you' as often and in as many different ways as possible.

Without these abilities, the clergy person is in serious danger of burnout, as the sheer size of the job proves too big for all but the most gifted and energetic minister. Sadly, all too often, these churches are led by clergy who have burned out, but, because they have the freehold of the parish, are reluctant to move. Or they perform poorly at interviews because of their burnout symptoms and are therefore unable to move – who wants a vicar who is burned out before he starts work?

In a church of this size, everyone in the regular congregation expects (often unreasonably) to have a personal relationship with the clergy person. They expect him or her to meet their spiritual needs, although once the regular worshippers exceed 100, it is highly unlikely that he/she will succeed, mainly because the administrative burden will have become too great. It is likely that people expect the minister/vicar to turn up at every meeting. People

[182] John O'Keith, 'What type of church is yours?', *Ministry Today* 44 (September 2008) 7-8.
[183] John O'Keith, 'What type of church is yours?' 8-9.

expect (usually unreasonably) the vicar to call when they are unwell (they also expect him or her to know about the pastoral crisis without being told, but that's another story!). When people ask to see the minister, they expect to be seen within a couple of days at the most. The time demands on the vicar of a church of this size can become oppressive, but most members will respond with loyalty to a reasonable level of attention and guidance from this central figure.

In a congregation-size church, everyone who's been there for any length of time still knows everyone by name, and may well know the names of their spouses and children, and even what they all do for a living, but it would not go much deeper than that. As this church reaches its maximum size, people begin to find that they no longer know everyone, with the result that they begin to get nervous. They begin to ask whether they are losing the quality of friendship, relationship and fellowship that they prize so highly. The answer is that, if the church is to grow any larger, they will have to pay that price. If they are not willing to pay the price, they will (without any malice aforethought) begin to freeze out newcomers, preventing further expansion. Clergy all too often collude with this process, especially if they themselves begin to feel uncomfortable that they no longer know everyone, and can no longer offer the quality of pastoral care to which they have become accustomed.

People join the church because they like the interaction between pastor and people, but when a congregation grows to the point where its pastor's time and energy is drawn off into many other activities and the one-to-one pastoral relationship begins to suffer, adding additional clergy will have limited success. Anyway, shortage of clergy and money to pay them means that this is not usually an option."[184]

In *the Celebration or 'Programme' church* (120-300 active members) "Clergy are still at the centre…., but they are no longer pastors – they are team leaders. Much of their time and attention must be spent in planning with other lay leaders to ensure the highest quality programmes. The vicar must spend a lot of time recruiting people to head up these smaller ministries, training, supervising, and evaluating them, and seeing to it that their morale remains high. In essence the pastoral leader must often step back from direct ministry with people in order to co-ordinate and support volunteers who offer this ministry. Unless high priority is given to the spiritual and pastoral needs of lay leaders, those programmes will suffer.

Members of the programme church are unlikely to receive pastoral visits from the senior minister, because his or her time is rightly focused on supporting the other leaders. To see the vicar about a parish matter, it will probably be necessary to make an appointment at the church office several weeks in advance."[185]

In *the corporate church* (300 or more active members) "The senior minister will probably spend a lot of his or her time ensuring that the quality of worship is of the highest possible quality. For this church, second-best is just not good enough. In this church, the senior cleric may not even know, much less remember, the names of many churchgoers. He will rarely make pastoral visits, and then usually it will be to members of his central leadership team. Those who value highly the corporate church experience are willing to sacrifice a personal connection with the senior cleric in favour of the Corporate church's variety and quality of programme offerings.

Sometimes the senior cleric is so prominent that he or she acquires an almost 'legendary' quality, especially in the course of a long pastorate. Few may know this person well, but the role does not require it. They become a symbol of unity and stability in a very complicated congregational life.

The corporate church is distinguished from the programme church by its complexity and diversity… Laity lead on many levels, and the corporate church provides opportunity for gifted lay people to exert considerable influence. Key to the success of the corporate church is the multiple staff (lay and ordained) and its ability to manage the diversity of its ministries in a collegial manner. Maintaining energy and momentum in a corporate church is very difficult when there is division within the parish staff. Any inability to work together harmoniously is especially evident during Sunday worship where any tensions among the ordained leadership of the parish will manifest themselves in subtle ways.

It is at this point that clergy making the transition to the corporate church find themselves most vulnerable and unsupported. The clergy who are called as head of staff in corporate churches are usually multi-skilled people who have proved their skill in a great variety of pastoral situations. But now he has to learn to allow his staff to do things their own way, which is in itself a major new demand. Research using psychometric testing of clergy shows that congregations are best served when the multiple staff includes different types. The more diverse the staff, the

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[184] John O'Keith, 'What type of church is yours?' 9-10.
[185] John O'Keith, 'What type of church is yours?' 10-11.

greater its ability to minister to a diverse congregation. But this requirement for diversity makes multiple staff functioning more complicated: the more diverse the staff, the harder it is to understand and support one another's ministries... In addition to learning to manage a multiple staff, clergy making the transition to head of staff need to hone their administrative skills. These clergy are becoming chief executive officers of substantive operations. However, it is important to emphasise leadership skills over management skills. Managers manage the energy of a parish, but it is leaders who generate that energy. Without that energy, the corporate church, however well managed it may be, begins to decline."[186]

Different sizes call for different skills and attitudes

From all this it will be seen that different size churches call for different skills on the part of pastors. A consequence is that pastors need to develop different skills if they wish to see their churches grow. This in turn requires on the part of pastors a willingness to adopt different ways of working.

For instance, if a church is to grow beyond the 'congregational'-size, then the pastor must be willing to delegate. But not all pastors are willing delegate. According to Ted Engstrom, there are five reasons why leaders fail to delegate:
  i.   They believe their 'subordinates' won't be able to handle the assignment
  ii. They fear competition from their 'subordinates'
  iii. They are afraid of losing recognition
  iv. They are fearful their weaknesses will be exposed
  v.   The feel that they won't have the time to turn over the work and provide the necessary training.[187]

Secondly, following on from a willingness to delegate, is a willingness to have members one cannot pastor. It is reckoned that if a church is to grow beyond the 'congregation'-size church, then, to use terminology developed by Lyle Schaller, an American church growth consultant, the pastor must be willing to shift from a 'shepherd' role to a 'rancher' role. Notice that in a church led by a rancher the sheep are still shepherded, but the rancher does not do it: the rancher sees that it is done by others.[188] Unfortunately many pastors are not willing to let go!

Whatever the size, mutual respect is called for

Larger churches are not 'better' than smaller churches, they are simply different. I believe that there is a place for both small and larger churches. Unfortunately in Britain there is a negative mindset on the part of many pastors of smaller churches toward larger churches – their mantra is 'small is beautiful' , and fail to see that 'large' can be 'beautiful' too![189] Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, for instance, on the basis of Jesus' likening his disciples to a "little flock" (Luke 12.32) argue that "at the heart of Jesus' future… are small unassuming churches"; and that only a small church can be "the church of the cross".[190] But as one colleague said to me: "If we take the words of Jesus seriously when he said that he would build his church, we would never be satisfied with 'small' church." Another critic, Roy Dorey, argued that members of churches with more than 200 members "do not take mission seriously" and are complacent and inward-looking; that such churches "encourage attendance on the 'consumer pattern'", and that "those who attend such churches are in danger of being 'takers' rather than givers."[191] But some members of smaller churches can lack vision and can define success simply in terms of keeping the doors of the church open for another year. The fact that people often come to a larger church as a result of surfing the web is not to be condemned as a feature of modern consumerism; very often they search the web because of a need.

Why do larger churches attract people? It seems to me that the following factors distinguishing our churches from others:

  1.   Larger churches give a warm welcome. Time and again people visiting larger churches comment on the warmth of the welcome they receive. At first sight this might seem strange. One might think that visitors in a larger church would get lost in the crowd and would perhaps not receive much of a welcome, whereas in a smaller church visitors would be immediately noticeable and would therefore be much more welcome.

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[186] John O'Keith, 'What type of church is yours?' 11-12.
[187] Quoted by Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth*, (Regal Books, Ventura, California 1984) 57, 58.
[188] See Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* 58-60.
[189] See E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered* (1978).
[190] Tim Chester & Steve Timmis, *Total Church: A radical reshaping around gospel and community* (IVP, Nottingham 2007) 194.
[191] Roy Dorey, 'Minorities and Honeypots', *Baptist Ministers Journal* 301 (Jan/Feb 2009), 8-10.

However, most larger churches go to great efforts to ensure that visitors are made welcome. Larger churches tend to have welcome teams, who are keen to learn the names of newcomers, and ready to show people to their seats and in so doing perhaps introduce them to others in the church. Some larger churches even give gifts to newcomers. There is a professionalism behind the welcome not always found in a smaller church. This is not to say that small churches do not welcome others – but simply that larger churches tend to ensure there is always a welcome.[192]

2. Larger churches can provide anonymity for people seeking a haven. The experience of larger churches is that they often attract Christians who have been hurt or bruised as a result of church 'fights'. Larger churches also tend to attract people who have been 'burned out' and are exhausted as a result of having to take on too much responsibility in a smaller church. Larger churches provide space for people to recover from bad experiences in smaller churches. Being a 'passenger' can be part of a healing process. Please note: I am not saying that it is just smaller churches which wound people. Sadly church fights can also take place in larger churches.

3. Larger churches are more seeker-friendly, in the sense that non-Christians do not feel as conspicuous. It is much more difficult for a non-Christian to try out a small church. Please note: I am not saying that large crowds are a necessity for effective evangelism. Many a larger church runs Alpha courses with fewer people on the course compared to those who might attend the average sized 'small' church: however, what helps in that Alpha context is that normally the majority of people are not church people.

4. Larger churches tend to be positive places. People in larger churches often feel good about their church, their pastor, and their activities. As a result of their good experience of church, they are happy to tell their friends about their church. People look forward to coming to church – church is a great place to be. Not surprisingly people are attracted to such churches Please note: I am not saying that small churches by contrast are negative places. However, sometimes smaller churches can be marked by a sense of tiredness, routine, and even failure. It can be tough being a member of a smaller church.

5. The worship and preaching of larger churches is attractive, not only because of the quality of the 'performance', but also by the vibrancy of spirit. In an age when people are media-savvy, this is important. It is so much easier for worship in the larger church to become a 'celebration'. Please note: I am not saying that there are no vibrant small churches. Nor am I saying that the Spirit is only present when crowds of people flock to worship. Isaiah's encounter with God in his Temple was probably a very personal and individual experience.

6. Larger churches offer something for everybody. Small churches, for instance, are often unable to run a full programme for children and young people; they are also unlikely to have activities for young singles.[193] Large churches are also able to offer a range of worship styles. All this is attractive to many.

I recognise that not everybody is attracted to a larger church. There are many people who prefer the intimacy of a smaller church; they like to be the sense of 'family' which comes from everybody knowing one another. Difficulties, however, arise for the smaller church when it seeks to be a 'large church writ small'. Instead of smaller churches seeking to be 'all things to all men', they probably need to do just one or two things well. To put it in 'shopping' terms, there is a place for the small 'boutique' as well as for the larger 'supermarket'.

So in conclusion, there is a place for the larger church. Indeed, the 2005 English Church Census found that the larger the church, the more likely it was to be a growing church.[194] Some 1% (150) of Anglican churches and 2% (50) of Baptist churches had 350 or more attending on a Sunday; these 200 churches respectively accounted for no less than 10% of all Anglican and 13% of all Baptist churchgoers in 2005. Reflecting on these findings, Peter Brierley asked the question: "Could these larger churches be encouraged to act as 'Minster Model' churches, supporting local churches (presumably of their own denomination) by enabling their leaders and giving practical help as well as providing some financial resources?"[195] Or is there just too great a gulf between small and large churches?

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[192] John Drane, *After McDonaldization*, 93, was less charitable toward smaller churches: "Small churches often stay that way because they are intrinsically inhospitable, and not infrequently dominated by introspective cliques of people with no interest in other Christians, let alone those who may be outside the Church."

[193] John Drane, *After McDonaldization* 94: "Single people… typically find a large church can offer the chance to meet others who are single, without feeling pressurised to conform to stereotypes based on a norm of married life."

[194] See *UK Church Handbook Religious Trends* 6 (Christian Research, London 2006) edited by Peter Brierley. Peter Brierley's findings contradicted earlier research which appeared to suggest that decline was a particular problem for larger churches: see Bob Jackson, *Hope for the Church: Contemporary Strategies for Growth* (Church House Publishing, London 2002) 108-131 who argued that larger churches should learn to act like small churches on the ground that "fewer people now prefer a large church to a small one because what they aspire to get out of church has changed: once it was teaching and inspiration, but not it is belonging." However, as he himself acknowledges, the need to belong can be met in the creation of small groups or 'cells' in the larger church.

[195] Peter Brierley, 'Pulling out of the Nosedive', *Ministry Today* 38 (Winter 2006) 10, 11.

9. Leadership and pastoral longevity

Longer pastorates tend to be more fruitful

It has been said of pastoral ministry: "The first two years you can do nothing wrong. The second two years you can do nothing right. The fifth and sixth years of a ministry, either you leave or the people who think you can do nothing right, leave. Or you change, or they change, or you both change. Productive ministry emerges somewhere in the seventh year or beyond."[196]

George Barna conducted a survey of more than 1,000 senior pastors. One of his concerns related to ministerial mobility:

> "During the past decade, the average tenure of senior pastors has dropped to about four years from seven. This is alarming for several reasons:
> - The practice of changing churches is not a characteristic of a leading or effective pastor.
> - Because viable churches are based upon relationships and because a strong community takes time to build, the possibility of a pastor creating a strong relational network within the congregation is minimised by a short tenure.
> - Many pastors experience their most productive years in ministry between their third and fifteenth years of service.
> - When churches experience a revolving door pastorate, they are less likely to be trusting, communal and outward oriented."

Barna went on to comment:

> "The smaller the church body the more likely the pastor is to spend a few years in that pulpit. Perhaps this is one of the ramifications of the numbers-crazed, upwardly mobile mentality that plagues the pastorate. Failing to accomplish the numerical growth with which the profession is enamoured, pastors move to other congregations in hopes of finding a setting more responsive to their efforts. The revolving door syndrome begs the question of whether God really calls most pastors to spend only a few years in each church before moving to new (and, presumably, greener) pastures." [197]

The American scene is actually worse than it would appear from Barna's description, for Barna was writing of senior pastors: i.e. pastors of larger churches able to afford more than one pastor. In smaller churches ministerial tenure is often much shorter. According to Jerry Scruggs, with forced terminations on the increase, the median tenure for Southern Baptist pastors is barely three years.[198] By contrast, from a cursory examination of the Baptist Union of Great Britain's annual *Directory* it would appear that the average English Baptist pastorate has been a little longer at around six years.

Yet as a general rule short pastorates tend to be ineffective. Some years ago Alan Wilkinson and I discovered on the basis of a survey of some 350 English Baptist churches that "it is not until a minister has served for five to ten years in his church that a bias towards growth becomes evidence. In other words, it takes time for fruit to emerge from someone's leadership."[199] This finding within a British context has subsequently been confirmed by Peter Brierley who, on the basis of an analysis of 3,000 churches, found that:

1. Leaders staying less than six years are the most likely to see their congregations decline
2. Leaders staying for between 7 and 13 years are those most likely to see their congregation grow
3. Leaders staying longer than 15-17 years are likely to see their congregations decline
4. There are many brilliant exceptions in churches where leaders have served for more than 20, 30 or even 40 years or more with great success. [200]

My own experience of ministry has proved the benefits of long-term ministry. During the 13 years that I was minister of Altrincham Baptist Church, the church experienced substantial numerical growth, and in spite of high mobility the

[196] Lynn Anderson, 'Why I've stayed', *Leadership* VII.3, 77.
[197] *George Barna, Today's Pastors* (Regal Books, Ventura, California 1993) 36-37.
[198] 'The Flexible Leader', *Search* Winter 1991 30.
[199] Paul Beasley-Murray and Alan Wilkinson, *Turning the Tide* 34.
[200] Peter Brierley, 'The Optimum Length of Ministry', *Future First* February 2013.

membership quadrupled in size. Similarly during my twenty one years at Central Baptist Church, the church, which at one stage had declined to a membership of 260, ended up with a committed membership of 400 people.

Longer pastorates are not always desirable

There are dangers in long pastorates. There is no point, for instance, for a minister to remain in a church where the members as a whole refuse to follow the leadership offered; nor is there any point in remaining in a church where it quickly becomes apparent that one is a square peg in a round hole. On the other hand, sometimes the long term pastorate comes about by 'default'. For instance, some ministers would like to move on to another church, but fail to get an invitation. This is often the case for those in their mid-50s, who on the ground of their age alone are no longer perceived by many churches to be 'attractive' with a result that they become 'stuck'. In other walks of life they might be offered early retirement, but in the ministry they are left to work out their remaining years. For some these may be exceedingly fruitful. For others, however, they may be desperately barren.

The fact is that the long term pastorate is not of itself necessarily advantageous to minister or to church. For example, on the basis of a detailed series of consultations with thirty-four American ministers and twenty-six spouses, Roy Oswald, Gail Hinand, William Hobgood and Barton Lloyd listed eight potential disadvantages to the Long Term Pastorate – the Long Term Pastorate (LTP) being defined as one lasting more than ten years:

- A LTP may lead to over-identification between the clergy and congregation;
- In a LTP, a gap may develop between clergy and a growing number of the congregation;
- In a LTP, there is a danger that a stagnant ineffective climate can develop;
- In a LTP, there is a greater danger of clergy burnout;
- As negative influences of a LTP mount and begin to outweigh positive influences, a downward spiral may develop;
- An unhealthy LTP can ultimately lead both clergy and congregation to feel they are helplessly stuck with each other;
- A LTP may produce reduced personal benefits for the clergy and their families.[201]

"All of us", they wrote, "are aware... of the many long pastorates that are stale and lifeless at best, and downright disgraceful to the Christian Church at worst. Those who risk long tenure in a pastorate need to know the price of failure."[202]

Longer pastorates can be a great blessing

Yet, Oswald, Hinand, Hobgood and Lloyd go on to say: "Though the stakes are high, the advantages clearly indicate that for alert, competent clergy, the risks are worth taking." [203] According to their research there were six very positive advantages to a long-term pastorate:

- A LTP makes possible greater in-depth knowledge of and relationships between the pastor and individual church members as well as between clergy and the congregation as a whole;
- Experiencing a LTP makes possible cumulative developing knowledge and experience of each other for both clergy and congregation, as they observe and participate in each other's growth over time;
- Greater continuity and stability of leadership and program in a LTP makes possible events not possible during a short tenure;
- A LTP opens up possibilities of greater personal and spiritual growth for both clergy and congregation;
- A LTP makes possible greater in-depth knowledge of and relationships between the pastor and individual church members as well as between clergy and the congregation as a whole;
- A LTP makes possible deeper knowledge of and participation by the clergy in the community (local, professional, ecumenical, larger denominational); and
- A LTP allows additional personal benefits for both the clergy and his/her family.[204]

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[201] Roy M Oswald, Gail D. Hinand, William Chis Hobgood and Barton M. Lloyd, *New Visions for the Long Pastorate* (Alban Washington DC 1983) 30.
[202] *New Visions for the Long Pastorate* 8.
[203] *New Visions for the Long Pastorate* 8.
[204] *New Visions for the Long Pastorate* 29, 30.

The advantages of a long-term pastorate are very real, but not inevitable. In their summary Oswald, Hinand, Hobgood and Lloyd concluded:

> "In many ways, maintaining a healthy long pastorate is more difficult than changing pastorates every five to eight years. Clergy can dazzle and even fool a congregation over shorter periods of ministry. Many simply repeat their five year bag of tricks everywhere they go. In a long pastorate people get to know their clergy very well, both their assets and their liabilities. These clergy either need to be genuine, authentic persons who live by what they preach and advocate or, to the detriment of their ministry, they are soon found out. It is definitely easier to be the spiritual mentor of people over the short haul than over the long haul. In a long pastorate, clergy soon exhaust whatever wisdom or knowledge they brought to the scene and must continue to scramble to grow personally or end up repeating themselves and boring others. But those who do grow, who do monitor the other disadvantages of a long pastorate, will be likely to have a ministry that is very rewarding and fulfilling."[205]

Peter Brierley, at the end of his piece on the optimum length of ministry, wrote: "In order to serve for, say 10 years, a leader must have a goal, or target, or vision, at which to aim. After 10 years that vision needs renewing. Some leaders seem able to do this, and thus open up the possibility of a successful long-term ministry, while others are not able, for whatever reason, and probably need to move on to another church or challenge."[206]

As I reflect on my own experience, I have found long-term ministry extremely rewarding and fulfilling. It's a wonderful privilege, for instance, to be involved in families over a period of time and to see those children brought for a service of dedication later confess their own faith in baptism; and then at a later stage to be involved in their marriage and even in the dedication of their children. There can be great gains in family stability: my own children benefited no end from spending their formative years in one happy church. There are also great gains in the development of deep and meaningful friendships – constantly shifting from one place to another can lead to ministers and their spouses experiencing fairly shallow relationships.

Longer pastorates demand commitment, creativity and personal growth

If long-term ministries are to become the norm, then the following two things are necessary.

First, ministers need to free themselves from viewing ministry as a 'career', which involves constantly seeking to move to ever bigger and better churches. Eugene Peterson told of how when at the age of thirty he went to Christ Our King Presbyterian Church, Bel Air, Maryland, he determined to stay there for his entire ministry. Influenced by the Benedictine rule of 'stability' he saw the church as a place for developing 'vocational holiness'. As he came to the end of his twenty-four year pastorate he wrote:

> "I found a way to detach myself from the careerism mind-set that has been so ruinous to pastoral vocations and began to understand my congregation as a location for a spiritually maturing life and ministry. I don't insist on the metaphor for others. I might be the only one for whom it works. I do insist, though, that the congregation is not a job site to be abandoned when a better offer comes along."[207]

Secondly, longer pastorates will only be 'successful' to the degree that ministers commit themselves to growth and development in their own personal and professional lives – otherwise, they will become stale, and bore their churches rigid.

Conclusion

Pastors are called to be inspirational leaders. Precisely how they fulfil this calling will vary from personality to personality, from situation to situation. Leadership does not just happen: it involves the hard work of developing vision, creating strategies, and setting goals. Leadership also involves exciting fresh hope and faith in God among God's people. Leadership is time-demanding, people-intensive, and risk-laden. Leadership is always tough – the first

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[205] *New Visions for the Long Pastorate* 87.

[206] See David L. Odom, 'The seven-year itch' (Faithandleadership.com blog October 2, 2014): "Somewhere around year seven, I have found that the energy and ideas that fuelled the first phase must be replenished to go further. For some, that means leaving one place and starting the process again. For some, that means staying put but undertaking some kind of course direction."

[207] Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: an Exploration in Vocational Holiness*, Gracewing (Leominster 1992) 21.

people to put their head above the parapet draw the fire. Yet without leadership no church will grow and develop; no church will rise to the challenge of mission and ministry today. Thank God pastors are not called to lead alone – but to work with others to achieve the task, build the team, and meet the needs of individuals.

PART 2: THE EMPOWERING TEAM PLAYER

10. Pastors need to be team players

Good leaders always work in teams

To live out the call we need others. If ministers are to fulfil their calling as inspirational leaders, charismatic preachers, missionary strategists, compassionate pastors, creative liturgists and exemplary pilgrims, they need others around them to help. The terms pastor and team go together as much as love and marriage. To quote again John Adair's definition of leadership: "The good leader evokes or draws forth leadership from the group. He works as a senior partner with other members to achieve the task, build the team, and meet individual needs." Here we see that if leaders are to achieve the task, then they need to work with others to achieve that task; what's more, as part of achieving the task they build teams.

But pastors are not just called to be team leaders; they are called to be team players. You cannot truly lead a team unless you are a good team player. Part of being a good team player is delegating to others significant responsibility in achieving the mission of the church. You cannot be a good team leader if you insist in having a finger in every pie.

Alastair Campbell says much the same thing in his study of leadership in the worlds of politics and sport: "The best team leaders are the best team players."[208] Furthermore, he talks of the importance not just of team-building but of "teamship":

> "The effective team means good leadership, a strong and shared sense of strategy and objectives, the resources to deliver them and clarity as to individual roles. That is the essence of *team-building*. Slightly separate from this is *teamship*, which is more like the glue that holds the team together: a sense of openness and creativity, a resistance to the blame game when things go wrong, and a culture that encourages development, adaptability and endless renewal."[209]

I find this distinction helpful. One final statement which every insecure pastor should note:

> "If giving praise where praise is due is one essential attribute of a successful team, not taking credit for someone else's achievement is a natural corollary."[210]

Team leaders empower God's people

Team leadership is about empowering others. Team leaders love to see others in the limelight, sharing in the mission and ministry of the church Andrew Le Peau wrote: "Organisations that are built on the preaching, teaching, thinking, entertaining, fund-raising charisma of one person – of which there are many in Christendom – are built contrary to Scripture. These are not bodies. These are grotesque mutations."[211] Similarly John Stott commented: "The New Testament concept of the pastor is not of a person who jealousy guards all ministry in his hands… Instead of monopolising all ministry to himself, he actually multiplies ministries."[212]

There is no place for the 'one-man' band, in which a single pastor plays all the instruments. Rather, if we develop the musical analogy, the role of the pastor is to be like the conductor of an orchestra. "In an orchestra the task of the conductor is to get all the members functioning together and playing in harmony. It is not his job to dash around the

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[208] Alastair Campbell, *Winners And How They Succeed* 74.
[209] Alastair Campbell, *Winners And How They Succeed* 97.
[210] Alastair Campbell, *Winners And How They Succeed* 106.
[211] Andrew T. Le Peau, *Paths of Leadership* (British Edition: Scripture Union, London 1984) 60.
[212] John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (IVP Leicester 1979) 167.

seats playing all the instruments himself one after another."[213] There is, however, a disadvantage to this analogy: it suggests dilettantism rather than purpose. The same criticism applies to the analogy of a choir conductor over against a vocal soloist.[214] A better analogy is perhaps that of a coach, encouraging the team. Alan Stibbs, for instance, likened the pastor to a rowing coach, whose "distinctive task is to get every member pulling his weight, and to train them as a crew to row effectively".[215]

But is a 'rowing coach' the best model for pastors seeking to mobilise their people? Tom Cadman of New Zealand argued that pastors should model themselves on rugby captains!

> "In New Zealand we have two favourite sports, cricket in the summer and rugby football in the winter. In cricket, one man can virtually win the day. If he scores many runs when batting and bowls out several of the opposition when fielding, it is possible for other team members to fail or stand around him and watch him produce results. With rugby this seldom if ever happens. For the whole game, the whole team is on the field, including the captain. He must lead and inspire but without a team effort, it is virtually impossible for one man to win the game. The image Paul uses of the ministry is akin to that of a rugby captain than that of a cricket captain. Ministers are encouragers of the team, all of whom are engaged in mission. At no point of the game can they be spectators. Sadly the pattern we have developed is that of the minister as 'super-player', who, by his skill and prowess, keeps the team going while most of the players spend their time in the pavilion (pews) hoping that he will not let them down."[216]

One way of empowering people for service is by creating teams, and within the context of the team giving power and responsibility to the people concerned. For this to happen, ministers need to be good team players – happy to share ministry with others, happy to allow others to take initiatives, happy to lead but not to control. Alas some ministers find this difficult – perhaps because of inner insecurities they find it difficult to let go. But God is in the business of teams!

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[213] Michael Griffiths, *Cinderella with Amnesia* (IVP, London 1975) 59.
[214] See Roy. D. Phillips, *Letting Go: Transforming Congregations for Ministry* (Alban Institute, 1999) 22: "The professional minister of past generations was like the trained vocal soloist. But suddenly the contemporary need is for choral sound. Dramatically different skills are needed to evoke a good sound from an ensemble than are required for singing solos."
[215] Unfortunately I cannot find the precise source of this quotation.
[216] Tom Cadman, 'How I practise my ministry', *Baptist World Alliance Commission on Pastoral Leadership* (Maclean, Virginia 1982).

Sermon: The ministry of all (Ephesians 4.11-12)

In many churches the pastor has been expected to do all the jobs, or at least all the jobs of any real significance.[217] In the words of one American church:

> Meet Pastor Jones, Superstar.
> He can preach, counsel, evangelise, administrate, communicate and sometimes even conciliate. He can also raise the budget.
> He handles Sunday morning better than any quizmaster on weekday TV.
> He is better with words than most political candidates.
> As a scholar he surpasses many seminary professors.
> No church function will be complete without him.
> His church, of course, 'Counts Itself Fortunate'.
> Alas, not many churches can boast such talents.

What a nonsense that statement is. Yes, of course, pastors have a key role to play. In the words of the American church growth Peter Wagner, the first vital sign of a healthy growing church is "a pastor who is a possibility thinker and whose dynamic leadership has been used to catalyse the entire church for growth". It is obvious that churches, if they would grow need pastors who are leaders with vision and drive. But it is equally obvious that pastors alone cannot grow churches. Not surprisingly, therefore, Peter Wagner, went on to say that the second vital sign of a healthy growing church is "a well-mobilised laity which has discovered, develop and is using all the spiritual gifts for growth". If a church would grow, then the church as a whole must be willing to put its back into Christian service. But that demands time, effort and energy – and that is not easy.

I love the statement drawn up a good number of years ago by Christ Church, Winchester. Although a little dated in its expression, it still rings true:

> "There are 566 members in our church, but 100 are frail and elderly.
> That leaves 466 to do all the work; but 80 are young people at college.
> That leaves 396 to do all the work; but 150 are tired business men,
> so that leaves 236 to do all the work.
> And 150 are busy housewives with children, that leaves 86 to do all the work;
> And a further 46 have more important outside interests.
> That leaves 40 to do all the work; but 15 live too far away to come regularly,
> so that leaves 25 to do all the work.
> And 23 say that they've already done their bit for the church.
> That leaves you and me, and I'm exhausted. Good Luck to you!"

As your pastor, I am very conscious of all the work which is done by many people in the church. I am grateful to God for all that is done. But we cannot rest on our laurels. There is a world out there needing God's love, there is a world out there needing to be won for Christ. That world will only be touched with God's love and won for Christ as we all play our part. So let me seek to encourage and inspire us all to fulfil the work God has given us to do.

Listen again to the words of the Apostle Paul: "It was he (Christ) who 'gave gifts'; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ" (Eph 4.11, 12).

1. God gives to his church leaders

"He appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers." Christ has given to his church leaders. Precisely what those leaders are called, will vary from place to place, and from age to age. Within the context of our own church, for instance, I would include deacons as being those whom Christ has appointed to be leaders in his church.

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[217] Sermon preached at Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford on July 24, 2005, and slightly adapted. The Scriptures quoted are from the GNB.

On this Sunday when we are welcoming five new deacons, it is good to remind ourselves that one of the key roles deacons have to play is to share with the ministers in leading the church. Indeed, we speak of the ministers and the deacons forming a leadership team. This doesn't mean that the ministers and deacons have any right to dictate to the church. Far from it. Christian leadership is always a servant ministry, which leaves people free to accept or not to accept its direction. Leaders are to be visionaries who inspire God's people to go the way of Christ.

Or to be more specific, Ade, Emma, John, Lesley, and Ursula – Christ has appointed all five of you to be visionary leaders, inspiring us to go the way of Christ. It's interesting to reflect on how different you five are: Ade has a passion for social action; Emma has a passion for evangelism; John has a passion for young people; Lesley a passion for young mothers along with younger people; and Ursula has a passion for pastoral care. Those varying passions are, I believe, gifts of the risen Christ to his church.

To the church, I believe that Christ would say: "Be grateful for my gifts. Honour these men and women whom I have given to be my church." To the new deacons I believe that Christ would say: "Remain passionate, be true to your passions, inspire the church to be passionate about social action, about evangelism, about young people and young mothers, as also about pastoral care. Yes, fulfil the ministry to which Christ has called you."

2. God expects all his people to be ministers

Not all can be leaders: but God expects all his people to be ministers. As Baptists we believe in the leadership of some, and the ministry of all. All who belong to the people of God, have a role to play within the purposes of God. Listen again to the Apostle Paul. Christ appointed leaders in his church "to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service" – or to use the more traditional language of the NRSV: Christ appointed leaders "to equip the saints for the work of ministry".

Ministry is not the work of the few, it is the work of us all. Unfortunately over the years the word 'ministry' has become a technical term for the work carried out by those who have been ordained. So when I am asked to sign somebody's passport application and have to answer the question of my occupation, I write: 'minister of religion'. But Paul here in Ephesians 4 suggests that all God's people are ministers, in the sense that all God's people are involved in Christian service. I read of a church which amended its notice-board to make this point. It read: 'Pastor: Rev Jo Bloggs. Ministers: All of us'. If somebody were to ask you how many ministers Central Baptist Church has, what would you say? On the basis of Ephesians 4 the true answer would not be four, but 400. For on this definition every church member is a minister.

We give expression to this reality at every baptismal service. After the candidates have been baptised, we lay hands upon them and pray that they may be filled afresh with the Spirit of God. Why? Theologians speak of this as an act of 'lay-ordination'. Just as when I was ordained, hands were laid upon me and prayer was made that I might be filled afresh with the Spirit for the ministry to which God had called me, so something similar happens at baptism. All God's people are called to be ministers.

Today we are welcoming into membership a number of new members. We shall be welcoming them not just into the membership of the church, but also into the ministry of the church. God expects all his people to be ministers. To make this possible God has gifted each one of us. Look again at Eph 4.7: "Each one of us has received a special gift." Paul makes the same point when writing to the Corinthians: "The Spirit gives to each one, just as he determines" (1 Cor 12.11). God when he gives his Holy Spirit, gifts each one of us. Each one of us is a gifted individual. Each one of us is a talented individual. Or to use a New Testament expression, each one of us is charismatic. Here at Central Baptist Church we have 400 gifted, talented, charismatic ministers. What an amazing thought!

3.   God calls us to differing forms of ministry

Just as there is variety within Christian leadership, for not every leader is an apostle or a prophet or an evangelist or whatever, so too there is variety within Christian ministry. There is no one form of Christian service. Our task is to discover the gifts he has given and then use them in his service.

In the first place, God calls us all to use our gifts in the service of the church. As pastor of this church I am grateful to God for the many ways in which people serve Christ through this church: where would we be without Sunday School

teachers, musicians, and sound technicians? Not to mention all the many leaders and helpers of our various organisations and activities.

Secondly, God calls some to serve Christ in the community. Gifts are not to be limited for use within the church: Christ wants us to use our gifts in the service of his Kingdom, which is far bigger than the church. There is a great need for Christians to use their gifts serving Christ in the community. Christians need to be involved in every area of community life. I believe, e.g., that God wants his people to serve him as magistrates, local councillors, school governors, and trade-unionists. Not everybody is gifted – but some are. Is that someone you?

Thirdly, God calls others to serve in the wider world. Only last week Tony Campolo was challenging the churches of Chelmsford to get involved in Africa. I am delighted that we shall be sending out this week a sixteen-person strong team to work for three weeks in Ghana.

Fourthly, God calls us all to serve him in the workplace. Whether the work place be at home or in the office or wherever, all of us are called to be salt and light.

Remember: Christian service – Christian ministry – is incumbent upon us all. Christ, says Paul, appointed leaders "to prepare ALL God's people for the work of Christian service". None of us are to be pew-fodder. All of us have a role to play in the service of Christ. Only in this way will we be the church that God intends us to be.

If we are not fulfilling our ministry, if we are not performing the particular service to which God has called us, then we are failing God and failing his church. This becomes clear when we look at one of the word Paul uses here. Paul speaks of Christ giving various kinds of leaders to "prepare" (GNB) or "equip" (NRSV) all God's people for Christian service.

The word translated as "prepare" or "equip" is a fascinating little word.
• In the context of surgery it was used of the setting of broken bones. From this use we can perhaps infer Christ gave leaders to his church to ensure that the structures of the body of Christ are set aright; but where Christians are not using their gifts, then the church of Christ can be likened to a cripple unable to do any useful work.
• Or to change the imagery, this same Greek word in the context of fishing could be used of mending nets. From this we can infer that Christ gave leaders to his church to help God's people to live up to their calling to be 'fishers of men'; but where Christians are not using their gifts, then the church will have as much success in winning people for Christ as fishermen seeking to catch fish with gaping holes in their nets!

To sum up: in God's church there are no super-stars. One-man bands are not what ministry is all about. All of us have been called and gifted to serve Christ. Let us not fail God or one another – let us each fulfil the ministry to which God has called us.

11. God is in the business of teams

Ministers are not to lead on their own; rather they are to lead with others. They are to be team-builders and team-players. This principle is derived from the New Testament.

Jesus built teams

Jesus did not exercise a solo ministry, but he built a team of disciples, known as the Twelve.[218] Attention has been drawn to Luke 6.13: "He called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles." Here there is a distinction between the Twelve and a general group of disciples: the implication may well be that here the Twelve "are designated as leaders among the disciples"; they are "set apart as the leaders within this new movement."[219]

It is of interest that when Jesus sent out his disciples 'on mission', he sent them out in twos (see Mark 6.7; Luke 10.1). Why was this so? It might be argued that more people might have heard the Good News of the Kingdom if the disciples had gone out one by one. Almost certainly this sending out in twos had its roots in a Jewish custom:

> "It had a twofold significance; first it was to protect the messengers; on lonely and dangerous roads it is good for the messenger to have someone at his side. On the other hand, sending out messengers in pairs was an application of the legal clause of Deut 17.6; 19.15, which originally applied to judicial proceedings: only statements on which two witnesses agree are trustworthy. In the same way, the one of the two who is a spokesman (see Acts 14.2) is to have his yoke-fellow by him to confirm his message."[220]

The purpose of the pairing was therefore more than simply providing mutual comfort and help – it underlined the validity of the message being proclaimed. However, as far as the disciples of Jesus were concerned, it surely also came to symbolise the fact that "service for Jesus… can never be done by only one person. The teamwork of at least two is a symbol of this truth."[221]

The 'Magnificent Seven' formed a team

The appointment of the Seven to free the apostles to concentrate on prayer and the ministry of the word (see Acts 6.1-7) is of interest. Here we have the creation of a 'second-tier' leadership team. Traditionally these seven men have been viewed as 'deacons', for their task is described in terms of 'serving tables' (*diakonein trapezeis*).[222] However, the Greek word *diakonia* is used to describe 'ministry' in general (see, e.g. 1 Cor 12.5; 2 Cor 5.18; Eph 4.12) and therefore does not refer to the service rendered later by 'deacons'. All of the Seven in Acts 6 were men of spiritual distinction ("men known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom", 6.3). In particular Stephen was a creative theologian (see Acts 7) and Philip a gifted evangelist (see Acts 8). The nomenclature of the Seven indicates that they belonged to the Hellenist group within the early church, and we are probably right in assuming that they were already acting as leaders within that particular group. There is much to be said for the suggestion that they were more akin to 'elders' than 'deacons'.

There is one aspect of this appointment which is of great relevance today: viz. the creative way in which the church in Jerusalem handled a pastoral problem with implications for the leadership of the church. "The early church seems to

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[218] See John Adair, *The Leadership of Jesus and its Legacy Today* (Canterbury Press, Norwich 2001) 109-222.

[219] See M.J. Wilkins, 'Disciples and Discipleship' 204 in the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (IVP, Nottingham 2nd edition 2013) edited by Joel B. Green.

[220] Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology I* (English Translation: SCM, London 1971) 235.

[221] Edward Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark* (English Translation: SPCK, London 1971) 129.

[222] There is much debate as to the meaning of 'serving tables'. Does it refer to the financial management of the common fund (the tables then being bankers' tables)? The GNB, for instance, renders the phrase: "handle finances". Or does it refer to the distribution of food (so the NIV) brought together perhaps at the daily agape meals (the equivalent of the Jewish 'poor basket')? Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (English Translation: SCM, London 1964) 13 favoured the latter, drawing parallels with the Jewish system of relief. Certainty is impossible to obtain.

have been prepared to adjust its procedures, alter its organisational structure, and develop new posts of responsibility in response to existing needs and for the sake of the ongoing proclamation of the Word of God."[223]

With regard to the creation of this team of seven, it is of interest to note that although the apostles took the initiative in this appointment, they asked the church to "select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task" (Acts 6.3). Some English versions appear to suggest that it was the apostles who actually appointed the seven leaders: e.g. the NIV translates "we will turn over the responsibility to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word". However, it is more likely that the "we" here includes those whom they address; it means 'we, the Christians of Jerusalem'; not 'we, the apostles'.[224]

The Apostle Paul headed many teams

The Apostle Paul never operated as a solo pastor. He constantly surrounded himself with colleagues who could share in the pastoral task. It is reckoned that, if one adds all the names found in Acts and in the 'Corpus Paulinum', then at various times some one hundred people were associated with the apostle.

Significantly, whenever Paul spoke of himself as an apostle, it was never in the context of the exercise of authority.[225] His favourite word to describe those with whom he served was 'co-worker' (*sunergos*). He used that term twelve times to identify such people as Priscilla and Aquila (Rom 16.13), Urbanus (Rom 16.9), Timothy (Rom 16.21; 1 Thess 3.2), Titus (2 Cor 8.23), Epaphroditus (Phil 2.25), Clement (Phil 4.3), Justus (Col 4.11), Philemon (Philem 1), and Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke (Philem 24). Paul saw himself as part of a 'team' of leaders. What is more among this team of leaders there was great affection for one another (see Acts 20.37; 1 Cor 4.17).

Although very much a leader of leaders, Paul never created a hierarchy within the churches for which he was responsible.[226] In this respect Joseph Hellerman writes: "It is interesting to note, in light of Paul's conviction that the church is a family, that the apostle's model of plurality of leadership was culturally anomalous to say the least. Families in the ancient world universally functioned under the aegis of strong one-man leadership, in the person of a family patriarch. It would have been quite natural, therefore, for Paul to appoint a single man to serve as the overseer of each local church family."[227] The words of Paul to the church at Philippi, although not specifically directed to church leaders, nonetheless seem to sum up his approach to team leadership: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves" (Phil 2.4).

Wherever we look, the churches of the New Testament were led by a team of leaders. It is true that in the Pastorals the list of qualifications for leadership speaks of a 'bishop-elder' in the singular (see 1 Tim 3.2 and Titus 1.7): however, these are probably examples of what is known as a 'generic singular' (see 1 Tim 5.4-10 where the 'generic singular' is also used of widows).

Only Diotrephes refused to be a team player

The only example of one-man ministry or one-man leadership in the New Testament is perhaps to be found in 3 John 9 where "the elder" writes of "Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first". However, as the letter clearly indicates, Diotrephes set no example. "He assumed a position of leadership in his congregation because of an egocentric lust for power, which he confused with zeal for the Gospel."[228] C.H. Dodd made the interesting comment that Diotrephes was "a symptom of the disease which the quasi-apostolic ministry of monarchical bishops was designed to receive"![229]

From this survey of New Testament evidence regarding the plurality of leadership, we may conclude with John Goldingay: "For all the diversity of patterns in the New Testament, there is no example of the concentration of local leadership in one man."[230] Or as Colin Brown said: "It would seem to be the case, that if there was to be a church at all

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[223] Richard Longenecker – quoted by David Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* 233.
[224] So David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Athlone Press, London 1956) 238.
[225] Ernest Best, *Paul and His Converts* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1988) 19.
[226] See Ernest Best, *Paul and His Converts* 145.
[227] Joseph H. Hellerman, *Embracing Shared Leadership: Power and Status in the Early Church and Why It Matters Today* (Kregel, Grand Rapids 2013) 194.
[228] Stephen Smalley, *1,2,3 John* (Word, Waco, Texas 1984) 356.
[229] C.H.Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1946) 164.
[230] John Goldingay, *Authority and Ministry* (Grove, Bramcote, Nottingham 1976) 23-24.

in the New Testament, it needed at least two ministers."[231] In other words, the early church was very much into team leadership!

12. Teams in the life of a church

Teams have great advantages

Working together in a team is always a strengthening experience. In the words of the 'Preacher': "Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone and falls, it's just too bad, because there is no one to help him. If it is cold, two can sleep together and stay warm, but how can you keep warm by yourself? Two people can resist an attack that would defeat one person alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break" (Eccl 4.9-12 GNB). Here we see "the profit, resilience, comfort and strength" which comes from partnership.[232]

Working together has great advantages.

- Leaders are able to complement one another, for no one has all the gifts necessary for an all-round ministry. Members of a leadership team can build up one another's strengths and compensate for one another's weaknesses
- Leaders are able to encourage one another. Leadership can be a lonely business, but where leadership is shared, there support can be derived. Members of a leadership team can identify one another's gifts and encourage each other and develop and use them
- Leaders are able to be accountable to one another. It is not good either for the individual or the local church if a leader is not in a position to receive correction when things go wrong. Members of a leadership team should be able to speak the truth in love to one another (see Eph 4.15), and so learn from failure and be the stronger for the future.

Teams can have a major impact on the lives of the people involved, and as a result the members of a team develop in ministry as well as become energised for ministry. This is where teams are different from the traditional church leadership structure of committees. In this respect Stanley Ott helpfully contrasts the positive nature of what he calls the 'ministry team' over against the committee:

"Committees are almost always task-driven, and only rarely do they facilitate personal friendships among their members and intentionally develop their discipleship as well as accomplish their mission. Ministry teams perform all three functions.

Ministry teams predispose members to move forward with passion and enthusiasm, whereas committees are inclined to safeguard present activities and move slowly. Ministry teams get energised with new ideas, whereas committees worry about setting a precedent. Ministry teams are learning organisations, whereas committees are continuing organisations… Committees tend toward maintenance, while teams tend toward movement."[233]

On the basis of Phil 4.3 where Paul describes a church leader, whose identity we do not know, as a 'yoke-fellow',[234] Ott wrote "We are yoked to other believers in loyalty, friendship, and service. Yokefellows are 'teammates' pulling a common load in service to Christ – a great picture of a ministry team."[235]

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[231] Colin Brown, 'New Testament Patterns of Ministry' in *Ministry in the Seventies* (Falcon, London 1970 edited by Clive Porterhouse) 19. Similarly James Lawrence, *Growing Leaders* (CPAS/BRF, Oxford 2004) 233-234.

[232] Derek Kidner, *A Time to Mourn and a Time to Dance* (IVP, Leicester 1976) 50.

[233] E. Stanley Ott, *Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 2004) x. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* 376-377 similarly has little time for committees, which he contrasts with what he terms 'lay ministries', which are in effect the same as Ott's ministry teams: "Committees discuss it, but ministries do it. Committees argue, ministries act. Committees maintain, ministries minister. Committees talk and consider, ministries serve and care. Committees discuss needs, ministries meet needs."

[234] *Suzugos* – translated by the NRSV as 'companion'; by the GNB as 'partner'; by the REB as 'comrade'.

[235] Stanley Ott, *Transform Your Church with Ministry Teams* 6.

Teams vary in shape and size

Most churches have one basic leadership team. The name that is given to this team varies: some churches talk of the board, some of the oversight, others of the elders, yet others of the deacons. Just as in the New Testament there was no one pattern for a leadership team, neither does there have to be one pattern today.

The size of these leadership teams can vary enormously. Some might only have three or four members – some many more. I have even known leadership teams with 20 or more members. However, there comes a point when a team becomes a meeting. According to David Cormack, for instance: "Two's company, three's a team, and more than fifteen's a crowd."[236]

The Australian church consultant John Mallison argued that twelve is the upper limit for a small group in which members are able to participate meaningfully. Beyond that number, he says, group tends to be dominated by a few aggressive members.[237] He based his argument on a simple equation which expresses the number of relationships possible among people in various sized groups: viz. R = N (N-1)! In this equation the number of relationships (R) equals the number of persons in the group (N), multiplied by one less than the number of persons in the group (N-1).

Or to put it another way, as shown in the diagram below, when four people are involved in dialogue there is a pattern of twelve interpersonal relationships, or in terms of the equation: 4 people, multiplied by 3 [one less than the number of people present] = 12 relationships
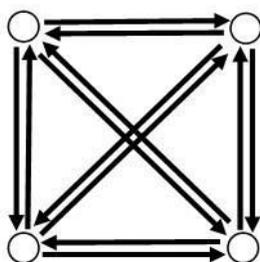
The number of relationships increases steeply as only a few extra are added to a group:

> For a group of 6 (6 x 5) – 30 relationships
> For a group of 8 (8 x 7) – 56 relationships
> For a group of 10 (10 x9) – 90 relationships
> For a group of 12 (12 x 11) – 132 relationships
> For a group of 15 (15 x 14) – 210 relationships
> For a group of 20 (20 x 19) – 380 relationships

The larger the group, the less possibility there is for people to operate meaningfully with one another.

Mallison was writing about groups that come together to pray, study and share. However, the same principle applies to leadership teams that come together to pray, reflect and plan. If a leadership team has too many people in it, the group becomes a meeting, rather than a team.

Building a leadership team

One of the key tasks of pastors is to spend time building their leadership team. In many churches pastors are not able to build a team in the sense of choosing their own men and women to serve on the leadership team (for this tends to be the privilege of the church), but they can build the team by welding together those who have been elected and making them into a team. All too often leadership teams are made up of rugged individualists, men and women doing well in their own professions and accustomed to doing their own thing at work, who then transfer the same attitudes to the leadership team. In such situations pastors need to encourage their leaders to develop their relationships with one another, and not just their relationship with their Lord. The two are intertwined.

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[236] David Cormack, *Team Spirit* (MARC, Bromley 1987) 20.
[237] John Mallison, *Building Small Groups in the Christian Community* (British edition, Scripture Union, London 1978) 55.

How is this process of team building best carried out? Firstly, through the pastor spending time with leaders. Pastors should concentrate on developing their own relationship with each of their leaders, visiting them in their homes or going out for a drink together, listening to their hopes and aspirations, and sharing with them on an individual basis their dreams and ideas for the church. The leaders are the VIPs of the church, not because of any standing they may have, but because of the role they have to play. Pastors need to spend time with their leaders.

Secondly, teams are built through the leaders spending time bonding together. Formal leadership team meetings, where the focus is inevitably on the business of the day, do not provide a good opportunity. This is best done in more informal settings. Some leadership teams go away for a morning or a day together. Even better is for the leadership team to go away for a weekend together, with or without a speaker or team facilitator. True it means that the leaders will be missing from a morning service, but surely any church worth should be able to cope with its leadership team being away for one Sunday morning in the year.

Creating task teams

As churches grow and develop there is much to be said for the leadership team delegating aspects of the mission of the church to 'task teams'. In *Turning the Tide* Alan Wilkinson and I set out a model for ministry, which involved the creation of task teams (at the time we called them multi-directional 'ministry' teams) responsible for all the main areas of the church's mission.[238] Building on this model we then created at Altrincham Baptist Church five task teams relating to what we perceived were the five key tasks of the church:

1. A social action team sought to identify and meet the needs of the community. It was responsible for various 'task forces' and constantly prodded people to get involved.
2. An evangelism team sought to encourage the church to 'by all means save some'. It was responsible for initiating new evangelistic projects and encouraging current evangelistic activities.
3. A nurture team was in the business of seeing people built up in their faith, and was responsible for all the church's small group activity.
4. A development team built on the work of the nurture team and sought to draw out people's natural and spiritual gifts so that they could be used to greatest effect within the body. This team was also responsible for thinking through matters relating to the ongoing development of the life of the church as a whole, and bringing any appropriate proposals to the leadership team.
5. A pastoral team co-ordinated the wider work of visiting, and shared with the pastor the workload of counselling and general pastoring.

This model of 'teams' has a number of advantages:

1. The model ensures that the church is engaged in 'all-round' ministry. All too often churches reflect the interests or gifts of a minister. Some ministers are passionate about small groups, other ministers are passionate about evangelism, while yet other minsters are passionate about getting stuck into the community. On this model there are five teams headed up by five different leaders, each of whom is almost 'one-eyed' in their passion for the particular area of ministry which they are heading up. As a result a degree of tension is built up as the church is stretched into different areas of mission. But this tension is good, because it ensures that there is breadth to the church's mission.
2. The model ensures that leadership is meaningfully shared with other leaders. Although leadership can be shared within a conventional leadership team, most leadership teams are driven by the minister. Time and again it is the minister who is responsible for drawing up the agenda and seeing that decisions are implemented. But on this model five different people are in the business of leading a team.
3. The model ensures that ministry is shared more effectively. Each team member – along with other members of the team – has ownership of a particular area of ministry. On the one hand, this releases gifts of leadership and of service. On the other hand, it releases time and energy. One reason why many churches never break the 150-175 membership barrier, is that ministry is often solely in the hands of the pastor, whose time and energy are inevitably limited.
4. The model frees up the leadership team to focus on the core tasks of leading the church. Otherwise, every agenda of the leadership could have to deal with every aspect of the church's mission; but this can be extraordinarily time consuming. What a difference it can make when a leadership team knows that there are others taking responsibility for such matters as evangelism, social action, and nurture.

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[238] See Paul Beasley-Murray & Alan Wilkinson, *Turning the Tide* 75-83.

5. The model brings constant challenge to the priorities of the leadership team. For each task team is accountable to the leadership team – and part of that accountability involves the task teams coming up with ideas for new initiatives for the church as a whole.

It is important to note that these five teams were compact in size. They were responsible for thinking and praying through possible courses of action, but they did not necessarily do all the work themselves. They simply sought to spearhead the work and encouraged others in the church to get stuck in.

Notice too that on this model even the pastoral team was headed by someone other than the pastor. There is a lot to be said for ministers being accountable to a team for their pastoral care. In such a context I have been made aware, for instance, of people in need of my attention; or have become conscious of issues of which otherwise I might have been unaware.

The beauty of this model of task teams is that it can be adapted to different situations. A smaller church, for instance, might only be able to run with two teams: one team perhaps responsible for mission, and the other team responsible for nurture and pastoral care; indeed, in a very small church, the tasks of these two teams might have to be shouldered just by two individuals. The key advantage of this model is that it stops the pastor taking responsibility for everything, and in this way becoming the 'cork' in the bottle stopping further expansion.

In a larger church this model of task teams can be developed. This is precisely what happened at Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford. There we developed a host of task teams, each taking responsibility for particular areas of the church's mission, and in this way freeing up the leadership team to focus on the bigger picture. Furthermore, at Chelmsford each team was given a budget. The budgets for each team were drawn up by the finance team in the light of 'bids' from each team – and, of course, in the light of the church's finances as a whole. This allocation of money created a sense of responsibility which otherwise they might not have had.

Developing a team of small group leaders

Small groups are key 'building blocks' of the church – or to use another metaphor, they are vital 'cells' within the body of Christ. Growing churches do not simply 'have' small groups; rather they are 'made up' of small groups. Resourced by the wider fellowship, at their best small groups are "dynamic, close-knit units of committed people, dedicated to evangelism, worship, mutual growth and real fellowship with God at the centre".[239] The leadership of small groups is therefore key to the life of the church.

Developing the leaders of small groups into a team is vital. Leaders of small groups need to be encouraged when things are difficult – and challenged when they are tempted to be satisfied with the status quo. Leaders of small groups need to understand the important role they have to play within the mission and ministry of the church, and to realise that without vision and purpose their groups will fail to grow. They – and the members of their group – need to accept that as part of that growth splitting and forming new groups should be part of their DNA.

In my experience good leadership of small groups does not just happen; it needs to be developed. Hence the need for leaders of small groups to meet together regularly for training and vision-building. At the very least leaders of small groups should meet as a team once a term – a Sunday lunch together can often be a good context for such a meeting.

Along with helping leaders to cope with the inevitable issues relating to the dynamics of small groups, they also need to be constantly reminded of the church's vision for small groups; otherwise small groups can easily degenerate into little more than comfortable Bible study groups.

In such a context I have sought to apply John Adair's three-fold model of leadership to the leadership of small groups: viz. the task of the leader of a small group is to work as a senior partner with other members to achieve the mission or vision of the church, to develop the small group as a team with a view to it becoming more effective in fulfilling its role, and to meet the varied needs of the individual members of the groups. Such thinking can be challenging if not revolutionary for some leaders, but it can also be very affirming of their role too. It is not just the pastor, but the small group leaders too who can 'make the difference' in the life of the church.

The focus of such team meetings, however, should not just be on the small group. These team meetings provide a great opportunity for pastors to share their vision for the church as a whole, in the hope that as a result of inspiring

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[239] Bob Jackson, *Hope for the Church: Contemporary strategies for growth* (Church House Publishing. London 2002) 125.

them, then in turn these leaders will inspire others. If, for instance, there is an important issue coming up in the life of the church, which in due course will be brought to the 'church meeting' or to some other church-wide body, then, provided the leaders have been well briefed, these matters can be helpfully discussed within the small group.

Email offers a great medium for staying in contact with the team. There is a lot to be said for emailing leaders once a week, sharing news of developments in the church, and giving prayer suggestions for their groups in the coming week.

Welding together the church as a team

Churches too, in spite of their size, may be regarded as a team with a mission to fulfil. The role of the pastor is to ensure that the church becomes and remains a team. At this point let me return to my definition of a leader: 'A good leader works as a senior partner with other members to achieve the task, build the team, and meet individual needs'.

Teamsmanship must be constantly worked at. Paul's words in Eph 4.3 regarding unity are very relevant: "Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together" (GNB). Significantly the underlying Greek verb Paul uses is in the present tense: welding together the team involves constant effort.[240] The church is already a team, yet it must remain a team. It must constantly become what it already is. Here the role of the leader is crucial. Negatively, the leader is called to troubleshoot. Thus when relationship difficulties arise – and such difficulties are inevitable for the church is made up of fallible men and women – then the leader must be unafraid to deal with such difficulties, to confront those who need to be confronted, so that healing and harmony may prevail again. More positively, the leader must constantly seek to weld the team together by giving it a sense of common purpose and direction. Indeed, the task, defined as the mission and purpose of the church, is itself the unifying force.

Teams benefit from a team covenant

A leadership team benefits from creating a team covenant. In the context of where a governing board has been experiencing "behavioural barriers to effective leadership and decision making", Gil Rendle suggested the adoption of the following 'covenant of leadership':[241]

> Our Promises to God
> - We promise to pray, alone and together, to thank God and to ask for God's help in our lives and in our work for our church, and we promise to listen to God's answer to us
>
> Our Promises to our church family
> - We promise to demonstrate our leadership and commitment to our church by our example
> - We promise to support our church's pastors and staff, so their efforts can be most productive
> - We promise to try to discover what is best for our church as a whole, not what might be best for us or for some small group in the church
>
> Our Promises to each other on the governing board
> - We promise to respect and care for each other
> - We promise to treat our time on the board as an opportunity to make an important gift to our church
> - We promise to listen with an open, non-judgemental mind to the words and ideas of the others in our church and on the board
> - We promise to discuss, debate and disagree openly in board meetings, expressing ourselves as clearly and honest as possible, so we are certain the board understands our point of view
> - We promise to support the final decision of the board, whether it reflects our view or not

Clearly before any covenant is adopted, it needs to be talked through with a view not just to gaining acceptance, but also to ensuring that it really meets the needs of the particular church in question.

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[240] See Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6* (Doubleday, New York 1974) 428: "It is hardly possible to render exactly the urgency contained in the underlying Greek verb. Not only haste and passion, but a full effort of the whole man is meant involving his will, sentiment, reason, physical strength and total attitude. The imperative mood of the participle in the Greek text excludes passivity, quietism, a wait-and-see attitude, or a diligence tempered by all deliberate speed. Yours is the initiative. Do it now! Mean it! YOU are to do it! I mean it!"

[241] *Covenants of Leadership Behaviour (*an Alban Institute Conversation Paper October 2012).

Teams galore: a case study

In the words of the church's development plan, the model of team leadership when I was minister at Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford took the following form:

"Spearheading the mission and ministry of the church are the ministers together with the other members of the ministerial staff team. Their task has been defined as to 'excite fresh hope and faith in God, encourage God's people to embrace others with love of another kind, enable individuals to change and to grow, and empower the church for witness and service'. To a large extent the ministers are responsible for the operational life of the church. In one way or another all the ministers are engaged in preaching and teaching, leading worship and pastoral care. Other responsibilities include study and personal development, administration and organisation, community engagement, working with teams, and the development of vision and direction. In addition the senior minister, as team leader, is responsible for managing the ministerial team.

The present leadership team is made up of the ministers and the deacons who provide direction to the church. Currently (2010-2014) we have 10 deacons. A key role of the deacons at leadership team meetings is holding the ministers to account for the way in which they define and implement the agreed vision and strategy of the church. The ministry of deacons also includes the important role of considering applications of new people for membership. In their dealings with members in general the deacons are called to be 'champions' of the church and its values. Where necessary, deacons seek to resolve difficulties within the church, and in so doing free the ministers for their particular ministry.

A key role of both ministers and deacons is to challenge the church to go against the prevailing culture of individualism and consumerism, and to encourage people to gain a bigger vision of what it is to 'be church' – the responsibilities of service to one another as well as to the wider world.

Like other Baptist churches, we are congregationally governed in that ultimately both the ministers and deacons are accountable to the church meeting. The church meeting adopts the annual budget and is ultimately responsible for the mission and ministry of the church. In calling ministers and appointing deacons the church delegates much of its authority to its leaders.

There are twelve task teams responsible for overseeing and developing clearly defined areas of the church's mission. Members of these teams are not expected to do all the work themselves, but to empower and encourage others. Each of the following teams is accountable to the leadership team and ultimately to the church meeting. The teams are as follows:

Five task teams reflect the church's five key purposes: viz. worship, evangelism, care for one another ('pastoral care'), growth in the faith ('nurture and prayer'), and service to others ('social action').
1. The worship team coordinates the many diverse contributions to the worship life of the church, with a view to helping people become inspired worshippers.
2. The evangelism team encourages the church to present the Gospel in a relevant way. It is responsible for initiating new evangelistic projects and encouraging current evangelistic activities. It seeks to help people become effective evangelists.
3. The pastoral team oversees the care group leaders and shares with the ministers in general pastoral care. It seeks to encourage people to care for one another and so become supportive members.
4. The nurture and prayer team oversees small group activities and promotes the church's prayer life. Along with encouraging people to become intentional learners, it also seeks to enable people to discover and develop their gifts for service, so that they can be used to greatest effect both in the church and the world.
5. The social action team promotes social justice; it identifies needs within the local community, nationally and internationally, with a view to helping people engage in Christian service. It encourages people to become selfless volunteers.

Three task teams have a focus on particular ages, but also reflect the church's five key purposes:
1. The children and families ministry team oversees and coordinates the church's work among children and their families and seeks to support parents.
2. The youth ministry team oversees the church's youth work and encourages the various groups to work to a common aim.
3. The seniors' ministry team oversees our work among older people, encouraging opportunities for evangelism, growth and development.

Five 'hub ministry' teams support the church in fulfilling its key purposes:

1. The communications team is responsible for communication within the church and to those in our local community.
2. The facilities (fabric) team is responsible for the church premises and the two church manses.
3. The finance team has the two-fold task of caring for the church's money and encouraging giving to the church.
4. The church centre management team coordinates the arrangements for outside lettings of the premises and oversees the staff involved in this work
5. The personnel, support and management group is a sub-committee of the leadership team, and is made up of the senior deacon, the church treasurer, the leader of the church centre management team, and the senior minister, and meets monthly to deal with the 'nuts and bolts' of church life."

There was no way in which I as senior minister could attend all the meetings of these task teams. My role was to empower the teams – encouraging them in their work, and helping them find new members when for one reason or another people had to stand down from a team

Team spirit

The following description of team spirit adapted from 1 Corinthians 13 could be helpfully circulated to members of any church team:[242]

"Though I understand all the words used in team building,
And though I can appreciate different cultures,
If I do not know the meaning of team spirit,
My words are hollow and carry no weight.

And though I am a visionary and can set objectives,
Solve problems and analyse situations;
And though I believe in myself and can achieve great things,
If I am not motivated by team spirit, my actions will come to nothing.

And though I spend all my time and resources on behalf of the group
And burn myself out in the course of my effort,
If I do these things outside the spirit of the team, no one benefits.

Team spirit is characterised by patience, acceptance and humility;
It is not associated with force, imposition, provocation or treachery.
Team spirit is concerned with true facts and feelings.
Its concern with the truth enables the team to cope with difficulties
And to maintain the team vision in the face of the strongest opposition.

Team spirit will see the team through every set-back.
The team may fail to meet its objectives;
Communication may break down,
And the team may fail to practise its skills and gifts.
All things might happen, for no team is perfect,
And like children with so much still to learn, we all struggle for understanding.
But with team spirit we can learn to grow together
And as we learn we can put behind us immature behaviours.

At the moment our vision of what our team might be is unclear
But as we move forward together, the possibilities will open before us.
A team depends on commitment, motivation and team spirit,
No team can survive without these three, but team spirit is the ultimate objective."

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[242] For 'team spirit' also read love! See David Cormack, *Team Spirit: People working with People* (Marc Europe, Bromley 1987) 216.

13. Staff teams in a larger church

Staff teams are vital for a church's growth and development

A church with an active membership of around 150 tends to be the limit of one person's effective ministry, and is unlikely to continue to grow if the staff team is not expanded. This was my experience in Altrincham:

> "As our church approached the 150 mark the growth process began to slow down…Our experience had finally exposed my own limitations in trying to contain all the pastoral needs of the fellowship. I had been trying to cope physically, intellectually and sociologically with an ever-widening range of activities. I felt like the circus juggler with an ever-growing row of spinning plates on bamboo poles. As each new plate is added, there is the danger that the other plates will crash down behind him."[243]

The question arises, at what stage should one appoint the next member of staff? There has been little research undertaken in the UK on this subject, and so at this point I shall have to draw upon the American experience.

Some years ago Peter Wagner stated: "The rule of thumb… is that you would have a program staff person (plus backup personnel such as secretaries) for each 100 active members"[244] Bill Easum, an American Methodist church consultant, wrote that churches should aim to "have the equivalent of one full-time paid 'program person' for every hundred people in worship (including children, even if they are not in worship)".[245]

Gary McIntosh, another American church consultant, believed that financially this is more than most churches can afford and argued that a realistic ratio of staff to worship attendance is 1:150. According to McIntosh:
- Each effective staff person tends to build a ministry that involves 125-150 people. For example, a senior pastor is capable of serving a church of about 150 worshippers.
- The addition of a second pastoral staff person does not double the productive capability of ministry. There is always some overlap of persons who are involved with both pastors' spheres of ministry. Due to this overlap, a second pastor potentially increases the overall productivity of the staff by approximately 80% beyond that of a solo pastor.
- When a third pastor is added to the staff, there is yet further overlap. The third full-time staff member potentially increases the staff productivity another 75% beyond that of the original two pastors on a staff.
- A church desiring to grow to the next level should add a new staff person *before* reaching the projected growth level. It is the addition of the next staff person that helps a church grow to the next level. [246]

Numbers of staff alone are not sufficient. What is needed is quality as well as quantity. Wagner made three suggestions:
- "The program staff should be a team made up of persons whose abilities complement one another rather than overlap…When all members of the staff are working in their areas of giftedness you can expect maximum harmony, job satisfaction, and effectiveness of ministry.
- Recruit new staff on the basis of devotion to the senior pastor.
- Be sure the new staff members heartily buy into the philosophy of ministry of the church… This should not be just intellectual consent, but a heartfelt conviction. When they join the staff they should feel like they are joining a cause."[247]

Bill Hybels spoke of the three 'Cs' of team selection: "character, competence, chemistry (with me and with the rest of the team)".[248] Character and competence can in part be judged by references – chemistry, however, can only be experienced. For that reason before I ever brought a name to my leadership team, I used to first meet with the candidate and then invited members of the staff team to come out with us for lunch. We needed to know that we could get on together.

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[243] Paul Beasley-Murray & Alan Wilkinson, *Turning the Tide* 58.
[244] C. Peter Wagner, *Leading your church to growth* (Regal Books, California 1984) 212.
[245] Bill Easum, *The Complete Ministry Audit* (Abingdon, Nashville 2006) 117.
[246] Gary L. McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth: Building team ministry in the 21st century* (Baker, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2000) 39-42.
[247] Wagner, *Leading Your Church To Growth* 213, 214.
[248] Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2002) 81.

Ideally the prospective member should be a self-starter, full of ideas. As American pastor Donald Schaeffer put it: "When building my staff, I have always sought to hire wild horses that had to be tamed rather than tame horses that had to be prodded."[249]

Staff teams come in various shapes and sizes

What kind of staff does one add? What should be their responsibilities? Gary McIntosh distinguished between the priorities of finding people (evangelism), keeping people (assimilation) and celebrating with people (worship), from educating people (education), overseeing people (church administration) and caring for people (pastoral care). He argued that although all six priorities are necessary to provide a supportive environment for church growth, a growing church will place a higher priority on the first three.[250] By contrast Easum maintained that the best order in which to bring staff on board is (1) worship leader; (2) lay mobiliser; and (3) outreach (evangelism). "Do not make the mistake of most churches", he wrote, "and make your first hire a youth director. Start with worship and succeeding hiring will be more affordable."

Although the previous paragraph has focused on paid ordained staff, the fact is that staff teams come in various shapes and sizes. In many churches, and not least larger churches, there is a significant interplay of ordained and lay, paid and unpaid, and full-time and part-time members of staff.

For instance, such are the demands for clergy in the Church of England that an Anglican church will count itself fortunate to have a stipendiary minister and a curate. However, in the Church of England non-stipendiary clergy play a very significant role: some non-stipendiary clergy in busy employment may be able to offer ministry only two Sundays a month and perhaps one evening a week, but newly retired clergy can be working almost full-time.

Many larger churches, both Anglican and non-Anglican, are able to employ their own lay staff in a wide variety of roles: for instance, as church administrators and church book-keepers, family and children's workers, youth and pastoral specialists, bereavement and debt counsellors.

In an Anglican multi-parish benefice, the staff team are responsible for more than one church – indeed, often they are responsible for a group of churches. Such a team could be made up of a team rector with one or more team vicars, together perhaps with a curate, a paid youth worker, a parish office secretary; and possibly several unpaid staff too.[251]

In a survey of churches with over 350 people in Sunday worship Peter Brierley discovered that the average large church has 3.0 ordained staff, comprising 2.6 paid and 0.4 unpaid (such as retired ministers). The average number of paid non-ordained ministry staff in a larger church is 3.7, consisting of 3.2 paid and 0.5 unpaid. The average number of administrative staff employed by larger churches is 2.8 per church, made up of 2.4 paid and 0.4 unpaid.[252]

There is more than one way for teams to operate. The important thing is that leaders develop teams. According to Chris Edmondson: "If the Church in England is going to recover its nerve, and rediscover its calling in the twenty-first century, it will be by means of people with a vision and understanding of being team leaders and team builders."[253]

Leading staff teams

To return to John Adair's definition of leadership: "A good leader works as a senior partner with other members to achieve the task, build the team, and meet individual needs"; the task of the leader of a staff team (the 'senior partner') is to keep colleagues, both as individuals and as a team, focused on its mission; to continually work at team building; and to ensure that the individuals needs of the team are being met. This three-fold role involves:

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[249] Donald Schaeffer, Pastor of Grace Church, a Christian & Missionary Alliance church in Cleveland, Ohio, which grew from 58 to 1,663 under the leadership of Donald Schaeffer and subsequently of his son Jonathan. Quoted by Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How To Make The Leap* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2005) 104.

[250] McIntosh, *Staff Your Church for Growth* 26.

[251] Some question the degree of genuine collaboration when a team is made up of paid and unpaid staff. My experience is that the key to collaboration lies in the drawing up of appropriate contracts, where expectations are clearly set out, not just in what is expected of the 'volunteers' but also what is expected in terms of the support and supervision offered by the team leader.

[252] Peter Brierley, *The Significance of Larger Churches* (Brierley Consultancy, Tonbridge 2009) 18.

[253] Chris Edmondson, 'Leadership and teamwork' 110 in *The Vicar's Guide: Life and ministry in the parish* (Church House Publishing, London 2005) edited by David Ison. Another guide to team-work in Anglican churches is offered by Robin Greenwood in *The Ministry Team Handbook* (SPCK, London 1984).

1. To ensure that the team are ever mindful of the vision of the church, and of the goals which have been agreed. Although staff may happily agree to the overall direction of the church, it is easy for them to become side-tracked into activities which do not contribute to the agreed mission of the church. One of the key roles of the senior pastor is to hold staff accountable to the goals we have set ourselves.

2. To build and maintain the team. Just as relationships in a marriage have to be worked at, so too do relationships in a team. All too often team relationships break down. According to Harold Westing: "It is rare to find one out of four multiple staffs working in love and harmony. Many team members merely tolerate each other. They resemble married couples living together like singles who have no commitment, common goals or sense of sharing. They simply share the same house."[254] Sadly what is true in the States, is true too of the UK. Relationships need to be worked upon. Along with the weekly team business meeting, there need to be opportunities for staff to relax together and have fun together. Staff need not become 'buddies' of one another – but they do need to be friends.

3. To help staff develop. This is particularly true of colleagues who have come straight from theological college. Along with their experience of ministry, so that they are ready then to take on a church of their own. However, it is not simply the younger staff who need to be developed. The learning process never stops. Everybody is on a journey, including the team leader.

The authority of a team leader is based on relationships

The real authority of a team leader is not built on a written statement outlining the 'position' of people within the team, but rather is built on relationships. Leaders therefore need to make time to cultivate relationships with members of the team. As we have seen, leadership patterned on the 'servant-king' can never be coercive. In the words of John Goldingay: "The authority of leaders is not based on their position in a structure but on the fact [if it be fact] that they embody true Christian living [i.e. service] and bring the true Christian message, which will be known by its content and not merely by its origin."[255] Or to put it even more simply: it is by the kind of people that they are that leaders begin to gain the trust of their team, and also of the church. Authority is rooted not in what we say, but in who we are.

Relationships are at the heart of a team

A team is not a collection of individuals, but a group of people who are committed to working together to achieve a common task. In sporting terms, for instance, a team is a set of players who are committed to working together in order to win a particular game or match. Football teams don't win a match without team-work – without team members passing the ball to one another. This team-work, however, is always with a purpose: the team want to score goals, they want to win.

James Lawrence helpfully contrasted groups with teams:
- Groups focus on individual results; teams focus on team results, for they have a common purpose
- Groups focus on individual effort, on independence; teams focus on interdependence
- Groups talk about 'contribution'; teams talk about 'co-operation'
- Groups focus on individual accountability, teams have a sense of mutual accountability
- Groups focus on collective results (1+1 = 2); whereas teams focus on synergistic results (1+1 = 3,4,20)
- In a group if one fails, s/he fails; in a team if one fails, all fail.[256]

Team ministry is about commitment to one another and to a common purpose. Team ministry is about working together; it's about achieving a common goal. Sadly, not every ministerial team functions as a team. As Geoffrey Cornell, an experienced Methodist minister, noted: "Ministers are not naturally collaborative. Their call to ministry is invariably rooted in a personal experience, marking them out for a distinctive vocation. Their role models, even biblical ones, are often 'lone rangers'."[257]

To create a ministry team involves real commitment to work together as distinct from separately.

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[254] Harold J. Westing, *Church Staff Handbook: How to build an effective ministry team* (Kregel, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2nd edition 1997) 13.

[255] John Goldingay, *Authority and Ministry* (Grove Booklets, Bramcote, Nottingham 1976) 23.

[256] James Lawrence, *Growing Leaders* 242.

[257] Geoffrey Cornell, 'Leading a Team' 151 in *How To Become a Creative Church Leader* (Canterbury Press, Norwich 2008) edited by John Nelson.

1. In the first place, for a team to be a team, team members can't go around 'doing their own thing', each intent on fulfilling their particular ministry without recourse to one another. That may be the way in which barristers operate, working together from a common base (a 'set of chambers'), having the services of the same clerk, but in fact each independently pursuing their own career. A ministry team, however, is very different. It involves a commitment to work together with a view to fulfilling a common purpose. The common purpose means more than simply 'serving Christ' or 'glorifying God'. It involves the acceptance of clearly stated common goals, adopting common strategies and common priorities with a view to achieving the mission of the church. It involves far more than simply sharing information or even of just facing the same direction; it involves a shared passion for and a shared commitment to an agreed vision for the church.

2. Secondly, it involves commitment to one another, in the sense that the welfare of the team and its members becomes paramount. Bill Hybels quoted his then 23-year old son Todd: "It's more than just working with other people, its doing life deeply with one another as we serve together."[258]

To sum up in the words of George Barna: "A leadership team… is a small group of leaders who possess complementary gifts and skills. They are committed to one another's growth and success and hold themselves mutually accountable. Together they lead a larger group of people toward a common vision, specific performance goals, and a plan of action." [259]

Staff team covenants strengthen team relationships

If a team is to work effectively, then a certain 'discipline' of relationships needs to be maintained. At Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, we developed the following team covenant for our ministry team:

- **Mutual care:** We will model the kind of relationships that ideally should characterise the life of the church in general. We will love one another, pray for one another, honour one another, care for one another, encourage one another, speak the truth in love to one another, and at all times forgive one another. We will be there for one another, come hell or high water.
- **Communication:** We will keep one another informed of what we are doing and of what we are hoping of doing. We will therefore come to our team meetings ready to share.
- **Openness:** We will be open with one another. There may be times when the ministers will not be free to be open with the rest of the team, however, there is no place for ministers to keep secrets from one another. A confidence does not necessarily mean that we cannot share information with one another.
- **Honesty:** In our thoughts and our feelings we will be honest with one another. If something has upset us, then we will surface it, recognising that 'Today's niggle could be tomorrow's resentment, and next week's breakdown'.
- **Loyalty:** Outside our team meeting, we will always stand up for one another. While none of us is perfect, and there will be times when we make a mess of things, we will resist the temptation of criticising one another to other members. The place for criticism is either one-to-one or in the team meeting.
- **Positivity:** In our relationships with one another, and also with the rest of the church, we will always exude a positive spirit. We will shun negative talking and thinking. We will instead affirm one another and will speak well of one another.
- **Excellence:** We will never be satisfied with the second-best. In our desire for excellence we will foster a healthy dissatisfaction with the way things are and will always strive for better.
- **Faith:** We will strengthen one another's hope and faith in God, and we will foster each other's passion for Christ. We will be bold in the way we develop our various ministries; and where there are failures, we will help one another to learn and then to use the failure as a stepping board for fresh advances.

Every time we appointed new members of staff, I always ensured that I read through this covenant with the team as a whole, high-lighting and expanding upon the various disciplines.

A somewhat different team covenant was adopted by Julian Reindorp, the former Vicar of Richmond, for use by his team. Based on a document drawn up by the board of directors of one of Britain's leading commercial companies, it read:

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[258] Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids 2002) 74.
[259] George Barna, *The Power of Team Leadership* (Water Brook Press, Colorado 2001) 24. The one draw-back of this definition is that it does not relate leadership to the given structures of any institution.

I promise to:
- Publicly communicate and support the decision of the team
- Stay focused on the desired result even when problems occur
- Speak up when I dissent
- Do what I say I am going to do (no blinking)
- Support my team colleagues, especially when I see them struggling
- Be ruthless about prioritisation
- Keep meeting discipline
- Be ready to take risks, challenge conventional wisdom and learn from each other
- Listen to everyone's point of view
- Seek solutions, not problems
- Let others speak once before speaking twice
- Recognise praising others on achievement.

For those who find this too 'secular' in nature, then the model for ministry teams developed by George Cladis may appeal. This draws upon the Trinity described by the 7th century Greek theologian, John of Damascus as *perichoresi*s (literally, 'a circle dance'). He wrote:

> "A perichoretic image of the Trinity is that of the three persons of God in constant movement in a circle that implies intimacy, equality, unity yet distinction, and love. The perichoretic model of God calls into question the traditional hierarchies of power, control, and domination that have formed the basis for church leadership in the past."

He went on to list "the seven attributes that church leadership teams will strive for in healthy ministry": viz.

1. The Covenanting Team: our covenants with one another should seek to resemble the love of God – Father, Son and Spirit – in holy fellowship
2. The Visionary Team; a clear sense of divine mission; they sense that their work has ultimate meaning, they sense that are proceeding to do something highly significant
3. The Culture-Creating Team: a culture of love
4. The Collaborative Team: there is no competition among the persons of God
5. The Trusting Team: in a world that thrives on betrayal and deceit, a culture of trust created by a trusting team is a wonderful source of healing and ministry in the church
6. The Empowering Team: these teams reinforce the concept that there is no such thing as a passive Christian; all of us are called to mission and ministry
7. The Learning Team: their learning, both spiritual and practical, becomes a narrative of growth that can help other teams and churches grow spiritually and become more effective communities of ministry.[260]

Relationship difficulties are inevitable, but not insuperable

Just as in marriage, so in church life in general, and in church teams in particular, there are bound to be times when misunderstandings occur and relationships become difficult. In the words of John Blattner: "It seems to be an immutable fact that wherever two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, sooner or later there are going to be people problems. This is as true among leaders as among other church members. We needn't be surprised. Gal 5.20-21 makes it clear that discord, jealousy, ambition, dissension, factionalism, and all the rest are part of the fallen human nature that pastoral leaders share with everyone else. Occasional problems among leaders are inevitable, given what leaders are made of."[261]

Although difficulties are inevitable, they need not be insuperable. In a survey of team ministry within Baptist churches, the following eleven points were made time and again in the responses of the 125 senior ministers and their associates as to how senior ministers should handle their staff:

1. **Communication:** Senior ministers must keep their colleagues informed and vice versa. According to one associate, this is the potential weak area in team ministry.

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[260] George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church – how pastors and church staffs can grow together into a powerful fellowship of leaders* (Jossey-Bass/Wiley, San Francisco 1999) 4ff.
[261] John C. Blattner, *Pastoral Renewal* (February 1987).

2. **Openness:** "Be open – share everything."
3. **Trust:** "The senior minister must be willing to give up responsibility." "Define areas of responsibility and give freedom within that responsibility, even if your associate does not do it your way."
4. **Accountability:** Responsible delegation involves some kind of reporting back.
5. **Respect:** "Respect your colleague's calling, training, personality and gifts." "Learn how to creatively use the emerging gifts and talents of the associate."
6. **Self-awareness:** "Recognise both your weaknesses and limitations and also those of your colleague."
7. **Patience:** "Don't expect too high too soon – the relationship has to grow gradually."
8. **Encouragement:** "Constant re-affirming and appreciation" are needed.
9. **Frankness:** "Be honest with gentleness" wrote one associate.
10. **Loyalty:** "Never let people play off one against the other." "Do not publicly overrule any decision associates make in their area of responsibility."
11. **Determination to make the relationship work:** Get to know them as persons not just as colleagues. One wise and experienced minister likened the relationship between senior ministers and associates to a marriage: "Within this relationship there is love, mutual trust, encouragement, and a determination to work harmoniously together."[262]

Relationships don't just happen. They have to be worked upon.

Team relationships are helped by working together

From almost the beginning of my ministry I worked in a church office. Working from church increases efficiency, and helps to develop a more discipline approach to work. It provides accessibility: popping one's head around the door of the minister's office, is so much easier than knocking on the door of the minister's home. Furthermore, it frees up home to be home.

In the context of teams, sharing the same office base, whether it be on church premises or in a large parsonage, helps team relationships. Working from the same base fosters collegiality. Staff can drop into one another's offices for a coffee and reflect together on the latest pastoral challenge. Staff work together so much better precisely because they work from the same base.

Team relationships are enhanced by walking the way of Christ together

Every staff team is in the first instance made up of disciples of the Lord Jesus. The team leader has the responsibility to encourage the team in their walk with the Lord.

Christopher Ellis, then minister of West Bridgford Baptist Church, listed seven Christian practices "which have long marked the serious disciple but which we might see as having particular relevance for an intentional approach to a ministerial way of being": viz. worship, waiting on God, Sabbath keeping, reading Scripture, prayer, spiritual direction, and what he terms 'giving attention to the grace of God'. He ends his article by calling for a 'common rule of life' for ministers.[263] What is true of ministers in general, should surely be true for church teams, whatever their composition. There is a lot to be said for encouraging staff teams to use a common lectionary, so that they can be reading the same Scriptures together.

A well-prepared agenda helps the weekly staff team meeting

My preferred time for the weekly staff meeting was on a Monday morning. With Sunday and all the pastoral encounters still fresh in mind, this was the ideal time to share news and to look to the week ahead. Let me give a flavour of that meeting by quoting from an article I wrote some time ago:

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[262] Paul Beasley-Murray, 'Dynamic Duos', *Today* (Feb 1987) 7-11; *Dynamic Leadership* 52-54.
[263] Christopher Ellis, 'Being a minister: spirituality and the pastor' 55-70 in *Challenging to change: dialogues with a radical Baptist theologian. Essays presented to Nigel G. Wright on his sixtieth birthday* (Spurgeon's College, London 2009) edited by Pieter J. Lalleman.

"Monday mornings begin with a short prayer meeting, to which the support staff and indeed anybody else who is around in church were invited. Together we thank God for the week that is past, and ask God's blessing on the week ahead. It is a time when we can share personal concerns and pray for one another.

Once a month after the prayer meeting we have 'Cake Monday', when the support staff join with the ministry team for coffee and cake. Always a fun occasion, it is important for two reasons: first, it gives us an opportunity to express our appreciation to the support staff; secondly, it gives the support staff an opportunity to express any concerns that they may have with the rest of the team.

With the exception of 'Cake Monday', the ministry team gathers at 10 o'clock for the weekly team meeting. The meeting begins with the handing out of a lengthy agenda. I am a great believer in preparing agendas, and the more detailed the better. Sometimes my agendas are three or four sides in length.

The agenda takes the following basic format:
1. Reflections on the weekend, and in particular upon the Sunday services. The chief purpose of the 'post mortem' is to see how we can do better – if we want to give God our very best, then there never comes a stage when we can feel fully satisfied with our performance. Even sermons come under scrutiny. This is the time for appreciation, but also a time for positive criticism.
2. Newcomers: their names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. Their responses such as 'Please tell me more about Alpha' or 'Please give information about small groups'; as also their comments on the welcome card, which encourages them to tell us what they first noticed, what they liked best, and what they disliked. To encourage newcomers to fill in the welcome card, I promise to give a specially inscribed pen to every person who fills in the card and returns it to me.
3. Those to whom the church flowers were sent (with a view to encouraging them or congratulating them or assuring them of our prayers)
4. Next weekend. Although the preachers and their topics are already known, this is when we confirm such details as to who else will be involved in the services.
5. Pastoral news. Much of the news on the agenda is for information only and is not discussed – occasionally we will spend time reflecting on the needs of individuals.
6. My engagements for the week – I believe in being open with my staff.
7. My concerns as team leader. This is the time for testing new ideas, sharing plans, and getting feedback from the team.
8. Concerns others wish to raise. Sometimes we can deal with the matters there and then – sometimes we agree to delay an issue until the next meeting.

We try to limit the team meeting to an hour. Save in most exceptional circumstances, we will always be over by noon. The chief purpose of the team meeting is for the team to share news and encourage/communicate with one another."[264]

Staff team supervision is beneficial

The purpose of team 'supervision' is to ensure that the team members are clear about their role in implementing the vision and strategy of the church, to give them encouragement and support in that role, and to hold them accountable for implementing the vision and the agreed strategy.[265]

Supervision is not always welcome in the life of a larger church. In the first place, the responsibility of oversight is not always welcomed by senior ministers. Regular 'supervision' is time-consuming, especially where there are several members of staff – the temptation is to allow colleagues to get on with the job. But without supervision colleagues will not always get on with the tasks required of them. It is not that they are lazy, but rather that they may be side-tracked and end up putting time and effort into activities which are not part of the church's agreed agenda. Indeed, this sometimes is precisely why team members are not keen on supervision, for supervision holds them accountable for their ministry. Such accountability is not welcome to those of an independent spirit. However, accountability is

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[264] Gill Rendle and Susan Beaumont would beg to differ. "One of the central purposes of the staff meeting is to remember and rehearse the vision of the congregation so that each staff person can find the way in which his or her part supports and deepens the mission of the whole" (*The Purposes of Staff Meetings*, An Alban Institute Conversation Paper, October 15, 2007). However, this purpose of 'mission alignment' relates primarily to staff meetings in the American large church.
[265] For more detailed discussion, see *Skills for Collaborative Ministry* (SPCK, London 2008) by Sally Nash, Jo Pimlott and Paul Nash.

intrinsic to ministry. That accountability involves more than the acceptance of a 'common rule of life': it needs to be expressed in supervision.

Supervision, rightly handled, can be a very positive experience, providing support and encouragement to colleagues. It provides an opportunity for senior pastors to take an informed interest in the ministry of their colleagues – to give recognition and praise where it is due.

Supervision is not about micro-management. To use supervision as an opportunity to tell others how to do their work is to stifle creativity. Supervision is not about control, but rather is an encouragement to others to own and take responsibility for their role. Susan Beaumont points out that "the appropriate object of supervision is a verb, not a noun."[266] A person is a noun – their work is a verb. "What is being supervised is the performance of the staff member as he or she works toward identified outcomes."[267]

Supervision is about encouraging individual team members to learn from their experience. In the context of the church, such learning can be very practical and can concern the nuts and bolts of church life; it can also include theological reflection on church life.

Supervision involves reviewing the past. In the first instance an opportunity is given to staff to report back on actions they have taken in the light of their previous meeting, and to review what they have achieved both in terms of those actions, as indeed of other actions taken. Secondly, this review of the past gives an opportunity to staff to give an account of what they have learnt since the past meeting. Such learning might be formal or informal. It might involve what they have learnt from attending a course or reading a book, or it might involve what they have learnt about people or indeed about God as a result of their ministry. Supervision in a church context is an opportunity for theological reflection.

The review of the past should also include the question: "What new partnerships have you made?" Ministry is not a solo act, but is about developing relationships and strengthening partnerships with others, both within and without the church.

Supervision is also about the future. It gives an opportunity for staff to share their plans for the immediate future, what their primary goals will be over the next few weeks.

Supervision involves preparation on the part of staff members, who in the first instance provide the agenda for the meeting. Ideally they come with written notes for the senior minister, in which they outline their reflections on the past and their hopes for the future. It is helpful if there is a written note of the outcomes of the supervision session: I make this the responsibility of the person being supervised, although Rendle and Beaumont suggest that the senior minister "drafts a brief (one page) written response memo within 48 hours, noting issues of agreement from the conversation, as well as topics that should be revisited in the subsequent performance management conversation".[268]

Where there are good relationships between senior ministers and their staff, in any given week there will be frequent opportunity for informal personal conversation and reporting back. However, such conversation is not supervision. Supervision involves a degree of formality. Supervision is probably best conducted on a monthly basis.

To some ministers supervision is theologically anathema. They argue that they are accountable to God, and not to their people. But the exercise of one's God-given ministry independent of the church and its authority has no place in Scripture. I sometimes wonder whether those who argue for the ministry's independency are using theology as a smoke screen for their sense of insecurity.

A check list for staff teams

1. To what extent are we 'servant-leaders'?
2. How do we complement one another?
3. How can we best encourage one another?
4. How might we better hold one another to account?

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[266] Gil Rendle & Susan Beaumont, *When Moses meets Aaron: Staffing and Supervision in Large Congregations* (Alban Institute, Herndon, Virginia 2007) 93.

[267] Rendle & Beaumont, *When Moses meets Aaron* 94.

[268] Rendle & Beaumont, *When Moses meets Aaron* 102.

5. Where does our church fit on the church size scale?
6. Where on the church scale do we want our church to be in five years' time?
7. What is the present size and mix of our church staff?
8. What should be our priorities in terms of adding extra staff?
9. In the present financial climate, how might we expand the mix of our staff?
10. How can we better work together as paid and unpaid staff?
11. What is the particular mission God has given our church?
12. How can we better build a sense of team?
13. How can we ensure individuals within the team are developed?
14. What should be the key roles of our team leader?
15. To what extent is the exercise of authority an issue in the church?
16. To what extent do our church teams enable us to exercise an all-round ministry?
17. How might we encourage teams to work better?
18. How satisfied are we with our accommodation and our 'tools of the trade'?
19. What might be an appropriate team covenant for us?
20. What would be the advantages of having a common team 'rule'?
21. How can our weekly staff meetings be improved?
22. How might we improve the way we operate team supervision?
23. How helpful do we find our annual reviews?
24. How practical might it be to appoint a team facilitator?
25. What is the most helpful insight or idea you found in reading this section?

Conclusion

In the past ministers were all too often 'prima donnas', enjoying the lime-light and monopolising ministry. But this is not God's pattern for his church. Ministry is the task of all God's people. Ministers are by definition team leaders, mobilising the whole church for mission and ministry. To quote yet again John Adair's definition of leadership: "The good leader evokes or draws forth leadership from the group. He works as a senior partner with other members to achieve the task, build the team, and meet individual needs."[269]

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[269] John Adair, *Effective Leadership* 51.

PART 3: THE EFFECTIVE MANAGER

14. Leaders need to be managers

No minister, in the first instance at least, is called to be a manager. Yet if ministers are to live out their call, then they need to develop management skills. Ministers who live their lives and run their churches in a disorderly fashion do not honour the Lord who has called them into his service.

There is, however, all the difference in the world between becoming an effective manager and becoming involved in the administration of the affairs of the church. Church administration is primarily a task for others in the church. A minister should resist the temptation (or indeed the request) to get involved in office management and office procedures.

Ian Stackhouse is right: "For all the attempts of Christian leaders to mimic the management skills of the corporate world, the heart of Christian leadership, it must be understood, is not composed rationality, balanced arguments or clever oratory, but, like the gospel we proclaim, raw, womb-like love."[270] There is no substitute for passionate love for the people of God. Nonetheless, I believe that leaders are also called to manage God's people, and in turn to manage themselves.

Leadership involves management

Much has been written about the distinction between leadership and management. John Adair helpfully explored the etymological roots of between 'leading' and managing:

> "Leadership is about a sense of direction. The word 'lead' comes from an Anglo-Saxon word, common to north European languages, which means a road, a way, a path of a ship at sea. It's knowing what the next step is…. Managing is a different image. It's from the Latin *manus*, a hand. It's handling a sword, ship, a horse. It tends to be closely linked with the idea of machines. Managing has its origins in the 19th century with engineers and accountants coming in to run entrepreneurial outfits. They tended to think of them as systems."[271]

It is often said that leadership is about solving problems, while management is about containing problems. Leadership 'thrives on finding new opportunities', while management 'thrives on accomplishing goals'. Management is different from leadership, but it is no less an important task. According to Peter Drucker: "Management makes an organisation of what would otherwise be a mob. It is the effective, integrative, life-giving organ."[272] I believe that any effective leader of an organisation needs to have certain basic management gifts.

On the whole ministers are resistant to being managers. They seek to delegate management to others. In larger churches the minister may have a 'personal assistant' or there may be a 'church administrator'. Every church, whatever the size, has a senior lay figure –it may be the church warden, the church secretary or the senior deacon – and this figure is often held to be responsible for managing the life of the church. Indeed, on the basis of Acts 6 some argue that like the apostles of old, ministers are in the first place to devote themselves to 'prayer and the ministry of the word' (Acts 6.7); while the deacons or their equivalent are to focus on the more practical tasks of running the church. But, this is to confuse the role of management. Good management on the part of ministers would ensure that they are not responsible for seeing to the nuts and bolts of church life.

Significantly in the New Testament 'management' is metaphor for ministry. Paul in 1 Cor 4.1-2 wrote: "Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they should

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[270] Ian Stackhouse, *Primitive Piety: a journey from suburban mediocrity to passionate Christianity* (Paternoster, Milton Keynes 2012) 104.
[271] Quoted by Richard Higginson, *Transforming Leadership: A Christian approach to management* (SPCK, London 1996) 26.
[272] Peter Drucker, *The Frontiers of Management* (Heinemann, London 1986) 173.

be found trustworthy." In the ancient world a steward was a manager (*oikonomos*). Owners of large estates would often appoint a slave to 'manage' their properties. This position of manager carried a good deal of responsibility, as also of privilege and authority. An illustration of this is found in an ancient commissioning document:

> "I have empowered you by this document to administer my estate in Arsinoe, and to collect the rents and, if need be, to arrange new leases or to cultivate some land yourself, and to give receipts in my name, and to transact any business connected with stewardship, just as I can transact it when I am present, and to distribute the plots in Karamis, restoring to me what remains over, as to which matter I rely on your good faith, and I confirm whatever you decide about them."

Now it is true that in 1 Cor 4 Paul applies this metaphor of 'stewardship' first and foremost to the faithful proclamation of the Gospel. However, Jesus when he used this metaphor applied it to the effective use of material possessions (see Luke 16.1-12). Good leaders are to be effective in their management not just of the church's resources, but also of their own resources of time and gifting. In this regard I find it interesting that Andrew Pratt includes a chapter on 'management' in his book *Practical Skills for Ministry*.[273]

A guide to general people management

First and foremost ministers are called to manage people. I love John Adair's "short course on effective leadership in management":[274]

> The six most important words: I ADMIT I MADE A MISTAKE
> The five most important words: I AM PROUD OF YOU
> The four most important words: WHAT IS YOUR OPINION?
> The three most important words: IF YOU PLEASE
> The two most important words: THANK YOU
> The one most important word: WE
> The least important word: I

One could argue that this has nothing to do with management, and everything to do with good manners. However, it is more than good manners. Ministers need to acknowledge that there are times when they get it wrong – and what a difference it makes to their people when they see their minister taking ownership for their mistakes. Ministers need to give credit to others for their achievements – and what a difference that makes, for it encourages their people to continue to give of their best in the service of the church. Ministers need to recognise that they have not a monopoly on wisdom – and again what a difference that makes, for when people realise they are being consulted they are more willing to own whatever the final decision may be. And so the list goes on, down to the least important word 'I'.

In a church people management is key, not least because everybody else is a volunteer. True in larger churches there will be paid staff, but even then almost everybody in such a church will be working for love, and not for money. As a result, if one wants to keep volunteers, then they need to be treated better than many companies treat their paid staff. This means consulting them, praising them, thanking them. Recognition of volunteers is a powerful motivator. In this respect thank you cards, flowers, public expressions of thanks in the services or in church magazine or weekly news sheet are all ways of giving affirmation. There is a lot to be said for giving out certificates of recognition honouring long service to the cause of Christ – and by long service, I don't mean waiting for 50 years to elapse, but rather for five or ten years of service as a Sunday School teacher or whatever.

Managing meetings

Meetings are often the bane of a church's life. They can be such a waste of time. Indeed, I rather like the suggestion that every committee should discuss its own dissolution once a year, and put up a case if it should continue for another twelve months! Nonetheless, some meetings are inevitable. The fact is that iron sharpens iron. The cut and thrust of debate in decision-making is vital if good decisions are to be made. So the question arises: how can we improve our meetings?

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[273] Andrew Pratt, *SCM Study Guide to Practical Skills for Ministry* (SCM, London 2010) 162-171.
[274] John Adair, *Effective Leadership* 103.

In July 2015 the *Harvard Business Review* published 'The Condensed Guide to Running Meetings' which proposed seven ways to have a 'perfect meeting':[275]

1. Keep the meeting small. No more than seven people. In a large group it is impossible to pick up body language and subtle cues. According to Paul Axtell, in his experience limiting a meeting to four or five people is the only way to make sure everyone has the chance to talk in a 60-minute meeting. Indeed, according to Francesca Gina a large meeting encourages 'social loafing', for "when many hands are available, people work less hard than they ought to"
2. Ban devices. They are unavoidably distracting for everyone. What is more, says Gino, "studies show that a person who is attempting to multi-task takes 50% longer to accomplish a task and he or she makes up to 50% more mistakes".
3. Keep it short as possible – no longer than an hour. They should last no longer than an hour. The shorter the meeting, the more focused people will stay. "Once people realise you're tight on time, they stop asking questions or talking and focus on getting the work done".
4. Stand up meetings are more product. Research has shown that stand-up meetings achieve the same solutions as sitting-down meetings but in less than two thirds of the time.
5. Make sure everyone participates and cold-call those who don't. People like their opinions to be heard but some won't speak unless they're asked to.
6. Never hold a meeting just to update people. This is the ultimate time-waster. Why take up valuable time saying something you could just email. This does not mean that there is no place for a quick update. The leader might say at the end "Is there anything that the group needs to be aware of before we leave?"
7. Always set an agenda ahead of time – and be clear about the purpose of the meeting. Lacking a clear plan of action is why decision-making gets derailed.

Although the *Harvard Business Review* didn't have churches in mind, I believe that church leadership teams have much to learn from these findings. Let me elaborate

1. Effective leadership teams are task-focused, and as a result work best when they are limited to seven people. Any larger, the 'team' becomes a meeting. As the Australian church consultant John Mallison convincingly showed, the larger the team, the less individuals contribute and the more likely that a group is dominated by a few powerful individuals. In my first church, the my leadership team was made up of the minister(s) and twelve deacons; in my second church, at one stage the my leadership team was made up of the ministers and fifteen deacons together with two or three other co-opted individuals. The task of the leadership team is not to be 'representative' of the church – in a Baptist setting that is the role of the church meeting; rather it is there to implement the vision of the church, developing appropriate strategies and goals.
2. Precisely because leadership team meetings are not social occasions, but demand the attention of everybody, concentration on the part of every member of the group is vital. Mobile phones should be switched off, and tablets should only be used for the purpose of the meeting.
3. An hour may be too short, but certainly well prepared and chaired, leadership team meetings should not last more than one and half-hours maximum. Alas, horror stories of leadership team meetings which go on to 11 pm – if not later – abound! Ministers who allow evening meetings to go on are being unfair to those of their lay leaders who have to get up early the following morning to go to work.
4. I have no experience of 'stand-up' meetings, but I do know that meetings in the comfortable surroundings of a home tend to last much longer than meetings conducted sitting around a table on church premises.
5. Before any key decision is made every 'voice' should be heard. Apart from anything else, this ensures that there are no 'misunderstandings' – it is all too easy for the leader of the meeting to presume that everybody is in agreement, but sometimes a failure to speak can indicate unease.
6. Updates can be circulated prior to the meeting, but that requires that every team member comes to the meeting have carefully read the previous minutes and the subsequent updates. Particularly where there is a large leadership team the temptation is for some members to come to a meeting having failed to do their homework. That is an abuse of the trust put in them by those who elected them.
7. An agenda should not just be a sheet of paper with a few headings which give no indication of the decisions that need to be taken. Agendas need careful preparation on the part of the leader of the meeting. I have sometimes produced agendas of five or more pages in length, and as a result the decision-making has been more effective – a long agenda normally makes for a short meeting.

It seems to me that it is this final point about the way leaders structure an agenda, which is the key to good management of meetings. So let me elaborate on how to create an agenda:

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[275] 'The Condensed Guide to Running Meetings', *Harvard Business Review* (July 6, 2015) by Amy Gallo

In the first place, it is vital that the agenda makes clear what the actual issue is. For instance, it is not good enough simply to have 'membership' as an item on the agenda; rather people need to know who are wanting to join the church, and who are leaving the church! Nor is it good enough to have simply 'church boiler' listed as a fabric item; rather people need to know before the meeting what is wrong and, if necessary, how much it will cost to replace the boiler. Sometimes an item on the agenda needs to be expanded by the presentation of a paper detailing the issues involved. Again, the paper needs to be circulated before the meeting – and should normally not be longer than one side of A4 in length. The shorter the paper, the more likely it is to be read.

In the second place, agendas should list items for solution and decision. Items for information only are normally best dealt with by sending out an email. It is very easy to clog up a meeting by updating everybody on this matter or that. Note too that no item should be on the agenda simply for 'discussion' but rather for 'solution' – to solve an issue means that a decision has been reached which moves the issue forward. It may not be a complete 'resolution' of the issue – sometimes more information is required – but least progress should have been made.

In the third place, agendas within a church context should be prioritized in terms of spiritual importance. In too many churches the top three items on the agenda of a leaders' meeting are: i) finance; ii) fabric; and iii) correspondence. Clearly issues of maintenance e have their place, but they must always be subservient to the wider goals of the church. When Jesus gave the Great Commission, he did not say 'Keep the doors of my church open', but rather 'God and make disciples' (Matt 28.19). Church agendas need to reflect the mission of the church.

In the fourth place, the order of the meeting should also reflect the fact that the early part of a meeting tends to be more lively and creative, so if an item needs mental energy, bright ideas, and clear heads, it is better to put it high up the agenda – especially if it is an evening meeting.

In the fifth place, at the end of each agenda item, it is helpful if the person leading the meeting could give a brief and clear summary of what has been agreed. This ensures that there is clarity in the decision-making. Just because one or two people may speak somewhat forcibly on an issue does not necessarily mean that their contributions reflect the consensus of the meeting. It is also helpful if everyone knows who has committed to do what, and when they have committed to have it done!

In the sixth place, there is no place for AOB. If members have an issue they wish to raise, then they need to raise it before the meeting. AOB tends to deal with trivia and almost always extend a meeting unnecessarily. This, of course, does not preclude the person leading the meeting to announce an extra agenda item at a meeting – but only if it is really urgent and unforeseen.

In the seventh place, meetings need to begin on time – and end on time. Very few meetings achieve anything of value after two hours, and an hour and a half is enough time for most purposes. In this regard it is useful to put the finishing time of a meeting on the agenda as well as the starting time. I like the suggestion that to encourage punctuality at future meetings, late arrivals should be listed in the minutes – people don't want that sort of information about themselves published too frequently! To ensure that meetings finish on time, there is something to be said for the person chairing the meeting to have a timed agenda.

Finally, I like the suggestion that as the final agenda point everybody is asked to rate the meeting 1-10, and that anybody who rates it less than 8 explains what it would have taken for the meeting to be a 10 to them. That would certainly improve future meetings!

Dealing effectively with email

It is not just people, but emails too need to be managed effectively. Email is a wonderful pastoral tool. To think there was a day when pastors were not able to send and receive emails! Yet, as I well remember, there was such a day, when emails and printers and photocopiers and access to the world-wide web did not exist. Thank God for progress! Certainly the possibility of sending and receiving emails is a real blessing.

But emails can be a bane
- when they are pointless. I belong to a Rotary Club where at one point the President and Secretary seemed to think that every email they received had to be passed on to all the members of the club; as a result I was swamped with emails about this fund-raising activity and that. The upshot was that I didn't read any of them;

instead I automatically deleted the lot of them. My fellow Rotarians had abused the system. As a result of this abuse, I am selective about the emails I send or forward to others.

- when people are copied in indiscriminately. By all means share news with a group of friends through email, but don't expect everybody to share their response with everybody else in the group. For busy people, it's excessive.
- when they are used for the wrong purpose. Email is a great medium for communicating information, but it is a highly dangerous medium for communicating disagreement. Where there are difficulties, a telephone call is much to be preferred – or even better, a conversation face-to-face.
- because once sent, they cannot be retracted. In the old days, when people wrote letters, there was always time for second-thoughts, for there was always time between the writing and the posting. But not so with emails.
- when they take priority over other tasks in ministry. Pastors should not open up computers before they have made time to read the Bible and pray. Similarly, when there is a sermon to write, looking at emails should be deferred until the sermon has taken shape. First things first!
- when they become a substitute for pastoral visiting. Emails can supplement pastoral care, but they can never take the place of a personal conversation.
- when the sender appears to demand an instant response. This is particularly so of those who use the facility requiring people to indicate they have received the email – I always decline the option! I dislike this form of pressure. Emails should be answered promptly, but for me 'promptly' means within a 24 hour period. If I cannot answer within that period, then I will send a 'holding' email, acknowledging receipt and assuring the sender of a response in due course.

This leads me to comment that ministers can be appalling correspondents. Experience has taught me that as a rule of thumb at least 25% of ministers fail to answer their emails. Not so long ago I emailed 68 ministers with an invitation to lunch six weeks from that date. Three weeks later, having received only 26 replies, I sent out a further email reminding them of my invitation. Most then replied, but 16 never got round to it. This is not unusual. To give another example, every other month I used to email a small group ministers reminding them of a ministers' fellowship meeting I hosted: of the twelve, four would always turn up; two would do their best to turn up, but if not, they would normally send an email of apology; of the other four, one would turn up every other year, while the other three never turned up and never acknowledged my email.

As a result of email abuse at Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, an email policy was drawn up – a policy which I commend:

1. There must be recognition that an email is not always the most appropriate form of communication and the best response to an email may be a personal conversation.
2. All emails of which you are a main recipient should be acknowledged promptly (as soon as practicable), even if it is to be actioned at a later date.
3. All emails to which you have been copied in to do not require a response and are for your information only.
4. Where possible 'out of office auto replies' need to be set up by staff when on annual or study leave. Staff should indicate who can be contacted in their absence. For personal/church security, details of length of absence and reasons for it (i.e. "I am away on holiday") should not be included in any out of office messages.
5. Where appropriate, the Blind Copy facility should be used on multiple mailings to protect people's personal data.

This email code revolutionised the way in which the ministers and deacons and other church workers responded to emails. As a result, for the most part everybody responded promptly, even if it was just to say 'thank you'.

Emails are, of course, a modern phenomenon. But I did wonder whether the Scriptures might have something to say about a prompt reply.

My mind went to the Book of Proverbs, which has a lot to say about those who put off to tomorrow, if not the day after tomorrow, the things that need to be done now. Such behaviour is termed laziness: "A farmer who is too lazy to plough his fields at the right time will have nothing to harvest" (20.4); "Never get a lazy man to do something for you; he will be as irritating as vinegar on your teeth or smoke in your eyes" (10.26). The NIV translation of Prov 15.23 is instructive: "A man finds joy in giving an apt reply – and how good is a timely word": unfortunately this reads very differently in other translations!

I also thought of the Apostle Paul, who was attacked by a group within the church at Corinth who questioned his integrity: 'You are a "yes" and "no" man who cannot be trusted'. Paul replied: "We are proud that our conscience

assures us that our lives in this world, and especially our relations with you, have been ruled by God-given frankness and sincerity" (2 Cor 1.12). The overall thrust that Christian ministers need to be trustworthy has perhaps some relevance.

Or what about the words of Jesus to one of his would-be followers? "No procrastination… You can't put God's kingdom off till tomorrow. Seize the day" (Luke 9.62). True, this translation found in *The Message* is a paraphrase, but Eugene Peterson does hit the nail on the head. Pastors need to deal effectively with emails!

15. Mastering change

Change is a fact of life

"Change", said John F. Kennedy, "is the law of life. And those who look to the past or present are certain to miss the future."[276] Yet Christians often find this business of change difficult. We would like the church to remain the same. Some years ago one of my older members said to me: "I've sat in this same seat for a third of a century, so why should I change and sit elsewhere?" But change is a fact of life Centuries ago the ancient Greek, Heraclitus (535 - 475 BC), remarked: "Everything changes and nothing remains still… and one cannot step twice into the same stream."[277] Constant change is here to stay. The only difference today is the pace of change. In this respect I am reminded of a news item reported to have been published in a Ghanaian newspaper: "Ghana is to change over to driving on the right. The change will be made gradually."

Change is more than a fact of life. It is also of the essence of the Christian faith. Mark records in his Gospel that "Jesus went to Galilee and preached the Good News from God. 'The right time has come and the Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the good news" (Mark 1.15). To follow Jesus involves 'turning away' from one's sins. The older versions speak of 'repenting'. But there's no difference of meaning. Repentance means more than being sorry – it means turning around, changing. A Christian is someone who has changed direction. Come to think of it, Christians should take to change as ducks to water!

Change is necessary for survival. We see that in the modern world of work. A business which turns its back on change will go to the wall. Some years ago a book was published entitled *In Search of Excellence*.[278] Its authors, Peters & Waterman, analysed forty-three of America's best-run companies, like IBM and 3M. But two years after publication fourteen of them were in financial trouble. According to the American magazine, *Business Week,* this was due to "failure to react and respond to change". Leith Anderson, who gave this example, commented: "One of the realities of the emerging 21st century is that yesterday's successes are no guarantee for tomorrow's survival."[279] Neither for businesses nor for churches is there room for leaders to sit on their laurels. No institution has ever 'arrived': we are ever 'en route' to our goal.

What is more, although the overall goal may not change, the tactics we use to achieve that overall goal will have to vary, if we are to be successful. There is no magic formula, which once found needs not be changed. Some churches appear to liken themselves to jumbo-jets, and set themselves on 'auto-pilot'. But the church is more like a sailing ship, which needs to tack first in one direction and then in another direction if it is to catch the wind of the Spirit.

Change is essential

Change is not an option. Churches either change or they die. Many churches in the UK are dying because they cannot cope with change.

Robin Gill likened British churches to "the pelicans in St James's Park" in central London, which he said are "awkward, out of place, angular, with a big mouth but little brain, demanding but inactive". He went on: "Churches in Britain need to make urgent choices about structure and direction. If they are to cease being pelicans, they need to be

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[276] John F. Kennedy's address in the Assembly Hall at the Pauluskirche in Frankfurt, June 25, 1963.
[277] Quoted by Plato, *Cratylus* 402a.
[278] Thomas J. Peters & Robert H. Waterman, *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies* (Harper & Row, New York 1982).
[279] Leith Anderson, *A Church for the 21st Century* (Bethany House, Minneapolis 1992) 17.

much clearer about how they might be effective in present-day Britain. They need to be more single-minded about growth... about how they might reach the nine out of ten people in Britain who seldom or never go to church."[280]

Using a different image, but making a similar point, William Easum likened churches to dinosaurs:

> "Congregations whose membership has plateaued or is declining have much in common with dinosaurs. Both have great heritages. Both require enormous amounts of food... Both became endangered species.... Like the dinosaur they have a voracious appetite. Much of their time, energy, and money is spent foraging for food (for themselves), so that little time is left to feed the unchurched… Either their pride or their near-sightedness keeps them from changing the ways they minister to people.... All around are unchurched, hurting people... But many refuse to change their methods and structures to minister to people where they are in ways they can understand. Like the dinosaur, their necks are too stiff or their eyes too near-sighted. Clearly God doesn't care if these congregations survive; but God passionately cares if they meet the spiritual needs of those God sends their way."[281]

Alas, churches all too often find change difficult. It has been said that the seven last words of a church were, 'We never did it that way before'.

Pastors need to be change masters

Several years ago my attention was drawn to *The Change Masters* by Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School.[282] It made a fascinating read. Although Rosabeth Moss Kanter was writing about "the need for an American corporate renaissance", the parallels for church life abound. For churches, like businesses, are in the marketplace, and if they fail to adapt to a changing world, they too wither and die.

The very title of the book is significant: *The Change Masters*. How many pastors see themselves as 'change masters'? According to Kanter, change masters are "those people and organisations adept at the art of anticipating the need for, and of leading, productive change."[283] I'm reminded of the poster which read: "Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark." Or in the words of Samuel Johnson's dictum, "The future is purchased by the present".[284] Pastors need to anticipate the future, in order to master change, rather than be mastered by change.

This best-seller abounds with quotable quotes. For example; "The change master is partly a historian who knows what pieces of the past to honour and preserve while moving toward a different future, but that is not at all the same as letting the past define the future."[285] How true that is. A church's history needs to be understood and honoured, but to allow itself to be bound by its past tradition is tantamount to receiving the kiss of death.

Change is a process

According to Kanter: "A prototypical innovation has three identifiable waves of activity:

1. *Problem definition* – the acquisition and application of information to shape a feasible, focused project;
2. *Coalition building* – the development of a network of backers who agree to provide resources and/or support;
3. *Mobilisation* – the investment of the acquired resources, information and support in the project itself, including activation of the project's working team to bring the innovation from idea to use."[286]

Again, what is true of the world, is true of the church. If change is to be successfully managed in a church, the same process must be followed. We may use different terminology, but the general thrust is the same.

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[280] Robin Gill, *A Vision for Growth: why your church doesn't have to be a pelican in the wilderness* (SPCK, London 1994), 2-3.
[281] William Easum, *Dancing with Dinosaurs: Ministry in a Hostile and Hurting World* (Abingdon, Nashville 1993) 14-15.
[282] *The Change Masters: Corporate Entrepreneurs at Work* (British edition: Unwin Paperbacks, London 1984). This formed the subsequent basis of a lengthy review article I wrote for *Church Growth Digest* XIV.2 (Winter 1992/1993) 2-3, much of which I have reproduced.
[283] Kanter, *The Change Masters* 13.
[284] Samuel Johnson, *Rambler* 178 (30 Nov 1751): "It may be observed in general that the future is purchased by the present. It is not possible to secure distant or permanent happiness but by the forbearance of some immediate gratification."
[285] Kanter, *The Change Masters* 33.
[286] Kanter, *The Change Masters* 217.

Change necessitates tactics

I found somewhat amusing Kanter's list of eight "tactics that innovators used to disarm opponents":[287]

1. *Waiting it out* (when the entrepreneurs had no tools with which to counter the opposition directly)
2. *Wearing them down* (continuing to repeat the same arguments and not giving ground)
3. *Appealing to larger principles* (tying the innovation to an unassailable value or person)
4. *Inviting them in* (finding a way that opponents could share the 'spoils' of the innovation)
5. *Sending emissaries to smooth the way and plead the case* (picking diplomats on the project team to visit critics periodically and present them with information)
6. *Displaying support* (asking sponsors for a visible demonstration of backing)
7. *Reducing the stakes* (de-escalating the number of losses or changes implied by the innovation)
8. *Warning the critics* (letting them know they would be challenged at an important meeting – with top management, for example).

It doesn't take much imagination to see that all these tactics could be profitably applied to a local church. I particularly appreciated the book's stress on the need for change masters to be "masters of the use of participation".[288] Autocracy doesn't work – either inside or outside the church.

Change is costly

Change is costly in two respects. Firstly, change is costly in terms of hard work and effort. This cost of change is admirably brought out by Leith Anderson in the form of an equation: (D + Pr)HW + PG = Changed Church

In this equation D = diagnosis; Pr = prescription; H = hard work; and PG = power of God.

Anderson wrote: "Correct diagnosis and right prescription usually need to be *multiplied* by hard work. Change within a church is seldom easy. It takes enormous amounts of prayer, time, money and ministry. There are few shortcuts. Effective churches are most often the product of years of zealous labour rightly deployed."[289] In other words, effective ministry involves "blood, sweat and tears". It involves hard work – not least the hard work of thinking through how to manage the process of change within the church.

Secondly, change is costly, for most of us are creatures of habit, who do not like having to adapt to a different way of doing church. To quote Anderson again: "There is a basic principle of church growth: 'For a church to grow, it must want to grow and be willing to pay the price'. The price is least counted in dollars. It comes in the more costly currency of change. It is doing church in new ways, incorporating new people, moving out of comfort zones, and existing for others rather than for self."[290] How true that is – and how blind people can be. Time and again people resist change, and in resisting fail to see that they are motivated by concern for self, rather than concern for others.

Change takes time

Change is a process which takes time. How often we learn this to our cost. As Nick Mercer delightfully put it, sudden change "is a bit like having a baby without being pregnant for nine months. The leaders have spent many hours and days in discussion, in the gestation of the idea. Then the 'baby' is suddenly presented at a Church Meeting which has forty-five minutes to make up its mind! No wonder there are so many unhappy births. The congregation must share in the pregnancy if it is to be a healthy baby."[291]

If a major change is to be introduced, plenty of time must be given for the church to absorb its implications.

If leaders are to take the church as a whole with them, they must pay careful attention to the various rates of adoption as also to the various categories of adopters. These rates and categories have been classified as follows:

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[287] Kanter, *The Change Masters* 231.
[288] Kanter, *The Change Masters* 241.
[289] Anderson, *Church for the 21st Century* 12, 13.
[290] Anderson, *Church for the 21st Century* 192.
[291] Nick Mercer, "Coping with Change", *The Fraternal* 234 (April 1991) 5.

1. Some 2.5% of the church are *Innovators*, who are enthusiastic about change and promote its introduction to others.
2. A further 13.5% are *Early Adopters*, who are quick to accept the change, and are then happy to promote its introduction.
3. A further 34% form the *Early Majority*. Many initially had reservations, but have now been persuaded and now persuade others.
4. A further 34%, the *Late Majority*, were initially resistant to the change, but have been gradually won over.
5. The final 16% are the *Laggards* who now accept the change grudgingly. The dissidents remain in this group even after the change has become tradition![292]

Obviously there is a good deal of generalisation here. I personally find the figure for 'Laggards' unduly high. Lyle Schaller, for instance, is on record as saying that only "about 3% of church members enjoy intimidating the pastor"![293] Furthermore, the composition of these groups may vary according to the type of change being considered. And yet it is important for leaders to deal with the underlying dynamics relating to the process of change. If a church is not to be split unnecessarily leaders need to ensure that decisions are not taken at church meeting until the *Late Majority* has come on board. This does not guarantee unanimity – there will always be some die-hard *Laggards*. However, without the *Late Majority* a church risks literally being split in two.

Clearly there is no Scriptural foundation to such an analysis. However, not to pay attention to such insights is to run the risk of being what Paul describes as "children in your thinking" (1 Cor 14.20). The fact is that for the most part people, even Christian people, initially resist change. They are much happier with the status quo. There is an amusing story which tells of a new pastor's conversation with one of his senior elders. "You must have seen a number of changes in this church", began the young pastor. "Yes", replied the elder, "and I've opposed every one of them!"

16. Managing conflict

Conflict is inevitable

Conflict is a reality in many churches.

> "On any given day in perhaps three-quarters of all churches the ministry of that congregation is reduced significantly as a result of non-productive conflict. In perhaps one-fourth of all churches that internal conflict is so sufficiently severe that it must be reduced before the parish can redirect its energies and resources towards formulating new goals and expanding its ministry."[294]

At some stage in their ministry every pastor will be engaged in major conflict of one kind another. Conflict cannot be avoided – but thank God, it can be managed.

Conflict management begins by understanding that conflict in the church is inevitable. It is no exaggeration to say that where two or three are gathered in Jesus' name, then there is almost bound to be conflict at one time or another. There is, of course, nothing new about conflict. Any intelligent reading of the New Testament reveals that there were power struggles from the beginning of the life of the early church. One recalls not only James and John, anxious to sit on the right and left hand of Jesus in his glory, but also the Judaisers who wanted to impose their way of doing church on the Gentile converts, and then a little later the bickering factions at Corinth.

Much of the conflict that takes place in the Christian church is rooted in human sinfulness. There is nothing glorifying to God in the statistic that involuntary terminations among Southern Baptists have escalated by 31% since 1984.[295] On the other hand, low-level conflict is not necessarily sinful. The presence of low-level conflict, far from indicating breaches in fellowship, may actually indicate depth in fellowship. Churches where differences of opinion never surface may not necessarily be united fellowships, rather they are probably unreal in their fellowship. Joyce Huggett was right when she wrote: "Friction in the fellowship need not be feared. Friction, the rubbing together of opposite, sometimes even opposing, viewpoints and personalities, is an integral part of firm relationships. Fellowship breeds

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[292] See Everett C. Rogers with F. Floyd Shoemaker, *Communication of Innovations* (Free Press, 2nd edition 1971) 182.
[293] Lyle Schaller, *Grid* (Autumn 1987).
[294] Lyle E.Schaller in Foreword to *Leadership and Conflict* by Speed Leas (Abingdon, Nashville 1982).
[295] See also Jerry L.Scruggs, "The Flexible Leader", *Search* (Winter 1991) 30: "Southern Baptists pastors, according to a recent survey, are being fired by their congregations at the alarming rate of 116 per month."

friction. You can't have one without the other."[296] I find it fascinating how Paul, in a context of unity, urges his fellow-Christians to "speak the truth in love" to one another (Eph 4.15): such speaking the truth in love inevitably involves expressions of disagreement and difference. Churches, which for "love's" sake suppress the expression of disagreement and difference, suppress at the same time "the truth". The Body of Christ is made up of many different kinds of individuals with different experiences and different points of view: it is only as these experiences and points of view are shared that together we grow together in maturity in the kind of way that Paul envisages (Eph 4.16).

This understanding of low-level conflict is surely behind Prov 27.17: "Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another". It is precisely through the clash of ideas that progress is often made. It is in the powerful exchange of ideas that "people learn from one another" (Prov 27.17 GNB). A church is the stronger precisely if its leadership team is made up disparate people who are not all in the pastor's mould.

There is therefore a positive side to conflict. Conflict can be beneficial. Indeed, in a British survey of ministers 87% said that in their experience conflict could be productive in church life. To quote some of the respondents, "it forces people to address and work through issues", and in so doing "makes people consider other angles, viewpoints and fact and breaks prejudice; it "challenges complacency" and as a result can "lead to better understanding"; as minds are sharpened, "ideas and directions emerge or are refined when 'tested' by contrary views".[297] Or as Paul Alvis stated:

> "Conflict gives vitality to an institution. It allows internal interest groups to pursue their aims, which may be for the overall benefit of the system. It opens up the system to its environment as fresh energies are drawn in to replace those energies consumed in internal conflicts. It clarifies the true interests of the organisation, corrects imbalances and stimulates reform and renewal. All attempts to create a 'totally homogeneous, unargumentative, non-disputatious' organisation, have tended, as Charles Handy insists, to result in low output and low morale."[298]

A church with no conflict is a church where nothing is happening. Churches without conflict are probably churches where the ministers are not doing their job in leading out the people of God in adventurous mission. Lynn Buzzard quotes Saul Alinsky: "Change means movement, and movement means friction, and friction means heat, and heat means conflict. You just can't get the rocket off the ground discreetly and quietly."[299]

For some pastors this kind of thinking is disturbing. They long for the quiet life. They long for leaders meetings and church meetings where differences are not expressed, where all is sweetness and light. But such 'rubber stamping' does a disservice to the church. Where healthy conflict is present, there issues get more fully explored, better decisions are made, and people become more committed to those decisions.

Good conflict is to be encouraged

How can we encourage churches to engage in positive debate, without at the same time encouraging anger, bitterness, and resentment? How can we enable churches to 'fight gracefully'?

Speed Leas has some useful suggestions.[300] In summary these are:

> 1. *Preach about low-level conflict*. Mention in sermons that by articulating differences congregations can grow and mature.
> 2. *Praise disagreement*. When people disagree with you or others in the congregation, affirm them for raising their concerns. Let them know that, in the long run, such disagreement enhances the church's life.
> 3. *Mix-up committees*. Encourage chairpersons to put people with different perspective on their committees so that the committee can come to stronger decisions.
> 4. *Put newcomers on leadership boards.* What old timers have taken for granted, they will question.
> 5. *Set standards for the work of the church.* Once a year, have committees look at what has happened in the church and ask 'How did we do?' and 'What can we do better?' If not the first year, certainly by the second and third, members will start getting the idea that disagreement and challenge is genuinely being sought.

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[296] Joyce Huggett, *Conflict: Friend or Foe* (Kingsway, Eastbourne 1984) 25.
[297] See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Power for God's Sake* 97-98.
[298] Paul Avis, *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church* (Mowbray, London 1992) 120.
[299] Lynn Buzzard, *Leadership* IV.3 (Summer 1983) 22.
[300] Speed Leas, 'Tension Isn't All Bad' 39 in *Mastering Conflict and Controversy* by E.G.Dobson, S.B. Leas & M. Shelley (Multnomah, Portland, Oregon 1992).

5. *Make clear the rules of healthy conflict.* No hitting! No personal attacks! No talking about people behind their backs!

Conflict can be disastrous

Conflict is not always beneficial. Conflict can get out of hand and have disastrous effects on the life of the church for years to come. Richard Rusbuldt reckoned that "any conflict beyond the simplest levels will cost the church at least ten years before ever recovering its scope and level of ministry at the time the conflict emerged – if it ever does. Pastors (and sometimes their families even more so) suffer significant damage, as well, and some will not be able (or will not want) to continue in pastoral ministry."[301] Such conflict is clearly to be avoided.

At this stage it may be useful to distinguish between the various levels of conflict. Not all conflicts are all-out war. The various levels of conflict have been helpfully mapped out by Leas:[302]

1. *Predicaments*. The major objective of the parties is to solve the problem. Level-I disputants don't accuse people.
2. *Disagreement.* Parties are still concerned about solving the problem but they are especially concerned about coming out of the situation looking good.*Contest*. The 'players' are less concerned about the problem or looking good: now they want to win and get their way.
3. *Fight/Flight.* The major objective of parties is to break the relationship, either by leaving or getting the other to withdraw. No longer is victory palatable; now the very relationship is a problem.
4. *Intractable*. People believe the opposition is so evil and virulent that simply getting rid of them will not do. The opposition must be punished and destroyed.

Church conflicts can become bloody affairs – even bloodier than many a conflict in the world. For church people invoke God and declare him to be on their side, with the result that the conflict becomes even more intense: winning (and beating the living daylights out of the opposition) becomes a tenet of faith. Charles Westermann said: "How easy to forget that it was the Devil whose tactic in Genesis 3 was getting two people to believe, 'You will be like God, knowing good and evil'. How tempting even today to mistake our will for God's; how devilish to believe that disagreeing with me is disagreeing with God."[303] Here are sobering words. Sadly, in the heat of the battle, reason goes out of the window and emotion in the form of religious fanaticism prevails.

Conflict has many causes

Causes of conflict are seldom simple, and often emerge from more than one root. At their simplest church conflicts may be divided into two types: conflict over facts and conflict involving feelings. "Fact-based conflicts revolve around role-conflict, philosophical differences, lack of co-operation or competition for leadership. Feeling-orientated differences centre around incompatible personalities, blocked personal or interpersonal needs, and differences or similarities over leader style."[304] Clearly feelings and facts impinge on one another, but in low-level conflict normally one or other predominates. In high-level conflict feelings always predominate.[305]

My own conviction is that a major cause of conflict is change, or the threat of change. "Probably no other phenomenon in the life of the church today is more disruptive than that of change... Older generations, long holding the power reins in churches, will quickly pit themselves against younger generations."[306] The nature of the change can vary enormously. One survey revealed the following causes of conflict: change in worship style (81%), major

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[301] Richard E.Rusbuldt, 'When Differences Tear Apart the Body of Christ', *Ministry Today* 1 (1994) 24.
[302] Speed Leas, 'The varieties of religious strife' 83-94 in *Mastering Conflict and Controversy*.
[303] Quoted by Marshall Shelley, 'Surviving A Power Play' 78 in *Mastering Conflict and Controversy*.
[304] Robert Dale, *Pastoral Leadership* 159.
[305] A more complex categorisation divides conflict into eight types: 1) *Values Conflict*: e.g. Liberals v. Conservatives, Charismatics v. Non-Charismatics. 2) *Incompetent pastor or lay-leaders*: e.g. interpersonal or professional incompetence. 3) *Conflict over goals or methods*: e.g. changes to worship. 4) *Interpersonal difficulty*: e.g. unmet needs for inclusion, power, affection as with an "old guard" and a "new guard". 5) *Lack of success, inability to achieve, frustration, blaming*: e.g. decreasing numbers, inability to pay bills. 6) *Bored, apathetic, frightened*: e.g. after a major conflict, suppressed anger may come to the surface. 7) *Breach of organisation's trust (usually by clergy)*: e.g. theft, sexual misdemeanour. 8) *Structural conflict*: e.g. lack of clear communication between groups. See George Parsons, *Intervening in a Church Fight: A Manual for Internal Consultants* (Alban, Washington D.C. 1989) 29-32 following the pioneering work of Speed Leas.
[306] Rusbuldt, 'When Differences Tear Apart the Body of Christ' 28.

redevelopment of buildings (21%); change to appearance of buildings (18%), change in Sunday School work (18%), introduction of new pastoral groups (18%), introduction of Alpha courses (15%), and change in time of Sunday services (14%).[307] Although theological justification is often given for positions adopted, time and again the underlying reason is not theological at all, but has much more to do with feelings of personal insecurity or of the need to be wanted.

Another major cause of conflict is, of course, plain old-fashioned 'sin'! Personal jealousies are often at the root of many a church fight. [308]

Steps to handling conflict well

The first step to handling negative conflict is to become aware of conflict, before it has time to gestate and devour the church. Rusbuldt was so alarmed by the increase in conflict in today's church that he even advocated pastors at least once week spending an hour alone in introspection regarding the life of their church:

> "Get off alone by yourself and identify and examine every relationship you have with leaders, groups, or the congregation itself. What about relationships between individual leaders, groups etc.?.. Don't become another Titanic! Remember every major conflict began as the tip of an ice cube."[309]

The advice may sound overdramatic: on the other hand, there is nothing worse than waking up and finding you have a major fire on your hands, which is threatening to go out of control.

Having checked out one's feelings and assumptions, the second step is to bring out the concerns into the open and allow people to air their differences. Where people feel empowered to take a meaningful part in the decision-making processes of their church, the possibilities of destructive conflict are reduced. In this respect the American Mennonite Ron Kraybill made a helpful distinction between 'outcome' powerlessness and 'process' powerlessness:

> "Outcome powerlessness is found when one's preference is overruled or someone else prevails against one's wishes: this form of powerlessness disappoints, but doesn't embitter. People healthily empowered in other ways know that no one wills all the time and tolerate such disappointments. Process powerlessness, however, is much more serious. For process powerlessness is not just about not winning, but not about even being seriously consulted. Or when the process of arriving at a decision is too hasty, exclusive or unclear for one to feel a part of things… When people complain about outcomes, they almost always do so because they believe the process was unfair."[310]

The third step is to establish boundaries by setting up ground rules for solving the problem at hand. For example:
1. No one is allowed to define the situation for the other. Each person expresses *only* his or her viewpoint.
2. Space is always given for an alternative point of view.
3. Respond to the statement of the other before expressing your own view.
4. It is OK to disagree. You can enjoy a conversation without coming to agreement. You only need to hear, understand and accept what the other has said as his or her point of view.[311]

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[307] See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Power for God's Sake* 96.

[308] Sometimes these jealousies hook into the sin of former generations which have never been properly dealt with. Institutions seem to breed 'institutional viruses', which unresolved dog one generation after another. For example, Brian Thorne and Kathleen Baker, reporting on conflict at Lincoln Cathedral, spoke of "powerful unconscious forces at work...These basic assumptions have probably permeated the Lincoln environment for centuries and they operate in complete opposition to the spirit of the cathedral statutes, which require collegiality and co-operation based on an atmosphere of trust" (*The Times,* November 30, 1991).

[309] Rusbuldt, 'When Differences Tear Apart the Body of Christ' 22, 23.

[310] Ron Kraybill, 'Powerlessness' 96 in *Mediation and Facilitation Training Manual: Foundations and Skills for Constructive Conflict Transformation* (3rd edition, Mennonite Conciliation Service, Akron, Pennsylvania 1995) edited by J. Stuzman & C. Schrock-Shenk. See also Alastair Mckay, 'Discord is part of harmony in the church', *Ministry Today* 32 (November 2004) 16, 17: "If people are not involved in the decision-making process, they can feel unvalued and marginalised. This can lead to bitterness and divisions that may not surface immediately, but may sow seeds of later destructiveness."

[311] David Luecke, *The Relationship Manual*, quoted by Speed Leas, *Leadership And Conflict* 70-71.

Particularly where feelings are involved, it is important to be able to ventilate those feelings in a safe way. Where facts are involved, it is vital for each side to be able to listen to the other – a non-structured process encourages intensity of debate, which only serves to obstruct the truth.[312]

The fourth step is to seek to negotiate a way forward together. This may involve identifying and building on common points of agreement. It may involve brainstorming for new solutions. It may involve give and take on both sides. It may involve agreeing to disagree, and accepting the will of the majority.

On one occasion, for instance, where 80% of the church had voted for a major change to our church premises involving the expenditure of a significant sum of money while 20% had vigorously opposed the proposal, I appealed to the minority to accept the decision of the church and move forward accordingly. In theological terms the church had tested the spirits (see 1 John 4.1) and the church had been led to make its decision. I went on to say that I recognised some were struggling to hear God speaking in the decision that had been made; and so I suggested that they followed the example of Gamaliel:

> "Although Gamaliel in all conscience could not respond positively to the preaching of Peter and John, he strongly advised his fellow Jews not to oppose the new preaching. Instead he told them to wait and see: 'If what they have planned and done is or human origin, it will disappear, but if it comes from God, you cannot possibly defeat them. You could find yourselves fighting against God' (Acts 5.38-39)."

While I did not at the time explicitly say this, clearly if people could not accept the Gamaliel option, then their only option left was to leave the church and find another church whose direction they could more happily accept. A parting of the ways (see Acts 15.36-39) is always preferable to in-fighting in the church.

There are times when conflict gets out of control. However, even when truth seems to have gone out of the window, it is vital for pastors to retain their composure and integrity. In this regard the nineteen year-old Jonathan Edwards set a wise example: "Resolved: that all men should live for the glory of God. Resolved second: that whether others do or not, I will.[313] Of course, this is sometimes easier said than done. In a conflict situation where ministers find themselves struggling to keep their cool, there is much to be said for 'supervision', which can provide not only a safe outlet for emotions to be expressed, but also an understanding of the aetiology of these emotions. Supervision can help ministers gain perspective, balance and self-control. Supervision can be a channel of healing for pastors in pain.

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[312] I drew up these guidelines for an occasion when the church was discussing a contentious issue: 1) If you wish to speak, please put up your hand. Only speak once you have been given a microphone and have been invited to speak. 2) When you speak, please do not speak for more than four minutes. We want to give an opportunity for everybody who wishes to speak. 3) Initially we would ask people to speak only once. If the conversation begins to dry up, then there may be the possibility to speak again. 4) Remember, this is an ongoing conversation. Although we plan to finish at 9.30 pm, if it becomes clear that we will need more time, then we will arrange another meeting.

In a subsequent blog I wrote: "To my delight, everybody respected the guidelines for the meeting; everybody spoke courteously to one another; everybody listened to one another; there were no interruptions. It was all the more remarkable, because of the underlying strength of conviction of many of those speaking. Some had come with prepared speeches; others were more spontaneous… If the truth be told, my own reflection on Scripture has now led me to adopt a more open position than many of my people, with the result that I found myself privately disagreeing with many of the views expressed. However, as I left the meeting my chief emotion was one of gratitude rather than of frustration. In a large meeting of this kind people could have spoken very differently. I was proud to be the minister of a church where people could express disagreement in a positive, courteous manner. For the time being the public conversation has come to an end. But when the conversation does resume, then I am hopeful that precisely because of this positive experience, people will have less 'angst' and be even more able to talk through issues where we see things differently."

[313] This is a summary of his first 'resolution' penned June 25, 1753: "Resolved that I will do whatsoever I think to be most to God's glory, and my own good, profit, and pleasure, in the whole duration, without any consideration of the time, whether now, or never so many myriads of ages hence. Resolved to do whatever I think to be my duty and most for the good and advantage of mankind in general. Resolved to do this, whatever difficulties I meet with, how many and how great soever."

17. The agony and ecstasy: a case study of change, conflict

One of my most painful and yet ultimately extraordinarily exhilarating tasks in ministry was leading Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, through a major building project. In over 35 years of pastoring a local church, it was my only experience of church conflict – but what a conflict it was! Thank God, there was a positive end.

The need for change

The story began in 1993, when I became the senior minister. Almost immediately, I realised that we had to change our church building, for, with the passing of the years, it was increasingly working against the mission of the church.

People's expectations had changed. The cinemas discovered that some years ago. They realised if they were to attract people to see their films, then it wasn't simply a matter of having good films to show. It was also about having comfortable surroundings. So they knocked down the old 'flea pits' and built new cinemas, with the result that people are now going to the cinema again in increasing numbers. The parallel with church is clear. Hard, uncomfortable pews in poorly heated and draughty buildings will not do. What was good enough for their grandparents is no longer good enough for them. If we want to attract a new church-going public, we must upgrade our facilities.

Not only was our building uncomfortable, it also spoke of a by-gone age and in turn of a God who belonged to the past. No wonder we had difficulty in attracting people to church.

So almost six months to the day after I began my pastorate, I preached a sermon on Isaiah 54.2-3, drawing inspiration from William Carey's 'deathless sermon' based on this same text, in which he coined the motto: 'Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God'. In my sermon I said: "A lick of paint or the buying of cushions to line the pews are small things – God would have us go for 'great things'... We need to gut both the sanctuary and also the halls and start all over again."

It took a further year before the church formally agreed to take a serious look at the premises. In the meantime I sought to highlight the way in which our buildings were working against us, rather than for us – not that this was too difficult!

The 'sanctuary' itself was dark and depressing: massive in height, with a balcony running around most of the church, with a high central pulpit, it was reminiscent of a past era. The sight lines were such that it was good only for preaching (the only feature in the church which was visible to all was the pulpit). The communion table and the lectern were invisible to those in the balcony, while the baptistery was visible to none. For preaching, and indeed for singing, I wanted to use an over-head projector, but one was difficult to see, so two were necessary.

The church halls and the rest of the premises were also in need of attention. For example, when people, came to deliver their children to our Child Contact Centre, they were faced with a cold corridor more akin to what you might see in a prison than in a place which welcomes visitors. The receptionists manned a desk placed next to the men's toilets. Basil Fawlty couldn't have arranged things better if he had tried!

It is a fact that with time church people get used to poor facilities, so that they fail to realise how outsiders may view their building. Somehow we are prepared to accept a 'tatty' building, even although our own homes are far from tatty. Then we wonder why people are not keen to come and worship God in such a building!

Agreeing to change

The decision-making process for a large Baptist church can be complex, and all the more so when radical changes are afoot. Decisions cannot be hurried. Time needs to be taken for people to understand what is involved; and to be persuaded that change is necessary. Most people do not welcome change of any kind, with the result that very often many of the initial responses tend to be negative. As Machiavelli recognised long ago:

> "There is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all who profit by the old order, and only luke-warm defenders in all those who profit by the new order. This lukewarmness arises partly from fear of

their adversaries, who have law in their favour, and partly from the incredulity of mankind, who do not truly believe in anything new until they have actual experience of it."[314]

In our case, it took five months just to agree the client brief, and a further ten months to agree "to proceed with the alterations to the church buildings on the basis of the architect's outline plans, at an estimated cost of £1,300,000". This was just the beginning. There were many more church meetings before the go-ahead for actual construction was given.

Selling the vision

Architects' plans have their limitations. Most people find it difficult to 'read' them. So I wrote an article for our church magazine, in which I sought to 'flesh' out the plans.

> "When you first arrive, you'll enter an internally modernised Edwardian building. As you walk through the main reception area, you will pass a welcome desk where information will be given on the church's activities together with directions to the various activities of the day. Tables will have been set out to serve coffee and fruit juice after the service. Subdued easy-listening music will be piping its way gently through into all the public areas.
>
> Most people will be making their way up to the first floor auditorium through one of the three main staircases. Some, however, will prefer to use the large lift, which will be regularly whisking up and down as it disgorges its passengers only to collect another group of people.
>
> The auditorium itself is large and carpeted. It is also well lit. During the day, light comes in from the large roof lights situated between the beams of the attractive wooden roof. At night there are downlighters and uplighters, which blend together to give a most attractive feel.
>
> The five hundred or so comfortable chairs are grouped around the slightly raised stage in a large semi-circle. The stage itself is quite wide – the focal point is formed by an open raised baptistery at the back, topped by a modern tapestry. The large communion table is sited towards the front of the stage – at communion services one gets a real feeling of gathering round the table of the Lord. There is no pulpit. Instead there is a large modern lectern for the worship leader and preacher to use.
>
> There is plenty of space for the music group to one side – as also for an organ. The styles of music being played range from classical to jazz to rock…"

The article was not enough. So at around the same time the church leaders devoted the period of Lent to make personal home visits on all the members and friends of the church to share with them the vision, and to challenge them to become part of that vision.

Raising the money

We engaged in a wide variety of fundraising events, which brought in a good deal of money. But fund-raising was not the chief means of raising money. Nor was making applications to trusts: in total we only raised £42,000 from trusts. A welcome £225,000 was added from the sale of a manse, but even this did not provide the major contribution to the fund.

The chief source of money was through direct giving, both on a one-off and on a regular basis. Right at the beginning of the project the leadership team challenged the church to a decade of double-tithing – a tithe for the church and a tithe for the building. Naturally, in challenging the church to make that commitment, the ministers and deacons had to back their words with actions. Although not everybody double-tithed, a good number did. One couple even treble-tithed.

In the end, with all the extra costs and the interest owed, the project cost us over £2,000,000 – a huge sum for a church with no really wealthy members. But 14 May 2006, five years after the redevelopment of the premises, we celebrated that we had paid off the debt!

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[314] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapter 6.

Encountering opposition

There was a vocal minority in the church who at every stage bitterly opposed the project. This bitterness became very personal. I became the focus of a huge amount of criticism and even received hate mail. At one stage I felt like renaming the church the 'Paul Beasley-Murray Martyr Memorial Church'. Bitterness was also vented against the leaders of the church in general. Significantly, the opposition came from a small group of mostly older people, who had been loyal workers in their time, but now found the proposed changes too much. Many of them were what have been called the AAEOLs – the Angry Alienated Ex Old Leaders.[315] They did immense damage, not least in the way in which they expressed themselves. Indeed, in all my 21 years of ministry in Chelmsford, the only time church discipline was formally exercised was after two older couples in a church meeting had shouted out abuse (including such comments as 'I hate you!') at one of our leaders, and – in private follow-up conversations – had refused to apologise for their behaviour.[316] A number of younger people moved away, despairing of a church that apparently could not live at peace with itself.[317]

Some of those opposed to the building project argued that it was wrong to spend money on 'ourselves' and that instead we should give more money to the poor or to missionary work overseas. Although we stressed time and again that we were investing in a mission-facility, somehow this concept failed to make sense. Our critics failed to realise the missionary nature of the local church. They were still operating with a pastoral paradigm, where the task of the church was understood as serving the needs of church members.

Others were frightened by the sums of money involved and believed that as a church we would end up with a massive debt. However, although the sums involved were large, we believed that, if everybody got behind the project, the sums were far from impossible.

As a leadership we bent over backwards in seeking to gain a consensus for moving forward with the building. Although almost 80% of the members voted to move forward with the redevelopment of the premises, we were concerned for the 20% who did not vote in favour and we went to great lengths to win them over to the project. With hindsight, we may well have been wrong to have been overly concerned, for we kept on putting off the redevelopment, which in turn meant costs increased. When large-scale changes involving money are involved unanimity is rare. Finally, however, we felt we had no choice but to go ahead, and in June 1999 awarded the contract to a local firm. At that point, a good number of the 'dissenters', having been outvoted yet again, left the church. It was a sad business.[318]

Although there was a great deal of bitterness among the 'dissenters', that was not true of everybody who voted against the scheme. Some were genuinely confused, and understandably felt unable to vote for the scheme. Others simply believed the scheme was wrong. Later it was enormously moving to see these people gradually change their minds:

[315] This term was developed by Lyle Schaller, *The Pastor and the People* 165-168: "The AAEOL Club is formed of the angry, alienated and older ex-leaders who are unhappy with all the changes that have been made. They complain that they no longer know every other member, they are convinced the pace of congregational life is too fast, they know this church cannot afford all these new programs, they are unhappy about the increase in the size of the payroll, they are overwhelmed by the new complexity, and they long for the good old days. While their numbers rarely exceed 1 or 2 or 3 percent of the membership, the members of this informal 'club' (It usually meets without prior announcement in a member's home) often can be highly vocal in articulating their unhappiness… The members often think of themselves as losers in a lot of battles, but their persistence enables them to win quite a few wars."

[316] There are times when discipline is essential to the health of the church. "Without discipline", said John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.12, "the church is like a body without sinews." The Reformers considered the exercise of discipline to be one of essential marks of a true church In the words of a 16th century Anabaptist leader Balthasar Hubmaier in *On Fraternal Admonition*, "Where church discipline is lacking, there is certainly no church, even if Baptism and the Supper of Christ are practised." In this particular case we asked the two couples to refrain from taking communion, for they were no longer 'in love and charity with their neighbours'. One of the couples left the church, while the other couple, after a number of months, grudgingly apologised and remained discontented church members. More generally, see Paul Beasley-Murray, 'How do we exercise church discipline?', *Baptist Times* April 29, 2004.

[317] One young church member said: "Why pay money to see Frank Bruno fight, when you can see a fight for nothing at Central Baptist Church?" Sadly, the young person concerned gave up on church all together.

[318] It is important to note that this instance of conflict had nothing to do with lack of consultation – what Kraybill called 'process' powerlessness. At every stage the leadership consulted with the church, and at every stage the 'dissenters' were consistently and overwhelmingly out-voted.

for once the redevelopment was complete and it became clear what had been achieved, a number had the courage and the grace to admit they were wrong and then began to give generously themselves to the project.

But at the time it was incredibly tough for me – and for others – as people left the church. As the pastor I found it personally very difficult seeing people leaving the church: at the time change seemed to result in church decline. However, in church life sometimes a period of 'pruning' is necessary for further growth to take place. Or to use another metaphor, a period of 'refining' is sometimes necessary before a church is ready to move out in effective mission. It was incredibly painful. However, ultimately the pain resulted in much 'gain'. To use yet another metaphor, it was like the pain of childbirth; and what eventually emerged was amazing new life.

As a leader it took enormous strength just to keep going. It was tempting to move to pastures new. Fortunately throughout those difficult years my leadership team was amazingly supportive: they believed in the vision and encouraged me to lead the church forward.

Dealing with escalating costs

When in March 1996 we agreed in principle to go ahead with the building project, the estimated cost was £1,300,000. By June 1999 the lowest-priced tender together with costs already incurred meant that we were now looking at a bill of £1,557,000, but then costs increased even more. Once the builders set to work they discovered that the roof needed replacing and there was water below the proposed lift-shaft. All kinds of unexpected contingencies raised their ugly heads. We found that we were facing a bill of £1,932,000. At that stage there was no choice: we could not now go back, for we were already committed. We had to bite the bullet and go forward, whatever the extra cost.

It was then that we experienced a series of miracles of giving. During the autumn of 1999 the treasurer of our building fund had to appeal for money to 'bridge the gap', not just once, but on five or six occasions. Each time members and friends of the church dug deep to the point that we believed that there could be no more money left in the fellowship. Each time we thought we had bridged the gap, only to discover that the gap had opened up again. This was at a time when many of us had been double-tithing for several years, when people had already given generously, indeed sacrificially, from their savings and investments. Yet when we felt we had exhausted the resources of the fellowship, the Lord provided. For me it was as though we were standing on holy ground. What we experienced at this time was truly awe-inspiring. God was at work in our midst.

Finally, the builders were finished and we were able to move back (for 18 months we had been worshipping in a local school, with other activities re-located all over the town). The first service in our redeveloped premises was held on Sunday 4 February 2001. At that stage there were no chairs, no sound-system and no organ. But all that soon changed, with the result that on Saturday 28 April 2001 the Grand Opening took place.

Serving the community

We redeveloped our premises primarily with the needs of the church's mission in mind. Every day the premises are now used by a wide range of church organisations. We are very much a seven-day-a-week church.

From the beginning we decided to make our premises available to the community when they were not being used by the church. We were amazed at how eager the community has been to use them. In any given week we normally had at least 400 non-church people through our premises, and often many more. We rapidly become a favoured venue in Chelmsford for concerts and conferences, exhibitions and receptions, seminars and consultations. These lettings brought in a good deal of extra cash. More importantly, they have given us an opportunity to serve our local community, and in doing so they have raised our profile in the community enormously. To our amazement we discovered that people had been passing our church without realising it was a church. Now people know where we are. Furthermore, in coming into our redeveloped building, people become aware of what we stand for. In our Friendship Centre downstairs, and in every room, there are eye-catching displays. In the Meeting Place there are our two impressive banners declaring that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. In this way, our service to the community becomes a form of pre-evangelism.

Experiencing renewal

As many churches have discovered, the redevelopment of buildings and the renewal of God's people go hand in hand. This was our experience too. The church totally changed character. What had been a highly dysfunctional church is now a warm and loving fellowship. What had been an inward-looking church, is now an outward-looking missional community. There is a new spirit of commitment and a far deeper sense of unity than ever we had before. People come to church expecting God to be present and to work in our midst. Visitors abound, congregations have increased, and baptisms are up. At our lowest point we had 250 members on the church roll: when I retired we had 400 committed members together with a large church fringe. Our building project has undoubtedly been used by God to enable us to take a major step forward in our life together.

So, if our experience is anything to go by, churches engaging in building projects may well encounter tough times, but the end result is worth all the tears. As George Carey discovered through a building project at St Nicholas', Durham: "To God there are no such things as problems; each is an opportunity. Our problem creates an opportunity for him to break in with his power and grace."[319]

Near the beginning of our building process I was given a card, which I pinned up on my office notice-board and kept there until the redevelopment was finished. It read: "It will happen... You just have to keep believing." There were times when I was near to despair, despair not just related to the building, but to the very existence of the church. But our faith was rewarded and 'it' did happen. A minister friend was right when he wrote to me after the Grand Opening: "Think the unthinkable, speak the unspeakable, believe for the impossible and pay the price for it." The price was high, but it was more than worth paying, for it marked the beginning of a new life, new growth, and new hope.

As a result of the experience, I also came to realise how important buildings can be in the life of a church. Buildings can make all the difference to effective mission.[320]

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[319] George Carey, *The Church in the Market Place* (Kingsway, Eastbourne, 3rd edition 1995) 10.
[320] The story of the redevelopment of Central Baptist Church is told in *Building For the Future* (Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, revised edition 2005) by Paul Beasley-Murray.

Sermon: Conflict – and conflict resolution (Acts 15)

Have you ever been involved in a really heated argument?[321] It's not pleasant, is it? It's even worse when the argument takes place in church. Sadly there was a time in the life of this church when the church meeting resembled a bear-garden or even a battlefield. People came to fight their corner – and they sometimes said dreadful things about one another. Thank God, those days are well and truly gone.

1.   Conflict is inevitable

Conflict in the church is inevitable. For every church is made up of people of flesh and blood.

Conflict was a reality in Jerusalem, in Corinth, in Philippi and in many other places too. It was also a reality in the church at Antioch. There a really passionate church fight took place. Listen to the first two verses of Acts 15: "Some men came from Judea to Antioch and started teaching the believers, 'You cannot be saved unless you are circumcised as the Law of Moses requires'. But Paul and Barnabas got into a fierce argument with them."

If you want a flavour of the argument, turn to Paul's Letter to the Galatians. There Paul was tackling the same issue – and he didn't mince his words. Let me read to you Gal 1.6-11 in Eugene Peterson's paraphrase, *The Message*: "I can't believe your fickleness – how easily you have turned traitor to him who called you by the grace of Christ by embracing a variant message! It is not a minor variation, you know; it is completely other, an alien message, a no-message, a lie about God. Those who are provoking this agitation among you are turning the Message of Christ on its head. Let me be blunt: If one of us – even if an angel from heaven! – were to preach something other than what we preached originally, let him be cursed. I said it once; I'll say it again: If anyone, regardless of reputation or credentials, preaches something other than what you received originally, let him be cursed – cursed in the sense of being sent to hell." Paul certainly didn't believe in pulling any punches.

What exactly had happened? Paul and Barnabas had gone throughout present-day Turkey preaching the Good News of Jesus. At each town they visited, they began their missionary work within the Jewish community – they went to the local synagogue and preached Jesus. But time and again they were thrown out of the synagogues, and so they started preaching to non-Jews, and in doing so they met with considerable success. Their success led to trouble. The trouble was not that non-Jews were being converted, but rather how they were being converted. For Paul and his friends were allowing these non-Jews to become church members without circumcision. For some of the Christians in Jerusalem that was unthinkable – it was heresy. In their book you had to become a Jew first in order to become a Christian. "You cannot be saved unless you are circumcised as the Law of Moses requires" (15.1). Nonsense, said Paul, "a person is put right with God only through faith in Jesus Christ, never doing what the Law requires" (Gal 2.16). For Paul a massive principle was at stake. He saw himself fighting for the Gospel, and so "a fierce argument developed" (15.2)

2.   Conflict can be healthy

The conflict which at one stage took place in our church was incredibly unhealthy. It caused people to leave the church in despair; it even caused some people to give up believing all together. Others remained in the church, but gave up on the church meeting. It was a God-dishonouring and faith-destroying conflict.

Yet not all conflict is sinful. Low-level conflict can actually be healthy. I find it fascinating how Paul, in a context of unity, urges his fellow-Christians to "speak the truth in love" to one another (Eph 4.15). Such speaking the truth in love inevitably involves expressions of disagreement and difference; but it also leads to growth in the body. "By speaking the truth in a spirit of love, we must grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head."

This understanding of low-level conflict is behind Prov 27.17 (NRSV): "Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wit of another". A church is the stronger when people are able to disagree with one another. I don't like mega conflict but I have benefited no end from friendly conflict, where it is not about winning an argument, but about discovering the best way forward. I would not want my leadership team to be made up of 'yes' men and women; and I am glad when in the church meeting people are able to express another point of view. God has given us one another, so that we can learn from one another.

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[321] Preached at Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford on June 28, 2009. Scriptures quoted are from the GNB.

3. Conflict may be resolved by:

The conflict at Antioch was so serious, that it was referred to the wider church, and in particular to the church at Jerusalem. There the issue was resolved through:

1. A sharing of differences: Just as there can be unhealthy conflict, so too there can be unhealthy agreement. Some families are so dysfunctional that the only way they can handle difference is by pretending that differences don't exist. Churches also can be too dysfunctional, or perhaps too fragile, to handle differences. But it is not healthy to sweep matters under the carpet. We need to face our differences with a view to resolving those differences. In particular we need to be able express our opinions with a view to finding what is God's perspective on the issue. The fact is "a good argument is a great achievement".[322] So in Jerusalem "a long debate" (15.7) ensued where the motion, this house believes that "the Gentiles must be circumcised and told to obey the law of Moses", was put by "some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees" (15.5), and opposed by Paul and Barnabas. But it was more than a debate. It was part of the process of seeking God's will for the church's life together.

2. A sharing of experiences: Peter shared his experience of taking the Good News to the Gentile world, and in particular to the occasion when the Holy Spirit fell upon the Roman soldier Cornelius and his friends. For Peter this was an eye-opening experience. To his amazement he discovered that God could pour out his Spirit even on non-Jews: "God made no difference between us and them; he forgave their sins because they believed… We are saved by the grace of God, just as they are" (15.9, 11). Paul and Barnabas likewise shared their experience: they reported "all the miracles and wonders that God had performed through them among the Gentiles" (15.12). There is a key difference between arguing a case and sharing an experience. To share an experience is to tell what we have seen; it is to tell our story. It is amazing how experiences can change our minds – and the minds of others too. All too often we put God into a box, and then he surprises us by acting outside the box.

3. Theological reflection: James, the senior pastor of the church and the brother of Jesus, sought to root the discussion in Scripture. "The words of the prophets agree completely with this" (v15), he said. He quoted from Amos 9.11-12 where the Lord declared: "All the rest of the human race will come to me, all the Gentiles whom I have called to be my own." The Scriptures, he said, show that God intended non-Jews also to be members of his Kingdom. Not every church argument can be resolved by a direct appeal to the Scriptures, but it is surprising how often the Scriptures contain principles relevant to church life. The Scriptures, for instance, did not tell us that we should redevelop our building, but they did support our desire to reach out in new ways to people beyond our church. Time and again God guides his people through his Word.

4. Listening together: The apostles and the elders, together with the church as a whole, 'considered the question' (15.6). Unlike some whose minds are made up before they consider the facts, they were open to taking a fresh look at the issue concerned. Unlike the House of Commons, where because party politics is the name of the game, people often heckle one another, Luke tells us that: "The whole group was silent as they heard Barnabas and Paul" (15.12). People listened to one another and to one another's experiences; they also listened to the voice of God, not just within people's experience, but also from within Scripture too.

5. Leaders leading: James allowed everybody to have their say, and then drew things to a conclusion by making a proposal: "It is my opinion that we should not trouble the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead, we should write a letter telling them not to eat any food that is ritually unclean because it has been offered to idols; to keep themselves from sexual immorality; nor to eat any animal that has been strangled, or any blood" (15.19-20). Some have suggested that James was just being a good chairman and expressing in his own words the sense of the meeting. I think that James was actually exercising his authority as leader of the church. He could have been out-voted. He was not forcing the church to make a particular decision. However, in the light of all that had been said, he 'judged' that non-Jews did not need to become Jews in order to be saved.

Some people have seen James as offering a compromise solution: the Gentiles don't need to follow the Jewish ritual law and be circumcised, but they do need to follow the Jewish food law and eat only kosher food. That is to misunderstand James. James proposed that although non-Jews did not need to be circumcised to be saved, they did need to abstain from attending pagan temples and all the practices associated with pagan

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[322] John Courtney Murray SJ.

temples. In particular he banned: eating "food… offered to idols" – that would be dishonouring to God; and "sexual immorality", i.e. prostitution, in the name of religion – the word James uses (*porneia*) does not refer to having sex outside marriage but to having sex with a temple prostitute

James then elaborated on the first practice: there must be no eating of animals that "have been strangled or of any blood". In pagan worship priests used to choke animals offered for sacrifice with a view to transferring its life breath into the idols they worshipped. As part of the sacrificial ritual there was even a formal tasting of blood.

James's compromise solution is remote from our experience. Circumcision is no longer an issue, nor is pagan temple worship. What is relevant to us is that James took a lead. Yes, everybody at a church meeting has a voice, but some voices weigh more than others. Leaders need to lead, without at the same time coercing people to follow their direction.

6. *Spiritual discernment:* The church resolved the issue by consciously seeking God's will. So much so that at the end they could say: "The Holy Spirit and we have agreed" (15.28). The Holy Spirit was at work through the church's decision-making. This principle underlies the Baptist understanding of the church meeting, when "as individuals and as a community, we submit ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and stand under the judgement of God that we may know the mind of Christ". The church in Jerusalem was not seeking to be democratic. As one commentary put it: "Democracy, which honours important values, seeks the will of the majority; discernment seeks the will of God and the mind of Christ."[323] Conflict can be resolved when instead of arguing for what we want, we seek to discover what God wants.

7. *Congregational involvement:* Finally note how the church as a whole was involved. At Antioch it was the church that "decided that Paul and Barnabas" should go to Jerusalem to consult with the church there (15.2), and it was the church which "sent" Paul and Barnabas "on their way" (15.3). When Paul and Barnabas arrived in Jerusalem, "they were welcomed by the church", and not just by the apostles and the elders (15.5). A church meeting was then called to consider the issue of the admission of non-Jews in the church. Although v6 states that "the apostles and the elders met together to consider this question", v12 makes it clear that the church as a whole was present: "the whole group… heard Paul and Silas." The same phrase is used in 15.22 where Luke talks of "the whole group of believers" gathering together for a church meeting. What's more, we see in 15.22 that the church didn't just listen in to the proceedings: the church was actively involved in decision-making ("the apostles and elders, together with the whole church"). Paul, Peter and James had key roles to play – but so too had ordinary church members. One of the great privileges of being a member of a Baptist church is that we can be involved in seeking God's will for our life together. Sometimes this involves resolving conflict, but thank God, it involves so much more. Let me end with another definition of the church meeting: the church meeting is "the place where all members meet together regularly and, in an atmosphere of prayer, share their deepest concerns and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit about all the matters which affect their common life as the family of God".[324] If we truly put that principle into action, any conflict would always be low-level.

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[323] A.B. Robinson and R.Wall, *Called to be Church: The Book of Acts* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2006) 185.
[324] Daniel Webster.

18. Maximising time

We all have 24 hours a day

Maximising time? It doesn't make sense – there are only 168 hours a week! However, there were times when I wished the French Revolution had succeeded in establishing a ten-day week, for it would have meant fewer sermons to prepare! But here, I do not mean adding extra hours to the week, but rather making the most of those God has given us.

Unlike most people, ministers have no set hours of work. Theirs is not a nine to five job. In theory they are on duty twenty-four hours a day. Many ministers are formally entitled to only one day off a week. How they shape their working week is left to them. Some find it incredibly hard to be self-disciplined: hence the notorious number of workaholics in the ranks of the ministry. [325]However, it is not fair to put all the blame on ministers' lack of self-discipline. Ministers are not helped by some of the unreasonable expectations of church members. The story is told of how members of one church were given a questionnaire in which they were asked to state how many hours they felt their pastor should devote to the following tasks: administration, sermon preparation, evangelism visitation, youth work, counselling and personal prayer. The totals on the answers averaged 82 hours per week. Even though a week has only 168 hours, one member actually proposed 200 hours a week. Furthermore, when it comes to setting the time and the day for a funeral, it is amazing how many church members fail to take into account their minister's day off!

The French Roman Catholic priest, Michel Quoist, wrote: "All men complain that they haven't enough time. It's because they look at their lives from too human point a view. There's always time to do what God wants us to do, but we must put ourselves completely into each moment that he offers us."[326] He encapsulated his thoughts in a prayer entitled 'Lord I have time', which concluded with these words:

> "Lord I have time,
> I have plenty of time,
> All the time that you give me,
> The years of my life
> The days of my hears
> The hours of my days,
> They are all mine,
> Mine to fill, quietly, calmly,
> But to fill completely, up to the brim,
> To offer them to you, that of their insipid water
> You make a rich wine such as you made once in Cana of Galilee
>
> I am not asking you tonight, Lord, for time to do this and then that,
> But your grace to do conscientiously, in the time that you give me, what you want me to do."

This is a challenging prayer. Quoist is right. Ultimately, how ministers use their time, should reflect God's priorities. But before we look at priorities, let's look at the realities of ministerial life today.

Ministers work hard

In a British survey, ministers reckoned that they worked 64.3 hours per week.[327] When one remembers that this is an average, then clearly some must have been working very hard.[328] In terms of activities, the ministers in this survey were asked to list the number of hours they worked on average in each category. The following averages ensued:

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[325] Robert Banks, *The Tyranny of Time* (Paternoster, Exeter 1983) 33: "It would probably be true to say that the clergyman or clergywoman is the busy person par excellence of our times; his or her life more than anyone else's exhibits the desperate shortage of time and accelerating pace of life that have become characteristic of our age."

[326] Michel Quoist, *Prayers of Life* (English Translation, Gill & Macmillan, Dublin 1965) 76.

[327] Paul Beasley-Murray, *Power for God's Sake* 48-49.

[328] These figures are just a little higher than those given by Peter Bates in 'Time – Servant or Master', *Ministry* 22 (Spring 1994) 5: "Studies that I have carried out over many years of the use of their time by clergy show that the average priest in parochial

Sermon preparation/preaching: 7.5hrs
Visiting – building and maintaining meaningful relationships: 7.5hrs
Administration: 6.5hrs
Prayer & meditation: 6.2hrs
Worship preparation/leading worship: 5.7hrs
Study: 5.6hrs
Committees: 5.3hrs
Community involvement/social action: 4.3hrs
Discipling/nurturing: 4.2hrs
Counselling: 4.1hrs
Enabling/involving laity in ministry: 4.1hrs
Evangelism: 3.3hrs

An enormous amount of time appears to be devoted to the Sunday services, which if preparation and study are included amounts to almost 19 hours. Maintaining the organisational life of the church (administration and committees) amounts to almost 12 hours. Pastoral care, as represented by counselling and visiting, amounts to 11.6 hours. Mission as represented by community involvement and evangelism amounts to 8.6 hours. While investing in the lives of others, hopefully with a view to their being involved in Christian service (discipling and enabling) amounts to just over 8 hours.

The question arises: what is a reasonable workload for a minister? To what extent should churches be encouraging ministers to observe the European Working Time Directive, which limits the average weekly work time to 48 hours – although individuals can choose to work longer? Roy Oswald of the Alban Institute wrote: "I believe each of us can learn to do our ministries in a fifty-hour work week. That is still ten hours more per week than many persons work."[329] I used to tell my ministerial colleagues that on average they should aim to work 50 hours a week, and if on occasion they exceeded 60 hours a week then they were overdoing it. I confess that for most of my ministerial life I normally worked more than a 50 hour week: at one stage I kept a careful time log for seven weeks and discovered that in that period I had averaged 57 hours. It was, however, my choice – my privilege, if you like – to work that hard. I certainly did not feel that my church had any right to expect me to work that number of hours.

A different approach to determining a minister's workload is not to count hours at all, but rather to count time blocks. Each week has 21 time blocks: i.e. each week consists of seven days of three sessions a day. An employed person in a secular job normally works five days and two sessions per day: i.e. ten sessions a week. Therefore a minister should at the very least work ten sessions a week – and probably a good deal more. Greg Asimakoupoulos told of one American pastor who,on this basis of time blocks, works twelve units a week: a typical week finds him putting in three units each on Monday and Wednesday; he takes Tuesday off and works mornings and afternoons Thursday and Friday – two units each day – and then works two more units on a Sunday.[330] A minister friend of mine, however, argued that ministers should work 15 sessions a week. His reasoning was as follows: if, in addition to the ten sessions per week taken up by his normal employment, a member attends church twice a Sunday, the total becomes twelve sessions; a deacon or other church officer might spend two evenings a week on church business; the minister should pave the way and do three – hence 15 sessions. This leaves six sessions

It is not just the number of hours or sessions, but the work that one puts into those hours and sessions that counts. Nor is it a matter of just working hard, but rather a matter of whether the time and energy expended actually contributed toward fulfilling the church's mission and ministry. It has been said that "the real issue of hours and resources is not whether they were spent, but whether they moved the congregation toward the outcome of ministry to which it is called by its mission. Staff members are not paid to work hard, but to achieve ministry."[331]

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ministry 'works' for about 61 hours a week." Speed B. Leas, *Time Management* (Abingdon, Nashville 1978) 22-24 reported on two studies of what an average work week is for ministers. In one study of 913 clergy of the American Episcopal Church the average clergy work week was 66.7 hours. Another study by Minister's Life revealed an average work week of 53.7 hours. Leas put the two together, which average out at ten hours per day. Bearing in mind this is only an average, half the ministers in the survey were working well over ten hours per day, six days per week – which puts most other groups of workers in the shade.
[329] Roy M. Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry* (Alban Institute, Washington D.C. 1991) 123.
[330] *The Time Crunch* 91. See also Roger Helland, 'Necessity: Mother of Invention', *Faith and Renewal (*May/June 1993) 14 who advocates a working week of no more than 13 time blocks: "It limits us to three (and sometimes four) nights out, and safeguards about one-and-a-half to two days off per week."
[331] Gil Rendle & Susan Beaumont, *The Importance of Outcomes* (An Alban Institute Conversation Paper, August 6, 2009).

It is true that ministers are not the only people working long hours. If one includes commuting time, the hours many church members work in London are frightening. Yet, unlike the average minister, they at least have two days off at the weekend!

Furthermore, many laypeople not only work long hours, they also give extra time to the church. All that could add up to another six or more ten hours a week. Should that not be put into the equation when making comparisons? I am not convinced. The time that lay-people give is discretionary time; it is freely given. Even more importantly, their work for the church is different from their paid employment: it actually is a break from their other routines. Not so for the minister.

Why so many ministers work hard

Eugene Peterson has given two suggestions for why ministers work so hard. First, he wrote: "I am busy because I am vain. I want to appear important. Significant. What better way to be busy?"[332] But why this desire to appear important? Is this desire linked to low self-esteem? This certainly is the verdict of Dianne Fassel: "Because they judge themselves by their accomplishments, they have the illusion they must always be doing something worthwhile, in order to feel good about themselves... [Their] sense of self is not separated from their achievements; rather it actually depends upon their achievements. Much of [their] frantic activity is an attempt to suppress or deny low self-esteem."[333] Although I accept that for some if not many ministers self-esteem is an issue, I do not recognise this to be at the root of their service for God. This seems to me a harsh and unfair judgement. In my own case, and I believe that to be the case of many others too, it has been a passion to see people won for Jesus and to see them built up in their faith which has been the chief motivating force for working long days, and many an evening too.

The second reason Peterson advanced for busyness is laziness: "I indolently let other people decide what I will do instead of resolutely deciding myself. I let people who do not understand the work of the pastor write the agenda for my day's work because I am too slipshod to write it myself."[334] Here there may well be some truth – although again the way this judgement is expressed is harsh. Many ministers may work long hours, but whether they have always got their priorities right is debatable. Perhaps part of the trouble is that most churches have not held their ministers accountable for the use of their time.

Speed Leas added four other reasons for ministerial workaholism:[335]

> a) *Fear of death*. Leas quoted Wayne Oates, the distinguished American pastoral consultant: "I have never met a work addict that I did not think was preoccupied subconsciously with the imminence of his own death. He works intensely, as if there is only a very little time left in which to accomplish his tasks."
> b) *Fear of failure*. It is very difficult to measure the results of one's work in ministry. We never really know how we are doing. So we work a little harder, in case we are failing to measure up.
> c) *Fear of intimacy*. "Hard work is a wonderful way to avoid getting close to people." Some ministers find it very hard to make meaningful relationships – they can be the lonely even in the midst of people.
> d) *Fear of being alone with yourself*. Some ministers are such activists, that they don't know how to be still – either with themselves or, even more tragically, with God.

Again, I have to say that I distance myself from these judgements. I do not recognise these as having been factors within my own life: this makes me wary of believing these factors may be generally true of others. The desire to "spend and be spent" in the service of God and his people (see 2 Cor 12.15) was not a psychological aberration on the part of the Apostle Paul, nor is it in many of his successors today.

Determine priorities

In 1906 the Italian economist Alfredo Pareto established the 80/20 principle regarding effectiveness of time: 80% of our productivity comes from doing the top 20% of our priorities, while only 20% of productivity comes from the

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[332] Eugene H. Peterson, 'The Unbusy Pastor', *Leadership* II (Summer 1981) 71.
[333] Dianne Fassel, *Working Ourselves to Death*, quoted in *The Time Crunch* (Multnomah, Sisters, Oregon 1993) 20 by G.Asimakoupoulos, J. Maxwell & S. McKinley.
[334] Eugene H. Peterson, 'The Unbusy Pastor', *Leadership* II (Summer 1981) 71.
[335] Speed Leas, *Time Management* 26-30.

bottom 80% of our priorities.[336] All the more reason to get our priorities straight! Pastors cannot and should not seek to do everything – they need to play to their strengths and empower others within the church to take up the slack.

From his perspective as senior pastor of a large Californian church John Maxwell listed his five priorities:

1. To cast the vision
2. To be the primary preaching pastor
3. To take responsibility for the progress of the church
4. To live a life of integrity as senior pastor
5. To teach leadership to the pastoral staff.[337]

For others, the priorities will be different. Eugene Peterson, for instance, listed his priorities as three:

1. I want to be a pastor who prays
2. I want to be a pastor who preaches
3. I want to be a pastor who listens.[338]

Priorities will vary from minister to minister. The important thing is that we establish our priorities and then stick to them. Instead of being blown hither and thither by every whim of our church members, we will instead be able to develop an intentional ministry'. [339]

Determining priorities will involve delegation – and remember that delegation does not involve 'dumping'. Accountability must be built into the process.[340]

Determining priorities may mean not turning up to every session of a conference we are booked into. If a session is not of immediate relevance, retire to your room and stimulate your mind with a book you may have brought along.

Determining priorities may mean recycling material. It is, for instance, not a good stewardship of time to prepare a new address for every occasion. In the run-up to Christmas with all the many carol services a minister may be called to speak at, there is no reason why one's theme in any given year may not for the most part be the same at each service.

Once priorities have been set, we have great freedom in being able to say 'no'. The fact is that every time the phone rings, it is not always God on the line![341]

Clear clutter

The organisational side of church life can be incredibly time-consuming. Steve McKinley listed seven 'time bandits' which rob ministers of time:[342]

1. Disorganisation
2. Chasing rabbits
3. Perfectionism
4. Poor use of secretary
5. Not calling ahead
6. Not setting limits
7. Not reading useless mail

Pastors need to exercise a degree of ruthlessness in their administration:

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[336] Peter Brierley, Priorities*, Planning and Paperwork* (Marc/Monarch 1992) 54-55.
[337] John Maxwell, 'Overcoming Procrastination' 42 in *The Time Crunch* (Multnomah, Sisters, Oregon 1993) by G. Asimakoupoulos, J. Maxwell & S. McKinley.
[338] Peterson, 'The Unbusy Pastor', *Leadership* (Summer 1981) 72-73.
[339] See Glenn Farquhar-Nicol, 'Developing An Intentional Ministry', *Congregations* (Jan/Feb 1994) 10-11.
[340] See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Dynamic Leadership* 139-140.
[341] See Douglas J.Rumford, 'How To Say No Graciously', *Leadership* III (Fall 1982) 93-98.
[342] Steve McKinley, 'Time Bandits' 65-74 in *The Time Crunch* (Multnomah, Sisters, Oregon 1993) by S. McKinley, J. Maxwell & G. Asimakoupoulos.

1. To avoid the time bandit of *disorganisation* office disciplines need to be observed.

2. To avoid the time bandit of *chasing rabbits* priorities need to be observed. It has been said: "You waste your time, whenever you spend it on something less important when you could be spending it on something more important. Importance is determined by measuring your activities against your objectives."[343]

3. To avoid the time bandit of *perfectionism* time must not be wasted by trying to improve on secondary issues: e.g. it is more important that the draft of the minutes of a meeting is correct, rather than that the minutes are expressed in quality prose.

4. To avoid the *poor use of a secretary* a minister needs to give prior thought to the work that needs to be done. Ministers who do not have a secretary are not let off the hook – there is no reason why they cannot find themselves a part-time secretary, even if the secretary has to work for love rather than for money.

5. *Not calling ahead* becomes a time bandit when visiting programmes are not planned. Ministers need to phone ahead and book visits. Otherwise, one never knows when a person might be out or when company is expected.

6. *Not setting limits* becomes a time bandit when pastoral visits or counselling sessions are allowed to go beyond a certain time. An hour should be the absolute maximum length of any visit or session.

7. *Reading useless mail* becomes a time bandit if we fail to throw into the waste paper basket the latest circular.

Work from a church office

Church offices for ministers are not a luxury to be enjoyed only by larger churches. They are a necessity and should be normal in every church, whatever the size.

Firstly, working from church increases efficiency. With an office at church, ministers know that they need to begin work when everybody else does. Without a church office, ministers can easily be tempted to have a leisurely read of the morning paper or to take the children to school, and not actually get down to any solid work until well past nine o'clock. Without a church office, coffee breaks can often be longer – especially if there is cricket on the television or the wife is around. A church office helps a more disciplined approach to work.

Secondly, working from church provides accessibility. For many people it takes a good deal of courage to knock at the door of the manse for help. Popping one's head around the door of the minister's office is so much easier. Unless I was in confidential discussions, the door to my office was always open – a sign that I was always available to those who need me. When I worked in a seven-day-a-week church, where there was action from 8.30 in the morning to 10 o'clock at night, you might think that an open door would guarantee little formal work would be done. In fact, people respected my need to study and rarely abused the hospitality of my office.

Thirdly, working from church frees up home to be home. When work is finished, ministers can go home and enjoy the privacy of home. My members knew that if they wanted me, then they could phone me – at church. Of course, I was always available at home in times of emergency; whatever the day, whatever the time; but I was not available for routine pastoral demands which could be dealt with during the day. To encourage this notion of home being home, I did not conduct any business at home. If people wanted to see me, they saw me at church; leadership team meetings and committee meetings were also held at church. The only time I opened up my home to the church was when my wife and I engaged in genuine hospitality.

Fourthly, in a team situation working from church fosters collegiality. Although we had a formal ministry team meeting every Monday, almost every day members of the team met up on an informal basis. We dropped into one another's offices for a coffee and reflected together on the latest pastoral challenge. We worked together so much better precisely because we work from church together.

I appreciate that some churches are strapped for space, but the needs of the minister's office should take precedence over every other need in the church, bar the need to have space for worship.

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[343] Merrill & Donna Douglass, *Manage Your Time, Manage your work, Manage Yourself* quoted by McKinley, 'Time Bandits' 65.

Have a structure to the week

Most books on time management recommend the practice of regularly recording time, then analysing the use of one's time, with a view to becoming a better manager of one's time.[344] Much as this may prove helpful to some, I never had much success with doing so. Life was too varied for such an exercise.

For me every week was an adventure. I never knew what it would hold. At the beginning of the week, as part of my accountability, I would give a copy of my engagements for the next seven days to my colleagues, but over the course of the week my diary would often change radically. Nonetheless, there were always fixed points:

- Sunday was the climax of the week: everything built up to Sunday. It always irritated me when people would say 'Sunday is your busy day'. Every day was busy! Yet nonetheless Sunday was an exhausting day, with every service carefully crafted from start to finish. I had to expend tremendous energy in ensuring the service 'worked'. In a way which is not true of those who are dependent upon a set liturgy, a Nonconformist minister in the preaching and the leading of the worship is very much a 'performer'. An experienced Australian Baptist pastor of a thousand-strong congregation once spoke of the weekly 'show' he put on for his people. Such a description of worship may sound offensive, and understandably so. First and foremost worship is about acknowledging God's worth and has nothing to do with impressing others. Yet precisely because ministers are seeking to enable people to worship God, we have to ensure that we give our best to them too. Add to this standing at the door, greeting people and then farewelling them after the service, together with all the other demands of the day, I always ended up exhausted and good for nothing but to watch the late night television thriller.
- Monday was recovery day. Most Mondays I didn't just feel tired, I felt incredibly depressed. Some Mondays I could weep. There was no rational reason for my sadness and depression; indeed normally there was every reason why I should have been grateful to God for the way in which Sunday went well. What was happening was that I was reacting to the release from all the pressure which accompanied the build-up to Sunday. No doubt it is precisely because of these 'Monday blues' that traditionally Monday is the minister's day off. However, I never wanted to have as my day off the day when I felt my worst. Instead it was the day for meeting with my staff. Those Monday mornings became almost sacrosanct: almost nothing was allowed to take precedent.
- Tuesday was also almost sacrosanct. It was 'sermon day': a day of intense focus and concentration as I delved into the Scriptures, seeking that word that God would have me bring to his people the following Sunday. It was a day when my door was closed, and nothing else bar an emergency was allowed to disturb me. It was a day when the creative juices ran. It was probably the day I felt my freshest. I was not surprised to discover that more than half of executives in the USA say Tuesday is their most productive day.[345]
- Thursday was 'deadline day': everything had to be ready for Sunday. On Thursday I gave my sermon (I always prepared a full manuscript) to my worship co-ordinator for her to create a PowerPoint presentation for Sunday. On Thursday too I would send out to my worship co-ordinator and the leader of the worship band for the Sunday morning service the following Sunday (i.e. ten days ahead of time) a draft of the service, asking for their input into the service, such as songs and hymns; I would then have to finalise the service for the coming Sunday, sending out a copy of the finalised order of service to such people as the musicians, the sound and vision co-ordinator, people taking part in the service (prayers of intercession, Scripture readings, interviews etc.), as also to my colleagues (one of whom would normally lead the opening worship). This was the day when I would also begin to give detailed thought to such matters as the content of prayers I might lead; as also the key notices I might need to give.
- Friday was sacrosanct: it was my free day. A day for doing penance at the gym, working in the garden, preparing for guests, and just reading the paper. Oh yes, there was also the weekly ritual of serving a gin and tonic late afternoon to my wife at the end of her working week!
- Saturday tended to be the day I 'soft-pedalled'. I often worked just the morning, but sometimes worked all day – and sometimes, if I had had a truly busy week, I took the day off.

Apart from these set points, flexibility was the order of the day. Afternoons tended to be people-focused: people came to see me or I went out visiting. Four evenings a week – Monday to Thursday – were often devoted to meetings or to visiting.

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[344] For example, Peter Brierley, *Priorities, Planning and Paperwork* (Marc/Monarch, Tunbridge Wells 1992).
[345] A 'snippet' reported in *Future First* 1.3 (June 2009).

19. Observing the principle of Sabbath

Relaxation is part of being a man or woman of God. To be a person of compassion is not necessarily to be strung out by every human need that comes along. Sometimes 'No' needs to be said in order that caring can continue. The Greeks had a proverb: 'The bow that is always bent (i.e. always stretched taut) will soon cease to shoot straight'.

The example of Jesus is significant. On one occasion notable for its busyness , when there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his disciples "had no leisure even to eat", Jesus said to his disciples: "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while" (Mark 6.31). Here Jesus exemplifies a doctrine of rest. To paraphrase the words of the Preacher: 'There is a time for everything… A time to work, and a time not to work'.

Relaxation needs to be viewed as a discipline. It is part of God's order for humankind. Ideally every day needs to include some time for relaxation. Indeed, the English Methodist Church exhorts its ministers to take "an hour's break each day for relaxation and exercise".[346] Even on a very busy day, where there are commitments morning, afternoon and evening, it should be always possible to take an hour – Monday often used to be my busiest day, but this did not stop me from going for an hour's walk with a friend at 7 o'clock in the morning!

Every minister needs a Sabbath day

The fourth commandment declares: "Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. You have six days in which to do work, but the seventh day is a day dedicated to me. On that day no one is to work" (Ex 20.8-10). Although the division of time into a week of seven days was not a Jewish invention, only the Jews exalted one day above the others; it was only the Jews who turned the seventh day into a day of rest. This day of rest was connected with the creation story. According to Ex 31.17: "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed" (NRSV), literally, 'God took a deep breath'. If God needed to take a deep breath, then surely all the more we need to do the same!

Pastors need more than a day off: they need a Sabbath day. Judith Schwanz makes the point: "A day off conjures images of chores and simply doing whatever needs to be done, substituting home pressures for church pressures – hardly a picture of renewal. Sabbath implies a deliberately restful day focused on God and filled with just the right amount of people and activities to refresh you and restore your soul."[347] Clearly there is no place for legalism, doing the odd errand for one's spouse is one thing; but having to work one's way through a long 'to do' list is another.

The keeping of the Sabbath, wrote Roy Oswald, is not about "restrictions and prohibitions", but rather about "privileges and freedom". He went on:

> "Picture a day in which you allow yourself to rejoice in sensual and emotional pleasures – a day of wonderful food, good company, the quiet pleasures of a walk, a good book, gorgeous flowers in your garden, or even a little romance!"[348]

Sundays cannot be a day of rest for ministers: another day instead must be found. As we have noted, traditionally Monday has been the ministers' day-off. However, Monday is not necessarily the best day to take off: in my experience at least, all kinds of pastoral matters came to my attention on a Sunday, so that on a Monday there was always so much to do. My preference was to go for a Friday; not least because with a working wife Friday evenings were the end of her working week and so she could afford to be more relaxed. Fridays for us was the day when we had people round for dinner – and part of my Sabbbath was happily spent in preparing for our guests.

Whatever the day a minister chooses, that day should be sacrosanct; and death apart nobody should be allowed to trouble a minister. Some ministers observe a moveable 'day of rest' – the day varies from week to week. If it works for them, perhaps fair enough, but I confess I would have found it a difficult discipline to maintain.

Some ministers take Saturday as a 'day of rest'; but with so many church events taking place on a Saturday, that is a bad day. Saturday should be a bonus day: a day sometimes to work, but sometimes to work just a little, or even better, sometimes an additional day to take off completely. According to researchers at Duke University, one day off a week

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[346] See Ann Bird, *Great Expectations* (Methodist Church Division of Ministries, London 1990) 5.

[347] Judith Schwanz, *Pastoral Sabbath Keeping* (An Alban Institute Conversation Paper, April 28, 2008).

[348] Roy Oswald with Jean Morris Trumbauer, *Transforming Rituals: daily practices for changing lives* (Alban Institute, 1999) 46.

is not sufficient for pastors to cope with the stresses and strains; ideally the body needs at least two consecutive days if it is to regain its balance.[349] If it is not possible to soft-pedal on a Saturday, then there is something to be said for taking off the evening before one's free day.[350] Or perhaps better still ministers should follow the advice of Roy Oswald and negotiate with their churches to have two days off per week, "one for life-maintenance tasks and one for Sabbath".[351]

One thing for certain, having a day of rest once a week is a sacred duty. Ministers owe it to themselves, as well as to their family and to the church. Surprisingly some ministers seem to struggle to keep the Sabbath. According to a 2010 survey of 1,671 United Methodist ministers in the USA 27% reported that they didn't regularly take a day off each week.

Enjoy holidays

Years ago one of the great perks of ministry in the UK were the holidays. Then many people were lucky to have two weeks off a year; whereas ministers had four weeks off. Many ministers would take off the whole of August – how lucky they were! Today ministers in the UK have even more time off: they now have five weeks of holiday.

In the meantime the basic holiday entitlement in Britain has increased substantially, with the result that most ministers have less holiday entitlement than members of their congregations. According to the British government's websites: "All workers have a right to at least 5.6 weeks' paid annual leave [i.e. 28 days for someone working five days a week], but you would receive more than that." For in addition to the normal holiday provisions, there are also the eight public holidays, which if they are added on come to 36 days a year – or 10% of each year. Although British companies are allowed to include the eight public holidays as part of the 28 day entitlement, many do not, with the result that workers in Britain, together with workers in Poland, have the most generous statutory employee holiday entitlements in the world.

By contrast workers in the USA have no statutory holiday entitlement at all. A Duke Clergy Health survey in 2010 revealed that of the 1,671 United Methodist pastors surveyed, on average pastors took slightly fewer than 12 days of vacation, while nearly a quarter had taken fewer than seven vacation days. Amazingly 6.2% had taken no vacation days that year.

Whatever their precise length, holidays are a great and necessary institution. Hard-working ministers need to take every day due to them. With the pressures of ministerial life, I'm a great believer in the long summer holiday. I know that there are some ministers who take off a week here and a week there, but I believe a holiday needs to be at least three weeks long if it is to be a true break, for many of us find it takes a week to forget the church. Traditionally ministers have taken off the whole of August, and in my judgement rightly so. But time too needs to be taken off after Christmas and after Easter. Busy pastors – for their own sake, for the sake of their families, and ultimately for the sake of their churches – need to ensure that regular holidays are built into their diaries. Along with working hard, they need to play hard too!

Take sabbaticals

In most British denominations ministers can take a paid sabbatical every so often. The Baptist Union of Great Britain encourages its ministers to take a three-month period of sabbatical every seven years or so after ordination. And what a gift these sabbaticals are! For ministers can become "weary in well-doing". In the words of Roy Oswald, a distinguished American church consultant:

> "Like Sisyphus and the rock, there is a repetitive intensity in ministry that exacts its price in weariness of spirit, diminished enthusiasm, a dulling of the capacity to be creative, and a loss of vision and perspective. These are serious defects in any profession, but especially critical in the ministry with its challenge to provide spiritual, intellectual, ethical and institutional leadership."[352]

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[349] The findings of the Duke Clergy Health Initiative as reported in an online article in *Faith & Leadership* 6/12/2011.
[350] According to Martin Dudley & Virginia Rounding, *The Parish Survival Guide* (SPCK, London 2004) 12, "A priest should take at least one full day off a week and should aim for this to be evening to evening, giving a full day and two evenings off."
[351] Roy Oswald with Jean Trumbauer, *Transforming Rituals* 48.
[352] Roy Oswald quoted by Richard Bullock, *Sabbatical Planning* (Alban Institute, 1987) 1.

A sabbatical is an occasion for taking a break from the everyday round of ministry and for being set free to re-charge one's batteries, physically and mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It is an occasion for nourishing one's soul and for encountering God anew through un-pressurised times of prayer and Bible study. It is an occasion for broadening one's horizons and for developing fresh skills through reading and study, through experimentation and travel; it is an occasion for reflecting on and taking stock of the past, with all its apparent successes and failure, and for gaining new hope and new vision for the future. Or in the words of Richard Bullock, an American Episcopalian bishop: "A sabbatical gets one off the treadmill and provides an opportunity for renewal of vision and hope. It's more than just a chance to recharge your batteries for another year. It can be a life and soul changing time – a time when perspective and the Holy Spirit can come together."[353]

The Old Testament speaks not just of 'Sabbath' days when humans were to rest, but also of 'Sabbath' years, when the land was allowed to rest and replenish itself (see, for instance, Ex 23.10-11; Lev 25.17). "Just like the soil, we humans need a sabbatical, a time to lie fallow", wrote Dave Ellingson. "We require a time to receive rather than give, to get input rather than give output, to carefully nurture and cultivate our lives so that the soil of our spirits might be rid of weeds and have an opportunity to receive nourishment."[354]

Ministers need to understand that a sabbatical is not an extra holiday, but a sacred duty. It concerns me that many ministers treat a sabbatical as an option, with the result that they might only experience a sabbatical once or twice in their ministry. For the sake of their ministry, they need to go on sabbatical.

Churches too need to understand the nature of a sabbatical. To this end ministers need to make themselves accountable to their church both in terms of the planning as also in the reporting. They need to help their churches see that sabbaticals are not just a blessing to individual ministers, but ultimately they are a blessing to the church itself. What more could a church want than to welcome back a minister rested and refreshed, renewed and restored, ready to serve God with fresh energy and vision!

20. Coping with pressure

Pastors are under pressure

> "I am appalled at what is required of me. I am supposed to move from sick-bed to administrative meeting, to planning, to supervising, to counselling, to praying, to trouble-shooting, to budgeting, to audio systems, to meditation, to worship preparation, to newsletter, to staff problems, to mission projects, to conflict management, to community leadership, to study, to funerals, to weddings, to preaching. I am supposed to be 'in charge' but not *too* in charge, administrative, executive, sensitive pastor, skilful counsellor, public speaker, spiritual guide, politically savvy, intellectually sophisticated. And I am not supposed to be depressed, discouraged, cynical, angry, hurt. I am supposed to be up-beat, positive, strong, willing, available. Right now I am not filling any of those expectations very well. And I am tired."[355]

Stress appears to be the order of the day in Christian ministry. Books abound with such titles as *Affirmation and Accountability: practical suggestions for preventing clergy stress, sickness and ill-health retirement*;[356] *At Cross Purposes: Stress and Support for the Wounded Healer*[357] ; *Christ, Stress and Glory*;[358] *Clergy and Laity Burnout*;[359] *Burnout: Stress in Ministry*;[360] *Clergy Stress: The Hidden Conflicts in Ministry*;[361] *High Calling, High Stress*; [362]*Honourably Wounded: Stress Among Christian Leaders*;[363]*Living with Stress – A Guide for Christian Ministers*;[364] *Ministry*

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[353] Richard Bullock, *Sabbatical Planning* 2.

[354] Dave Ellingson, *Remember the Sabbatical to Keep it Holy* (Lutheran Church in the USA, Chicago 1980) 2.

[355] A clergyman quoted by Barbara Gilbert, *Who Ministers to Ministers? A Study of Support Systems for Clergy and Spouses* (Alban, Washington D.C. 1987) 5.

[356] Carl Lee & Sarah Horsman, *Affirmation and Accountability* (Society of Mary & Martha, Sheldon 2002).

[357] Robin Pryor, *At Cross Purposes* (Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria, Australia 1986).

[358] Wanda Nash, *Christ, Stress and Glory* (Darton, Longman & Todd, London 1992).

[359] William H.Willimon, *Clergy and Laity Burnout* (Abingdon, Nashville 1989).

[360] John Davey, *Burnout: Stress in Ministry* (Gracewing, Leominster 1995).

[361] Mary Anne Coate, *Clergy Stress* (SPCK, London 1989).

[362] Robin Pryor, *High Calling, High Stress* (Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria, Australia 1982).

[363] Marjorie Foyle, *Honourably Wounded* (MARC Europe, London 1987).

Burnout;[365] *Pastors under Pressure;*[366] *Rest in the Storm: Self-Care Strategies for Clergy and Other Caregivers;*[367] *The Last Straw: Resolving the Build Up of Stress*[368] – all of them written with the pastor in mind!

There seems to be no end of reports on clergy stress:

- In 2001 in Australia, 56% of church leaders were found to be on the borderline to burn out, with 19% experiencing burnout, and a further 4% in extreme burnout.[369]
- In September 2002 a Church of Scotland survey reported that more than two thirds of ministers were suffering from stress. "In a poll of almost 600 ministers, 43% felt their health had been affected by stress and a further 28% said their marriage had been adversely affected by their work."[370]
- In a 2009 analysis of the psychological health of 3,715 clergy from Australia, England and New Zealand, although 87% of clergy gained a lot of personal satisfaction from working with people in their current context, 35% of clergy felt drained in fulfilling their functions in their current context; 32% felt frustrated in their attempts to accomplish tasks important to them; and 28% reported that fatigue and irritation are part of their daily experience.[371]
- In 2011 the Fuller Institute and Focus on the Family reported: "77% of pastors say they don't have a good marriage; 75% of pastors are highly or extremely stressed; 70% of pastors say they will not be in ministry 10 years from now; 70% of pastors do not have anyone they consider a personal friend; 50% of pastors say they would leave the ministry today because of discouragement, but have no other way of making a living; 40% of pastors report serious conflict with a parishioner every month; 25% of pastors are divorced."[372]
- In 2012 a survey of 1,000 clergy revealed: "Heart attacks, diabetes, strokes and stress are higher among the clergy under 40 years of age than in any other professional group and the numbers continue to rise. Couple that with the disturbing rate of 'clergy burnout' such that individuals who have spent years in training for ministry are, in some instances, staying in the profession of ministry less than five years after which they drop out of the ministry (and not a few leave the faith-community entirely)."[373]

No stage in Christian ministry is exempt of pressure. Every phase has its challenge. One survey of ministers, doctors and psychiatrists experienced in counselling ministers in Victoria, Australia, asked the question: "Do particular periods of stress relate to the age cycle?". The respondents identified, in order of importance, the following "decades of distress" in the ministry:

30s – Career changes, family pressures
50s – Approaching retirement
40s – Mid-life crises, coming to terms with expectations and relationships
60s – Retirement phase.[374]

Another study of ministers in the same state of Victoria revealed a different ordering.[375] In response to the question, "In your experience, do particular periods of negative stress relate to events along your vocational/career path? In order of importance for you personally, rank the following periods from highest to least stress", the mid-career period won hands down:

1: Mid-career
2: Second settlement
3: Training for ministry
4: Later in first settlement

[364] Sarah Horsman, *Living with Stress* (Society of Mary & Martha, Sheldon, Exeter 1987).

[365] John Sandford, *Ministry Burnout* (British edition: Arthur James, London 1984).

[366] Paul Beasley-Murray, *Pastors under Pressure* (Kingsway, Eastbourne 1989).

[367] Kirk Byron Jones, *Rest in the Storm: Self-Care Strategies for Clergy and Other Caregivers* (Judson Press, Valley Forge 2001).

[368] Ruth Fowke, *The Last Straw: Resolving the Build Up of Stress* (Eagle, Guildford 2000).

[369] Nigel Pegram, 'Emotional intelligence and ministry burnout' 176 in New Frontiers; *Redefining Christian ministry in 21st century contexts* (Mosaic Press 2014) who added: "In my experience the majority of people who train formally for ministry are not in that role 10 or 20 years later."

[370] BBC News, September 18, 2002.

[371] Leslie J. Francis & Mandy Robbins together with Peter Kaldor & Keith Castle, *Psychological type and work-related psychological health among clergy in Australia, England and New Zealand* (University of Warwick 2009) 16.

[372] Pastor's [sic] Statistics 2011 – www.jimkellync.wordpress.com – published 15/6/2011.

[373] John H. Morgan, 'Clergy Stress and Satisfaction in the Workplace: a comparative study of four Christian traditions' (Graduate Theological Foundation) January 8, 2013 – www.gtfeducation.org

[374] Pryor, *At Cross Purposes* 74.

[375] Pryor, *At Cross Purposes* 75, 76.

5: Ministerial selection process
6: Arrival in first settlement
7: Approaching retirement

In response to why they had ranked a particular period as the stage of highest stress, the respondents' answers fell into four categories:

48%: Pressures (e.g. work, study, family, marital, synod/presbytery, health, age, to leave ministry, financial, mid-life crisis, lack of support, selection procedures)
23%: Unresolved problems (career choice, theological clash, parish problems, working with colleague)
17%: Changes and readjustments (work, family, study, city-country, adjusting to role of minister)
12%: Expectations (expectations of ministry unfulfilled, rejection by colleague/church, training not relevant, poor self-image).

If nothing else, these figures reveal the complexity of the stress suffered by ministers. It's hard being a pastor!

In a recent book, *Stress*, Simon Vibert of Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, singled out five particular stresses experienced by ministers: i) the task that God has given us impossible; ii) evangelical ministry is task-oriented; iii) God calls for perfection; iv) the Christian leader is to be above reproach; and v) leaders like to be in control.[376] However, the issues are far more extensive and broad-ranging than he suggests.

We can divide pressures experienced by ministers into two groups of stressors.

The first group of stressors are *longstanding pressures* which have been with us some time:
1. Image: sometimes people put pastors on a pedestal, expecting them to be 'perfect'; sometimes the pressure is self-imposed.
2. Visibility: pastors and their families tend to live in a 'goldfish' bowl; their lives are observed more closely than others in the community.
3. The Scapegoat: pastors tend to be blamed when things go wrong in the church.
4. Time: pastors do not have a nine to five job, they are available 24 hours a day.
5. Finance: pastors are not always paid a fair living wage; an additional pressure today is that as churches decline, money becomes ever more tight in the church.
6. Loneliness: many pastors have no meaningful relationships with their people.
7. Powerlessness: pastors are dependent on volunteers, who can be awkward and difficult, and who cannot be fired.Few quantifiable results: baptisms and church attendance apart, it is almost impossible for pastors to measure what God has achieved through their ministries.
8. The endless task: the job is never finished, there is always more to be done.
9. Differing if contradictory expectations: if pastors would please their people, they can often feel themselves torn in all sort of different directions.

The second group of stressors are *more recent pressures* to ministry:
1. The current theological whirlpool: theology has always had its fashions, but never have the fashions seemed to change so quickly as today.
2. The numerical decline of the mainline churches: this saps confidence, and also means that with less people around to do the work, the pressure increases.
3. The numerical growth of some churches: for pastors with expanding congregations the workload increases; while pastors with static or declining congregations can face criticism from their members for failing to grow their church.
4. The democratisation of education: at one stage the 'parson' was one of the few educated people in the parish and a figure of respect; today many members are better educated than their pastor, and for the insecure pastor this can be a threat.
5. The influence of the competitive society: while many members are 'climbing the ladder' at work, for most pastors there is no career structure.
6. The complexity of moral issues (e.g. the gay issue; issues such as abortion and euthanasia and how they relate to the sanctity of life) can cause some pastors to feel out of their depth.
7. The development of the welfare state: many of today's pastors are used to everything being provided for them; it comes as a shock to discover that ministry can be tough.

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[376] Simon Vibert, *Stress: the Path to Peace* (IVP, Nottingham 2014) 62.

8. The slowing down of mobility: in the past when difficulties arose in a church after the fourth or fifth years, ministers would move on to another church; but with most ministers' spouses developing a career of their own, this is no longer as easy as it was

9. The uncertainty of the pastor's role: although ministers tend to work hard, many are not sure it is the work they should be doing; often for theological reasons there is a crisis of identity.

10. The challenge of mission in today's society: as the gulf between the church and the world increases, pastors are under pressure to discover effective ways of reaching out to their communities.[377]

Stress is not the same as burnout

Pressures abound. However, it is important to realise that stress is different from burnout. Stress in itself is not necessarily a bad thing: stress can be good for us. We need a certain amount of stress if we are to live full and meaningful lives. Stress is often needed to motivate and energise us. Too much stress is another matter. It can lead to 'hyper-stress', and ultimately to 'burn out'.

'Burnout' is an American term often used in stress studies, and describes the final stage of hyper stress. The subject has ceased to 'struggle'; he or she is now 'smashed'. Sometimes called 'paralytic stress', burnout is a state of emotional exhaustion. Symptoms include lack of interest and lack of concern for others. Life no longer has any meaning. Any sense of mission and purpose has disappeared. A victim of burnout is emotionally 'dead'. It may well be argued that the term burnout is an unfortunate one. It implies that the victim has totally had it. Yet in fact there is a difference between a burned out engine and a burned-out person. Whereas the engine has had it, the emotional state of burnout is, with proper care, reversible. There is always room for hope!

Put in place coping strategies

The strategies for dealing with stress generally suggested relate for the most part to changing the person. For example, Mary Coates suggested stress can be managed through:

- Support networks (e.g. family, friends, religious superiors, peer support, spiritual direction).
- Medical and psychiatric care (where more specialist and focused help is needed).
- Self-help preventative activities (e.g. time off, hobbies, time with family and non-work friends, in-service training).
- Counselling and therapy.[378]

Roy Oswald's self-care strategies were much more detailed:

- The spiritual uplift (e.g. the spiritual disciplines of meditation, journaling, having a spiritual director, chanting, fasting, somatic spirituality, retreats)
- Letting go techniques (e.g. bio feed-back, autogenic training, hatha yoga)
- Time out (e.g. daily, weekly, quarterly and annual breaks; sabbaticals)
- Support systems that work (e.g. support networks)Getting the body moving (e.g. exercise and workouts)
- Monitoring our intake (e.g. limiting certain foods, choosing a weight-loss programme)
- The psychotherapy tune-up
- Getting control of our time (e.g. role clarity, working to a plan)The value of assertiveness
- The power of laughter
- Monitoring our ambitions
- Routes to detachment (e.g. hobbies, sports, arts, reflective/expressive work).[379]

All these strategies have their uses. Of course ministers need to manage their time, of course they need to develop support networks,[380] of course they need to cultivate the spiritual disciplines. But equally, if not more, important is to remove the actual causes of stress, which tend to centre around a wrong understanding of ministry.

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[377] See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Pastors Under Pressure* 17-34.
[378] Mary Coates, *Clergy Stress* 192-205.
[379] Roy Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care* 91-188.
[380] I like the six functions of a support group as developed by Barbara Gilbert, *Who Ministers to Ministers?* 22: Comfort, Clarification, Confrontation, Collaboration, Clowning, and Celebration: "We need people who we can trust with our pain and uncertainty who will *comfort* us, often by just being good listeners. We need people who will help us *clarify* by asking the right

Role clarity is vital

Roy Oswald was on the right track when in the category of "getting control of our time" he referred to the need for "role clarity". If ministers believe that they need to be their church's ever-present omni-competent dogs-body, then the stress is bound to be overwhelming. I believe that if pastors were to adopt the following definition of ministry, much of the hyper-stress would disappear:

1. *Pastoral ministry is God's ministry.*

Pastors in the first place are called to be ministers of Christ and not ministers of his church. True God calls pastors to serve his church, and therefore they have an accountability towards those who pay them, but ultimately they are accountable to God. Although at times a fearful thought, this is a liberating thought. It means that ultimately pastors are not dependent upon what others may think of them – it is not other people's judgement which counts, but God's. This theological conviction gives inner security and confidence.

2. *Pastoral ministry is shared ministry*

Rightly understood, a church's membership roll is its ministry roll, for every member has a ministry to exercise. This means that it is not all down to the pastor. The workload is to be shared. What is more, in any given church God has gifted not only the pastor but also a number of others with leadership gifts: these leaders (deacons, elders, members of the PCC, or whoever) are there to share the burden of leadership with the pastor. Where the ministry of all God's people is taken seriously, pastors are freed to step down from their pedestals and be liberated from all the false expectations associated with 'one-man' ministry.

3. *Pastoral ministry is specialist ministry*

Within this general context of shared ministry, the pastor has a particular ministry to perform. Pastors are not called to be Jacks or Jills-of-all-trades, but have a particular role to fulfil. According to William Willimon: "People appear to burn out in the church not necessarily because they are overworked, but because they are overburdened with the trivial and the unimportant."[381] Some things cannot be delegated to anybody else: for instance, to be a man or woman of God, to be a leader, to be a preacher-teacher, and to be an enabler. However many aspects of pastoral care, evangelism and social action can be shared with and delegated to others. Where the specialist ministry of the pastor is taken seriously, there the pastor is free to say 'no' to those tasks which rightly belong to others. It is precisely because there is confusion about the pastoral role, that so many pastors find it difficult to say 'no': "We say yes to everything out of fear that we may say no to the thing we truly ought to be doing."[382] There is, for instance, no good reason why the pastor needs to be present at every meeting of the church: what pastoral skills, for instance, does the pastor have to offer to the meetings of the fabric and finance committees?

None of this just happens. Few, if any, churches take the initiative into their own hands and redefine the role of the pastor. Rather pastors, as effective leaders, must take the initiative themselves and redefine their role for their people.

Conclusion

When it comes to living out the call, there is much to be gained by applying our minds and learning from others about such vital issues as maximising the use of time and observing the Sabbath, managing change and handling conflict, coping with pressure and dealing with people. The developing of these practical skills can make an enormous difference not just to effectiveness in ministry, but also to fulfilment in ministry.

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questions and pointing us to significant resources. We need people who are about us enough to lovingly *confront* us with that which we don't see or have been avoiding... We need people to work with who have some of the same goals, visions and problems we do, and who therefore can be *collaborators* (or colleagues) and help us avoid isolation and stagnation in ministry. *Clowns* are persons who can add perspective and support through humor or a light touch at an appropriate moment... We need people who will *celebrate* our triumphs, large or small, and affirm us as persons."
[381] Willimon, *Clergy and Laity Burnout* 25.
[382] Willimon, *Clergy and Laity Burnout* 62, 63.

About the author

Ordained in 1970, Paul Beasley-Murray taught in the Protestant Theological Faculty of Congo/Zaire from 1970 to 1972. From 1973 to 1986 he was pastor of Altrincham Baptist Church, Cheshire, which quadrupled in size during his ministry. From 1986 to 1992 he was Principal of Spurgeon's College, London, during which time the student enrolment doubled. From 1993 to 2013 he was senior minister of Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, which experienced significant growth and he led the church through a £2 million redevelopment programme. He is currently Chairman of both the College of Baptist Ministers and of Ministry Today.

A prolific author, he has over 350 articles to his credit, for the most part reflecting on the practice of ministry. His writings currently in print are *Radical Believers: The Baptist Way Of Being The Church* (Baptist Union 1992, and translated into Czech, German and Norwegian; revised edition 2006); *Radical Disciples: A Course For New Christians* (Baptist Union 1996; revised edition 2005); *Happy Ever After?* (Baptist Union 1996; revised edition Amazon 2016); *Radical Leaders: A Guide For Elders & Deacons In Baptist Churches* (Baptist Union 1997; revised edition 2005); *The Message Of The Resurrection: The Bible Speaks For Today* (IVP 2000: also published in the USA and translated into Burmese, Chinese, Romanian and Korean); *A Loved One Dies: Help In The First Few Days* (Baptist Union 2005; revised edition Amazon 2016); *Joy to the World: Preaching at Christmas* (IVP 2005 – also available in a special OM edition in India, Nepal, Oman, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait); *Transform Your Church! 50 very practical steps* (IVP 2005); *Baptism, Belonging and Breaking Bread: Preparing for Baptism* (Baptist Union 2010); *Leading Teams in Larger Churches* (2010): www.teal.org.uk; *A Retreat Lectionary* (Society of Mary & Martha 2012); *Church Matters: Creative Ideas for Mission and Ministry* (Amazon 2016).

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