



Greater Sydney SDA Conference

Direct Hit

Aiming Real Leaders at the Mission Field

“Am I going to get passionate about the mission of Jesus or stand around just keeping house as the place falls in?”

Only God produces real change, and only God grows the Church. However, it is also true that God usually works through leaders who function wisely and are committed to God.

A Communication Plan Is Essential

Too many former pastors are now selling insurance and funeral plans because they wanted to lead change but failed in communicating well the changes they were attempting to implement. They failed in large measure because they had no communication strategy.

Most congregations are declining and moving more and more inward as each day passes. Two major reasons are:

- 1 – The people in leadership positions in congregations either are not willing to lead transformational change or do not see themselves as leaders.
- 2 – Even when people lead they do not have a well-developed communication strategy to affect such change.

The primary skill required for strong leadership in the church is the ability to use words.

Every spoken word, every phone call, every e-mail, every verbal interaction with people in the congregation reflects an overall communication strategy for change.

Communication needs to be in a positive manner but include communication of key negative images.

While leaders are communicating in a positive manner, they are also gathering followers who will be instrumental in helping them achieve change and preparing for the time when change will actually happen.

Develop More Leaders

Good leaders are constantly raising up new leaders. One of the pastor's primary responsibilities is to develop their staff and board members as leaders.

A congregation grows in proportion to the number of new leaders that are being developed every year.

Barriers To Leading Change

1 – Most pastors do not see themselves as leaders of congregation. Few pastors are willing to assume the role of leader who takes responsibility for mobilising the congregation to accept the mission of obeying our Lord's Great Commission. They become the congregational chaplain, preacher, theologian and so forth. Leading the community is not part of their paradigm.

2 – The incentive to change is particularly absent when the ministry environment reacts so negatively and often labels change as unspiritual.

3 – Many congregations are led by a handful of people who have gained that position by default. They deteriorate to conserving the status quo. They then go about protecting their own status which would be threatened by an influx of new people.

4 – Most congregations are designed to be small, remain small and function ineffectively. Authority, responsibility and accountability are not aligned.

Factors in Leading Change

The constantly changing culture demands fluidity in structures, tactics and methods. Healthy congregations are outward focused and they maintain that focus against tremendous forces that are encouraging an inward bent.

Many pastors have gladly accepted the role of leading individuals to change. The role of leading someone to move away from a destructive and sinful life to embrace Jesus and his teaching is what

has often motivated pastors to choose their profession over others. However, few pastors have taken seriously the role of leading an entire congregation to change from conducting ministry for personal consumption to conducting ministry for the purpose of transforming the community that surrounds it. Those who do take on this more biblical and global role have not been trained to do so, and there is often little help in pursuing this role from either their peers or the denomination in which they find fellowship.

The ineffectiveness of most congregations and denominations has led to a theology of smallness that validates our sickly existence and makes us feel better about it. Discussing success, effectiveness, and bold visions in such an environment is frowned upon. It is written off as too much interest in numbers, pride or ego and making something fleshly out of that which is spiritual. This attitude, coupled with the infamous stories of pastoral dictators, most of whom did not finish their spiritual pilgrimage well, asserts that leadership, if not sinful, is at least dangerous and that most people should avoid it.

Highly dysfunctional congregations become that way over time. Leading such congregations to change takes time and costs emotionally. In many cases, a leader may spend three to five years communicating and implementing a change strategy before the actual change occurs. Good leaders use that time to prepare wisely for the eventual removal of barriers and the creation of incentives that produce systemic change rather than incremental change.

Leadership Behaviour

Those observing the Healthy Churches network noted that they had never seen pastors cooperate with each other so well.

Leadership behaviour is a practise, not a gift.

The Church, like the rest of the world, faces a dearth of leadership.

Passion - At the heart of all effective leadership is passion. For pastors this must come from God's work in our lives.

Courage – The control of established congregations by people who do not want to grow and are unwilling to give up the privileges of membership is the biggest problem faced by those desiring to lead congregational change. The movement from an inward to and outward focus, with rare exception, demands a major shift in who controls the behaviours of the organization. Tackling this major issue

demands courageous leaders who are willing to risk all for the sake of the Great Commission.

Flexibility – While leaders may be unchanging in their core beliefs and bedrock values, they must understand that effective congregational behaviours will vary from congregation to congregation.

Missional – Missional leaders know intellectually as well as intuitively that followers are motivated when leaders proclaim a clear vision, which is the answer to a great urgency that the leader has also communicated. People are willing to follow and risk greatly if they are convinced that the tasks and accompanying risks are going to accomplish something greater, bigger and more wonderful than they could ever achieve on their own.

Wisdom – The most dangerous people in the world are passionate, courageous, missional fools who demonstrate great flexibility in accomplishing their desires. Therefore, biblical leaders must also be wise. Wisdom is the ability to incorporate, assimilate and synthesize biblical knowledge with human experience to produce spiritual behaviour that is balanced, complete and honouring to God.

Wise leaders guide but do not overrun sheep. They never ask more of their sheep than they are willing to do as leaders. However, they are also honest with those sheep who do not want to be missional and if people do not want to participate in the mission they are not given voice or authority in how the mission will be accomplished.

Wise leaders know themselves and lead themselves well.

Wise leaders know what it takes to lead a congregation to health and reproduction. The understanding of what a healthy congregation is and what it takes to produce one is clear. Just as clear is the understanding of what produces dysfunction within a congregation. Wise leaders stop dysfunction before it happens.

Positive – Positive leaders are constantly showing disciples what God can do and wants to do. These leaders do not lead by compulsion, using guilt to get people to serve. Rather they cast vision, assume the best and then develop new leaders and disciples who have been convinced that they can do many things in time and space that will have eternal value.

We are not wired to respond to service out of guilt. We respond when we get a vision of a great God who has called us to great and positive things. Guilt has its place in exposing sin, keeping us humble and

remaining dependent upon God, but vision and excitement are what motivate others for service.

Responsibility/Accountability

Leaders do not blame others if the mission fails. Most excuses reflect issues of mission, vision or denial.

Vision

Vision does not necessarily start with the pastor. However, most pastors who arrive to lead congregations that lack vision, hope, and morale will find that if they do not generate vision, no one else will.

A pastor who starts a new ministry in a typical, dysfunctional congregation that is either on a plateau or in decline must realize that many (or all) of the congregants do not understand the congregation's mission and the pastor's role in that mission.

The first zone is a period of one to five years when the leader is preparing the congregation for systemic change. This time is misunderstood so often ignored by pastors.

The next zone is making the change.

Growth happens when a congregation has more health than sickness.

In the first zone (3-6months)

1 – Pray

2 – Exegete the community

3 – Become an expert in the congregation. Know its DNA. The pastor is taking objective stock of the gifts, talents, desires, dreams, aspiration and abilities of those who currently attend.

4 – Shape a vision for how this group, if led well, can develop a preferable future for itself and the community.

5 – Develop a communication strategy for the vision. Weave subtle pieces of the vision through themes, narratives and applications through sermons. The 'so what' question needs to be asked in every sermon.

6 – Look for those responding to the sermons, training and other communication of vision.

7 – While the pastor is sowing the seeds of vision, the pastor is fulfilling well those ministries and responsibilities that are designed to keep the congregation small and effective at meeting member needs. Failure to do so will cause the pastor to lose credibility and reduce any future leverage for change. The pastor fulfills all the expected roles required in highly dysfunctional congregations, realising they are providing future capital to lead change.

At this time the pastor is really living a double life performing two jobs a chaplain and a leader. This is one major reason why change is so difficult and why most pastors decide, often unintentionally not to pursue it.

Dying congregations whose only vision is that the congregation remain viable enough for long-term members to have their funeral in the church building, often have no one left who can dream.

If the pastor has no vision, does not think in visionary leadership terms and will not work at developing a vision, then his or her tenure is doomed to maintenance at best and the hastening death of the congregation at worst.

On the bottom line of change, everything is reduced to leadership. The best and only thing a leader can do in a desperate situation is go back to the vision. If no one else in a congregation can dream, then the pastor must act like a leader and focus on vision. Without vision there is no hope.

Developing Urgency

Perhaps the greatest sin of denominations and most congregations is the lack of urgency to bring the good news to lost individuals.

Without the consistent presentation of urgency, people vote with their behaviour for the status quo. A good leader makes the status quo so unacceptable that people are willing to embrace a new vision.

Congregations that perceive they have the necessary financial and human resources to survive are often the hardest to lead to change. The status quo may not be great or even good, but many believe it to be better than what a risky, unknown change might produce. And until someone can convince them that the status quo is unacceptable, people will not change, no matter how compelling the new vision might be.

Good leaders spend as much time creating urgency as they do communicating a new vision.

Wise leaders always give people a choice between a preferable future and an unacceptable present.

Urgency comes from loving God and sharing his heart for mission'

Good vision is rooted in urgency.

Develop urgency through:

1 – Realising that the majority of people in our communities are lost to God and that being lost matter deeply to God? This assumes people value God's heart.

1 – Communicating the biblical purposes of the church

2 – Painting a picture of where the congregation is headed if it does not change

3 – Helping people see their community

4 – Helping people sense the loss of those who have left

Create healthy urgency not based on guilt but mission. Shame and blame do not produce change.

Leaders understand that creating urgency is a tool to produce change. This tool must always be used with its companion: casting vision.

Healthy congregation are defined by sacrifice. They exist more for those who are not part of the group than for those who comprise the current congregation. Dysfunctional congregations, on the other hand, despite all their rhetoric about sacrifice exist more for those who already rule the congregation than for those who are on the outside.

Matriarchal and patriarchal networks perpetuate themselves.

Others may champion change and growth as long as the well established system that has been in place for years does not change.

Formal and Informal Structures.

The formal structure is the legal framework that determines how the congregation makes decisions and carries out its normal business. However, there is always an informal structure. This structure reflects how most daily and weekly decisions are made and how business is normally carried out.

Wise change agents work at quickly learning the two structures, noting how each functions separately and how they work together.

While the real leaders may be part of the formal structure, they are often not, choosing instead to use the informal structure to maintain their influence in the congregation. The real leaders in the congregation know how to use both structures in order to maintain their influence and stop any changes.

If the actual leaders of the congregation really want change and are willing to use or give up their influence to make change happen then

you do not need to ready this book. Just gather them around and go for it! The tragedy in most congregations is that those in positions of leadership have gained significance in possessing these roles and are not only unwilling to sacrifice them for health and growth but will also fight tooth and nail to prevent change.

Develop Resources:

1 - Develop a prayer team. This team meets for prayer and more prayer. Training occurs through the focus of the prayer.

2 - Develop an ideas team. The purpose of this team is to help the pastor develop arguments for urgency and create vision in order to address the urgency. Focus on needs within the community.

3 – Developing Personnel. Training leaders to implement change. Teach healthy leadership and healthy congregations.

Train leaders to establish missional audits, determining how each of the congregation's ministries can be brought into alignment with the mission. If a ministry cannot be brought into alignment it should be discarded.

4 – Sort through the structural issues of authority, responsibility and accountability.

The pastor and lay leaders nearly need to become sick of hearing themselves talk about vision and need.

Do not lose influence. Walk the fine balance.

Train, train and train some more.

Model that which you want the congregation to produce. Model what it means to live with an outward focus.

Do not conduct ministry alone. Allow people to watch and learn how things get done.

Sort through funding. Pastors who do not think about funding will find themselves on the verge of great change and not be able to lead it due to the lack of money.

Care for the antagonists – because it is the right thing to do.

Use outside consultation or intervention.

Three goals to be established:

1 – Number of new people to be brought to Jesus under the respective ministries

2 – Number of new people trained by each ministry area

3 – Numbers/Percentages by which a ministry area will grow during a year.

Do not try and change things if there has been no preparation, inadequate prayer and a lack of leaders committed to the direction in which they want to take the congregation.

Impatience is why many pastors fail. They do not understand the difference between preparing a congregation for systemic change and leading a congregation through change when the time is right and the spiritual and human resources required for the difficult journey are in place.

Summarised from

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