

# Program Base or Small Group Base?

Two styles of ministry, each representing a side of the crack in history, are operating... at the moment.. Program-based congregations are on the “what was” side of the crack; and small group-based congregations are on the “what is emerging” side...

In the first model, the professional, ordained pastor performs the ministerial roles of caring for the congregation and recruiting new members. In the second model, the pastor is responsible for equipping the laity to minister to one another and take responsibility for their own ministry and evangelism.

In program-based congregations, pastors give and lay people receive. In small group-based congregations, the pastor equips and lay people give. The growth of congregations in the first model depends primarily on the population growth of the area. In the second model, congregational growth depends on the effectiveness of those equipping the laity and of the witness of the laity. The role of the pastor is to equip rather than to do; the role of the laity is to be priest and theologian rather than spectator in the pew.

Ministry for both laity and clergy is helping people help others rather than holding an office in the church.

William Easum, *Dancing with Dinosaurs*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1993.

# All Pastors are Interim Pastors

The relationship between clergy and the laity over the years has built chronic overfunctioning into the role of the clergy and underfunctioning into the role of the laity. The clergy has come to expect the laity to underfunction, and the prophecy is self-fulfilling. The laity has come to expect the clergy to overfunction, and this, too, is self-fulfilling. Neither finds it easy to challenge the depressingly self-replicating pattern of dependence...

More than two decades ago colleagues and I began exploring an alternative without at first realising what we were dealing with... [We] identified needed skills and learned how to train what we started calling the interim pastor... In identifying this new role of interim pastor, we had stumbled onto a kind of religious leadership and pastoral authority that circumvented the “ownership” issue. By being intentionally a short-term actor in the congregation’s life, the interim pastor was freed of the long-range responsibility for the future of the congregation... The interim pastor understood that he or she was to provide limited, temporary help in a congregation by entering a system in which ministry with integrity was already “happening,” in which there was a long history of ministry.

The assumption and the contract of the interim pastor called for the position to be temporary. Within the interim period the psychological contract of both pastor and congregation changed. The interim pastor was understood to be the religious leader, encouraging and strengthening local leadership. The responsibility for the life of ministry in that place did not belong to the interim pastor but to the laity...

Without fully understanding what we were doing, my colleagues and I had developed a model of ministry that was not locked into the “overfunctioning” standard model. Simply by acknowledging the temporary nature of the role, we placed the pastor and congregation in different roles of ownership, different relationships of authority, and opened the doors to fully functioning roles of laity in ministry and of clergy in ministry. Since I have understood the dynamics of what we did, I have been trying to teach all pastors that they are interim pastors...

Loren Mead, *Five Challenges for the Once and Future Church*, Alban Institute, 1996.

# Centredness on the Word

Rigorous biblical learning must be the missional congregation's priority. The congregation intentionally commits most of its time together to biblical study – which takes place in many different ways. It encourages and equips its members to continue biblical study individually. Through its continuing encounter with the biblical word, the congregation experiences the conversion which is the result of the “transformation of the mind” (Rom 12:2). This means that the members are learning to think Christianly; they are learning how to see the world through the eyes of Jesus; they are becoming biblically literate in order to be effective translators of the gospel into their world...

The concept of the “solo minister” is foreign to the missionary congregation. The apostolic ministry in the New Testament was carried out by teams... Paul appointed groups of elders to lead the communities he founded. The Spirit is not stingy in its gifting of the church for its mission. Every community's task is to discern those who are Christ's gifts to the church as part of the apostolic-prophetic-evangelistic-pastoral-teaching Word ministry that is to equip it for its calling. Here, the conversion of the church will necessarily mean the conversion of many of our concepts and practices of office, ordination, and leadership...

Our centredness and dependence upon the ministry of the Word means that neither the collegial leadership nor the congregation owns the gospel. It means that, together, they are engaging the gospel as openly and honestly as they can.

Darrel Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000.

# Permission-giving Churches and Leaders

Permission-giving churches believe that the role of God's people is to minister to people, in the world, every day of the week, by living out their spiritual gifts instead of running the church by sitting on committees and making decisions about what can or cannot be done. Ministry happens when people discover their spiritual gifts instead of fulfilling roles or tasks the institution require done... These churches ask people, "What gifts do you bring to the Body of Christ, and what do you need from the Body to help you exercise them? Tell us and we'll equip you to use them."

Permission-giving churches encourage autonomous, on-the-spot decision making by collaborative individuals and self-organising teams. Decisions are delegated to the person closest to the ministry...

Permission-giving churches encourage ministry to be delivered any time, any place, by anyone, no matter what. People should not have to wait for the church to respond when they are hurting... The faster a congregation can bring healing to a person's life, the healthier it will be.

Permission-giving churches have leaders who are secure enough to equip others for ministry and then get out of their way and let them develop their ministry even if it is not something in which they might participate...

The laity do most of the pastoral ministries and taking care of one another, not the pastor. In this model the pastor is expected to equip the laity to do ministry....

Today's leaders focus on permission giving rather than control or managing.

William Easum, *Sacred Cows Make Gourment Burgers*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.

# Lead the Process, not the People.

To blame the frozen state of the lay person on the clergy is far too simple and unkind. The non-clergy portion of the laity cannot be liberated or empowered simply by telling the clergy to move over and make room for the lay person. Nor will it happen simply by telling lay people to move up and become one of the ministers of the church. We are dealing with complex historical forces that have impinged upon the church's life over several centuries... It is a systemic problem and it requires a systemic solution...

Equipping is essentially a relational, rather than a programmatic, ministry; this involves building the people of God... Leaders have the challenge of building unity in people without evoking compliance or autonomy; this involves encouraging people to remain connected and to define themselves and their own ministries rather than merely assisting the leaders in their ministry.

By listening, teaching, consulting, and clarifying, the pastor will work with all parts of the church as the spokesperson for a mission that the whole body can embrace. There are some inadequate ways of doing this. One is sheer persuasion: "You should do what I say." Another is by using personal charisma: "Wouldn't you like to follow me?" Finally, the pastor can rely on the consensus achieved in one brief, long-range planning retreat: "You should do what you agreed to do." But, in each of these, systemic growth and/or the pastor's leadership can be lost...

The church will accomplish only a mission that the whole church has embraced. The people will do what the people have had a part in planning. The pastor's goal is the equipping of all the saints, not just the ones most friendly to the pastor's personal vision.

Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor*, Alban Institute, 1993.

# A Matter of the Heart

In every class I teach, my ability to connect with my students, and to connect them with the subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood – and am willing to make it available and vulnerable to the service of learning...

Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. The methods used by these weavers vary widely... The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts – meaning heart in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self.

As good teachers weave the fabric that joins them with students and subjects, the heart is the loom on which the threads are tied, the tension is held, the shuttle flies, and the fabric is stretched tight. Small wonder, then, that teaching tugs at the heart, opens the heart, even breaks the heart... The courage to teach is the courage to keep one's heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning, and living, require.

Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

# Collaborative Ministry

The goal is to unite these gifted people whose purpose is discipleship and ministry into a community which exists for evangelisation. The essence of collaboration is to develop a church in which people continue to discover new and better ways of working together in ministry towards that common mission... Francis Morrisey suggests that the primary role of the pastor is to animate the entire Christian community to assume its role for carrying out the pastoral responsibilities of the church.

Many ministers consider time to develop collaboration a luxury rather than an essential... In the past,.. training for ministry was focused almost exclusively on providing competence in a specific ministry. Little if any attention was devoted to providing the attitudes and skills necessary for working collaboratively. As a result, most people in ministry have been formed with the attitudes and skills to function well independently, but they find a more mutual and shared approach to ministry difficult. Even those motivated to move in this direction discover that good will, without the necessary collaborative skills, results in a high degree of frustration.

Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry*, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1987.

# The Role of the Pastor

Traditional church organizations tend to be shaped around the pastor. The pastor leads by the authority of his or her office... The pastor ensures that congregational organization conforms with the structures of every other denominational congregational unit as if it were a franchise of a larger corporation. The pastor imports his or her values, beliefs, and vision into the congregational identity. The pastor's mission priorities shift congregational energies. Fundamentally, and often with profound subtlety, the pastor controls the church.

This is why few meetings occur without the pastor's presence, and virtually no activities happen without the pastor's knowledge and approval... The judicatory (eg. presbytery, synod) knows that by controlling the pastor, it can control the congregation. The congregation knows that by controlling the pastor, they can manipulate the congregational system. Obviously, the traditional church organisation rapidly becomes a web of control in which the pastor finds himself or herself at the centre. Sometimes the controller, and sometimes the controlled, the pastor begins to define himself or herself as a politician or a diplomat rather than a spiritual leader...

Permission-giving organizations are not shaped around the pastor. Instead the pastor shapes his or her lifestyle and work schedule around the organization. The pastor leads not by the authority of an office or denominational certification, but by the authority of his or her own spiritual authenticity. That authenticity is transparent to the congregation and the public by their disciplines of spirituality and learning, and by their eagerness to help others give birth to the full potential of gifts and callings that God has given each human being...

The permission-giving pastor does not ensure conformity, but encourage diversity. The permission-giving pastor does not impose his or her own values and beliefs on the organization, but aggressively articulates the values, beliefs, vision and mission that reflect the consensus and calling of the congregation. The permission-giving pastor does not direct preconceived mission priorities toward his or her own goals, but encourage mission previously unimagined that pursues the goals of others.

The permission-giving pastor does not fundamentally control the church. Instead, the pastor pervades... the permission-giving organization as visionary, synthesiser, trainer, and midwife.

Thomas Bandy, *Christian Chaos*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1999.



# Collaboration and Team-Work

Modern leadership highlighted the noun “equipment.”  
Postmodern leadership stresses the verb “equip.”

When you drain complexity and chaos out of any living system..., you snuff out that system, for you damage the organism’s natural immunological ability to adapt to new conditions and future-fit itself for unprecedented challenges.

Leadership is less about employing people than empowering people. Leadership is less about controlling people than releasing them... The whole purpose of an air traffic “controller” is not to keep planes on the ground, but to let them get off the ground and into the sky. What do “controllers” do? They clear pilots for take-off.

The Christian tradition is team-work obsessed. The doctrine of creation trumpets a God who shares creative power with us, who insists we be co-conspirators in our own story, collaborators in our emergence.

Leadership in the modern world was the power of charisma and command. Only a few people had it. These were gifts. Leadership in the postmodern world is a collaboration and interaction. Everybody has it. These are learnings.

Leonard Sweet, *Aqua Church*, Group Publishing, 1999.