

# LEADERSHIP AND ORDINATION

## 1. LEADERS AND MANAGERS

It is not just in the commercial world that analysts are now highlighting the distinction between the role of **leadership** and that of **management**, but authors on church life are increasingly acknowledging the difference, too.

**Managers** have skills that enable them effectively to maintain the *status quo*. They are good at repeating what has been done before and at keeping a system running smoothly. Their strength lies in efficient administration rather than in creativity or innovation.

**Leaders** are required especially in times of change, either when the external environment in which an organisation functions is changing or when the internal systems within the organisation need to be adapted. At those times, managers on their own will probably lack the skills to adapt the organisation to the changing circumstances, whereas leaders will instinctively identify fresh ways forward. Leaders are influencers of others, catalysts for change.

*'In the past when times were more stable and people seemed more naturally interested in going to church and in Christianity, we did not need pastor-leaders so much. But times have changed. We need leaders who respond to and create change.'*

Alan Nelson.

In practice, there is a substantial overlap between leadership skills and management skills, and it can sometimes be difficult to pinpoint where the one begins and the other ends. But for the purposes of this brief paper, the point that is being highlighted is that in a period of great social and ecclesiastical change, the church urgently needs to ensure that those in positions of leadership are people in whom the gift of leadership has been identified, nurtured and encouraged. Management approaches, such as maintaining the *status quo*, repeating what has always been done, sticking to patterns that are familiar even though they are not working the way they used to, these are approaches that will lead to decline, not growth.

## 2. CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Leadership is referred to in the New Testament as a one of the gifts of the Spirit, 'Those with a gift of leadership must lead with diligence.' Rom12:8.

The following eight key qualities of church *leaders* have been identified (by Bill Hybels):

1. They **develop and communicate a clear vision** in such a way that people understand it, grasp it and become excited about it.

2. They can **organize and align people towards the achievement of that vision**: by forming an effective team, helping them to see how they have a part to play in the overall purpose.
3. They possess the **ability to motivate co-workers**: by helping people tackle hard work and thankless tasks cheerfully because they can discern the overall plan to which their part is making a contribution.
4. They **sense the need for positive change and bring it about in a constructive way**: by having an awareness of how things should and could be and of what changes need to be made in order to implement them.
5. They **establish core values**: by making members aware of how things are to be done, the standards expected, and types of behaviour that are unacceptable in the church.
6. They can **allocate resources effectively**: by seeing how people, gifts, buildings, equipment and money can be deployed most effectively.
7. They can **identify entropy**: by becoming aware when things are not going well and by responding appropriately to potential and actual difficulties.
8. They **create a leadership culture**: by encouraging others to develop their gifts of leadership, welcoming their contribution rather than being threatened by it.

### 3. ORDINATION, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

For centuries, ordination (and particularly incumbency) has become synonymous with parish leadership, and so it has been assumed that because a priest has been ordained, he or she will *de facto* be qualified to lead. What is currently becoming apparent is that while some (many?) incumbents may be liturgically aware, pastorally effective, godly priests, and may be reasonably well suited to be parish *managers* (maintainers of the *status quo*) some are less suited or trained to be church *leaders* (visionary influencers in times of change).

The four main characteristics that have become associated with ordination (and consequently with leadership) are: *leading worship, teaching, pastoring, and modelling the Christian life*. While everyone knows there is much more to the priestly life than just these four qualities, suitability for ordination is more likely to be assumed when potential or proven ability in these is evident in someone's life. The proven or potential ability to be an effective or influential leaders has seldom been specified in the selection process as an essential or even desirable criterion being looked for in those to be trained for ordination.

### 4. EPISCOPE

It may be that aspects of what could be understood as *episcope* or an oversight ministry might provide a bridge between the kind of church leadership needed in

times of change and the ordained ministry as more traditionally understood. Steven Croft in *Ministry in Three Dimensions* expounds the view that all ordained ministry must combine three elements, *diakonia* (practical service), *presbyteria* (word and sacrament), and *episcopo* (oversight). The task of episcopo, he argues, includes vision, unity, transformation, enabling the ministry of others, and the leading of a team. While these may in some particular way be the responsibility of the bishop at a diocesan level, they must also be evident in the priestly ministry at a local church level.

## 5. TEAMS

Another emphasis we have inherited from the traditional understanding of ordination is that of solitary leadership (and sometimes even of solitary ministry) focussed in the person of the priest/ incumbent. One of the paths down which a discussion on church leadership may need to take us is the question as to whether, when an incumbent clearly does not possess the leadership skills needed in a parish, the primary leadership focus in that parish might be acknowledged to be in a suitably gifted lay person and/or in a ministry team, of which the incumbent is a member.

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