

Leadership structure in the local church

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Structure for Church Ministry By Geraldine Rowe A Paper Presented to Professor Dr. Epps In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For Research for Scholarly Writing College of Biblical Studies Houston, Texas October 14, 2010

? Leadership Structure for Church Ministry The local church has not exhibited consistent patterns of lay leadership. Most denominations articulate the Reformation principle of a universal priesthood, while vacillating with changing times and pressures.

At both the local and denominational levels organizations have expanded the role of lay persons which may or may not require them to be educated clergy. Organization structure of the local church whether modern or traditional empowers themselves to announce the word, administer the sacraments and to call and discipline ministers and laity. Believers in Christ connect simultaneously as a congregation to manage the work that Jesus requested. The general values that can be acclimatized to fit the features of “ the local church” were established by the early church to do ministry.

These values can be directed to the constitution or bylaws of a localized place of worship in modern times. Concentration should be given to the reason and objective of the local church preventing them from dropping into the complacency of just “ doing church. ” In architecture, one of the most significant notions is that the church balances between covenant theology and proliferated leadership roles. To explore this notion a closer look is given to church models and their leadership philosophies, beginning with the authority or “ head” of the church.

The first and most significant part of the church’s structure is the Head Shepherd who is Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1: 22-23, 4: 15-16). Underneath the

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Head Shepherd, there is an assembly of under shepherds (overseers, elders or pastors). Historically, from the perspective of Anglicans, Puritans, and Presbyterians all early Baptist preachers were lay, meaning they did not receive Episcopal or Presbyterian ordination. One example was Thomas Collier, who joined one of the seven London churches and served as an itinerant evangelist.

He, through the use of the press gained great influence of Particular Baptists. Lay preachers were the chief means for the advancement of Baptist in the American frontier. Today, however the Pastor no longer functions merely as preachers, chief administrators or ordinances, counselors, and general leaders. They have become executives or administrators who perform numerous functions. They interface disillusionment when they discover that it requires something very different. They become the “hired hands” instead of God-called ministers.

The common options for handling this issue seems to be emphasize the equipping role of the pastor and other professionals while seeking to acknowledge an array of functions and leadership in the churches today. The leadership of the church depends largely upon its doctrine and how closely the pastor is to follow its bylaws. One view is that of the church as a covenant community which has deep roots in biblical as well as free-church traditions. Max Stackhouse wrote on “free church Calvinism” which had a strong influence on the Puritans who left the Church of England.

He describes it like this: “A covenantal people live under the law of God, and find themselves empowered to live together by the love of God. God is the source and sustainer of the covenant ecclesia. Though the initiator of the

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covenant of God, the church also in a sense a voluntary community. The covenant is voluntary in the sense that it is not a community given by birth in a family, class or nation. People must choose to be an active member. This is so even if, in another sense, it is not voluntary at all. God initiates the covenant, humans only receive it, as signified by baptism. This doctrine if properly adopted eliminates the temptation of self-interest, isolation and the disregard for the claims of others. Statistics show however that among Southern Baptist Churches the denomination has been restricted by geography and economic factors to the South, and by racism. Additionally, many southern Baptists have embraced the pluralistic value of urban life and advanced education. Covenantalism, in its original intent could guide a system which recognizes different influences and authorities, and to give a voice to diverse groups and individuals.

A church is both an organism and an organization. According to New Testament writers the church is defined as the “body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12) also “the bride of Christ” (Revelation 19). These scriptures personify the church as a living organism. This organism lives under the leadership of the spirit of Christ as it works in the life of believers which prompts them to begin a congregation. An effective leader strives to keep the congregation attached to its source of energy thereby keeping people focused on the One who corporately gives them strength and direction.

This organism can be dynamic or it can become weak and sickly. As an organism its life and energy must be cared for much like one who would care for a living being. The Church is also an organization as defined by Webster. It is “any unified, consolidated group of elements; systematized

whole; a) a body of persons organized for some specific purpose". As an organization the Church has form, structure, a mission to perform, clientele, constituents, programs, a way of doing business, financial systems, a corporate culture, and many other attributes of any other organization whether secular or sacred.

The effective leader needs to understand the nature of its organization and attempt to lead the church carrying out its mission. Leaders of the Bible like Moses, Joshua, David, Nehemiah, Jesus, Paul and others had goals and envisioned the end results as they pushed themselves and led others. Any effective leader can enlist people around them to commit to common purpose. They motivate others to dream the dreams, see the visions, and work toward the goals that have been set. This servant leader strives to build trust between leader and effective balance so that leadership compliments one another.

This frees him up to preach the gospel. When a leader is overly task oriented he will do whatever it takes to accomplish the task at hand. People are not very important. The danger here is that the leader directs more attention to the organization than the organism. The most consistent lay leadership role in ministry in Baptist Churches has been that of Deacon. The work of the Deacon is to serve tables, providing the Lord Supper. They are to partner with the Pastor as bond servants and overseers according to Phil 1: 1.

Likewise his attributes should reconcile with the description of overseer given in 1Tim 3: 1-13. The position of Deacon and other church officers and ministries are accountable when heading up a successful church organization. Patterson makes this point clear in his writings about leading <https://assignbuster.com/leadership-structure-in-the-local-church/>

from the second chair. A second chair leader may be defined as “ anyone in a subordinate whole whose influence with others adds value throughout the organization. It could refer to the second or the fourth or fifth person of the organization chart.

According to this writer the second chair leader should learn from the paradoxes from the reflection on the life of Joseph in the book of Genesis. If the overseers are out of order and dysfunctional, the entire congregation suffers from confusion and strife that eventually weakens the church preventing it to function according to its original purpose. The biblical purpose of the church is the Great Commission as stated in Matthew 28: 19-20. Its mission, or the way in which its purpose is carried out, is stated in Acts 2: 42-47 as evangelism, discipleship, worship, ministry, prayer, and fellowship.

The leader of the second chair understands the mission of the church and has developed a vision of what the purpose of the church is and is committed to that mission and vision. In conclusion, many changes have taken place in the local church since its Reformation principals. Some of these changes have raised the awareness of social injustices and much progress has been made in the areas of diversity. Many of the post modern adjustments that were made in order to accommodate a diverse society however have proven to weaken its effectiveness in a dying world.

Over a period of time the church has become stagnate and content with the way things are being done been under the umbrella of “ the church”. Distractions such as church membership, financial budgets, and annual programs have taken the forefront of too many local congregations. They

exist to survive or survive to exist and totally lose sight of its mandate to teach the Word of God, win people to a saving knowledge of Christ, grow people in Christ- likeness, and minister to one another.

The Leaders and Overseers should re-evaluate their agenda. They should nurture the passion for work to which they have been called and keep their eyes on the mission and purpose of the church or whatever group/organization they are leading. This will eradicate confusion, hostility, misunderstandings, controversy and selfish agendas. They should be determined to lead the church to develop strong, positive Kingdom agendas that clearly contributes to the advancement of the cause of Christ in the world.