

Let the sweet music of leadership play in all its diverse forms and expressions but most of all in the 21st century let us learn to lead by playing Jazz together.

In leadership as Jazz Trevor Withers outlines his ideas for leadership based on the musical genre of Jazz, where improvisation around a theme and listening to each other as we participate are major themes.

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Leadership

as Jazz

*Reflections on a different
kind of Leadership
for local Church*

Trevor Withers

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Leadership as Jazz

Trevor Withers

***A huge thank you to Liz West
for her encouragement & editing skills.***

And to all those who are part of Network Church

***Let the sweet music of leadership play
in all its diverse forms and expressions
but most of all in the 21st century let us learn to lead
by playing Jazz together***

In conclusion

So as I help to lead Network Church I think in terms of leading a Jazz group rather than conducting an orchestra. Maybe others will find it helpful to think of their leadership in this way and as a result the sort of atmosphere created in our church communities will change and may be attractive to people who struggle with other forms. I think of myself wanting to work with the following values:

- Creating something beautiful, building the kingdom on a 24/7 basis
- Everyone taking responsibility and making their unique contribution
- A commitment to maturity in an atmosphere of encouragement
- A community of real and growing relationships, engaged in our world

As a leader works to grow in his or her own contribution, they are totally committed to encourage and make space for the contribution of others – after all how can the music be sweet if the leader plays alone. No one is passive or consumerist. This leader knows that unless there is a real community where differences are recognised and celebrated, the music that they make together will lack a quality of harmony and excellence.

The musicians in the jazz group are encouraged to work together to create something that is a gift to many people. They can support each other in their individual playing while in the group and on many other occasions. Whether they are together or not there is a strong sense of belonging and that the group is part of their identity. It is this community and the sense of safety that enable the individuals to flourish and contribute in a way that they wouldn't be able to do alone.

I have found that leading this kind of community has given me the freedom to be myself, making my own contribution as part of the whole. The community is based on relationships and my job is to help create the atmospheres that encourage relationships, provide spaces for contribution and stimulate people to take responsibility. It continues to be an exciting journey and my hope is that many will join this less walked path way.

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contemporary Christian jargon that it's the pre-Christians who are called seekers? Where does that leave the Christians? Shouldn't the Christian leader be the lead seeker?

10. Solo Act → Team Builder:

All along her journey, Dorothy welcomed company. She was glad for a team. By the end of their journey, the lion, the scarecrow, and the tin man have joined Dorothy as peers, partners, friends. Her style of leadership was empowering, ennobling, not patronizing, paternalistic, creating dependency. So effective was her empowering of them that they were able to say a tearful goodbye and move on to their own adventures. ⁽²⁾

Ok so it's just a film but I think Brian D. McLaren makes some really helpful observations from it and maybe the film itself was an early expression of some of the shifts being experienced from modernism to post modernism. It's far easier to imagine Dorothy saying I no longer call you servants but friends than it is the booming voice of the Wizard of Oz!

I think many of us have been trying to be superheroes like the Wizard of Oz as we lead, which we were never designed to be and using outmoded models and forms of leadership that no longer sit comfortably in the 21st century. The qualities of Jesus that we see echoed in Dorothy's leadership seem far more attractive although they may prove challenging for us to emulate.

Notes chapter 7

1. John 15 v15
2. Brian D. McLaren Originally Published in Rev Magazine, Nov/Dec 2000

Introduction

Why Leadership as Jazz?

Chatting to my son one day I discovered a connection that caused me to think differently about how Jesus approached leadership. The conversation was about Jazz. James was studying music at Lancaster University and plays jazz saxophone. The course he was on had a bias towards classical music and we were talking about what this meant for him as a jazz musician. I asked James what he thought was the key distinctive of jazz as a musical genre. He highlighted the way that the musicians improvised around a core theme, that they listened to one another and played in response to each other. They were not tied to a score but none the less had a framework that acted as a backdrop to what they were creating together. This was in contrast to the way that classical music works where every note is written down and played according to the timing of a conductor, where parts are all pre determined and getting it all right according to the composers score is what matters.

It struck me that the way the Pharisees worked was much like playing classical music; every note being written down and trying to get everyone to play according to the parts that had been written. Jesus however appears to be playing jazz! Every situation he encounters creates a different response. He seems far more interested in engaging with the various groups and individuals that he encounters, interested in what they are doing and thinking, exploring ideas with them and asking endless questions of them. Conrad Gempf states that 'in the fifty episodes of Marks gospel Jesus asked fifty two questions' ⁽¹⁾.

This set me thinking about which type of musical genre might describe our leadership and organisational style in church life. I think many of us have been trying to play jazz but have been doing it in situations where the expectations of our congregations and indeed the structures that have been created for us to work in have been formed around a classical music mind set. Not surprisingly tensions exist just as they did for my son James.

My writing here is an attempt to explore some of these tensions and suggest some possible new ways of thinking and working that could help us. I thought it might be helpful to start by introducing something of my personal journey and in particular the last 12 years where many of the ideas I talk about have been experimented with in a local church situation.

I have had the opportunity to help lead a community of people at Network Church in the St Albans area over the last 12 years as we have gone on a journey together to respond to the changing requirements of leadership. A number of people wonder why Network church is organised in the way that it is and in particular why leadership at Network takes the form that it does. I often find myself having conversations with other church leaders who look a little bemused as I describe some of the things we do and the way we think about church. What follows is not intended to defend what we do but merely an attempt to explain how things have been shaped. Each expression of church is and should be unique and I have great admiration for many who lead in a completely different way using the gifts that God has given them to great effect. I have tried to communicate something of the thinking that goes on behind our leadership style and the beliefs and values that motivate us in Network. This has been a fascinating process for me as I have attempted to unravel the way we think and work together.

Notes Introduction

1. Conrad Gempf, Jesus asked what he wanted to Know

“job” and more like the joy of a day golfing or fishing or playing soccer or whatever ... not something we have to do, but something we get to do? The professionalization of ministry will be one of the harmful legacies of modernity; I believe ... a classic case of jumping from the frying pan of clericalism into the fire of professionalism.

6. Problem-Solver → Quest Creator:

The man-at-the-top of modern leadership is the guy you go to for answers and solutions. No doubt, there are times when that’s what we need now too. But postmodern leaders will be as interested in creating new problems, in setting new challenges, in launching new adventures ... as in solving, finishing, or facilitating old ones. Dorothy does this: she helps her companions trade their old problems (birds landing on the scarecrow, the tin man being paralyzed by rust, the lion faking bravado) for a new quest. Of course, this is what Jesus does too. He doesn’t solve the problems of the Pharisees (How can we get these stupid crowds to know and obey the law as we do?). He creates new ones (Seek first the kingdom of God....).

7. Apologist → Apologizer:

Instead of defending old answers, the new kind of leader will often apologize for how inadequate they are. In modernity, you gained credibility by always being right; in post modernity, you gain authority by admitting when you’re wrong (think of the Pope’s visit to the Middle East in early 2000) and apologizing humbly. That kind of humility, that vulnerability, was one of Dorothy’s most winsome – and “leader-ly” -- characteristics.

8. Threat → Includer:

The only threat Dorothy poses is the threat of inclusion, not exclusion. She basically threatens you with acceptance; you’re part of her journey, a member of her team, unless you refuse and walk away. That kind of leadership strikes me as gospel leadership, and it reminds me of someone else.

9. Knower → Seeker:

Oddly, Dorothy’s appeal as a leader arises from her being lost and being passionate about seeking a way home. Does it ever strike you as odd in

2. **Broadcaster → Listener:**

In the postmodern world, it's not how loud you shout; it's how deeply you listen that counts. Just as Dorothy engages her travelling companions by listening to their stories and evoking their needs, the postmodern leader creates a safe place that attracts a team, and then she or he empowers them by the amazing power of a listening heart.

3. **Objective Technician → Spiritual friend:**

Think of the difference between a scientist objectively studying chimpanzees and a crusader dedicated to saving them from extinction. In modernity, a leader loves his organization and loves his ambition, his strategic plan, his goals; but on this side of the transition, leaders love their teams, and those to whom their teams are sent. (Or, more perversely put – in modernity, I Corinthians 13 would read, "If I have all love and would lay down my life for my friends, but have not knowledge, I am a wispy wimp and a poor excuse for a leader." Beyond modernity, we return toward Paul's original meaning.)

4. **Warrior/Salesman → Dancer:**

In a world plagued by ethnic hatred and telemarketers, every voice adding stridency and sales pressure to the world is one voice too many. Nobody wants to be "won to Christ" or "taken for Jesus" in one of our "crusades," and neither do they want to be subjected to a sales pitch for heaven, that sounds for all the world like an invitation to check out a time share vacation resort. A presentation of the gospel that sounds like a military ultimatum or like a slick sales pitch will dishonour the gospel for postmodern people. Instead, think of leadership (and especially evangelism) as a dance. You hear the music that I don't hear, and you know how to move to its rhythm. Gently, you help me begin to hear its music, feel its rhythm, and learn to move to it with grace and joy. A very different kind of leadership, don't you agree?

5. **Careerist → Amateur:**

The root of the word "amateur" is "amar" – to love. Most of us in Christian leadership know that seeing ministry as a career can quickly quench the motivation of love. How can we keep that higher motivation alive? How can Christian leadership be for us less like the drudgery of a

Chapter 1 Distinctives

I feel it is a great privilege to be part of the leadership of Network and being involved is a great joy for me. I think we are very fortunate to have the friendship and support of such a loving Christian community which seeks to live out the message of Jesus in a relevant way for our day.

I start this book with a few headline thoughts that come from my understanding of biblical principles. I have then tried to show how these principles work out in the ideas that I value and the way that I lead. This is not in any way exhaustive but an attempt to give some understanding to our philosophy of leadership. The picture that is emerging is still 'work in progress' which is something of the challenge we face as we try to express a form of leadership that is appropriate in our fast changing culture.

Network distinctives – reflections on how we are developing

As our ideas and way of working as leaders developed we decided to put some reflections on paper that would help us clarify the atmospheres we were trying to encourage. They are deliberately short and as ever the pictures seemed to communicate more than the words.

Reversing the gravitational pull of church

This is about a 'go' rather than 'come' mentality. Isn't it interesting that Jesus sends the disciples out and says he will be with them as they go ⁽¹⁾. Often we are trying to pull people in. It's about being out in the world and how we live 24/7. The kingdom is compared to yeast

"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." ⁽²⁾ What a fantastic picture of the transforming nature of the kingdom in the world.



The people revolution

The reformation was about the priesthood of all believers. I believe as Bill Beckham states that what we are experiencing now is the second reformation which is the outworking of this belief in practice as we encourage 'every member ministry'. The amazing fact of the Gospels is that Jesus through His spirit lives in us. 'I am in you and you are in me' ⁽³⁾. This means that each one of us is empowered and called to the work of the kingdom and not just a special few.



Working around centres of energy

Christianity spread through the known world of the first century at some speed. It was mobile in nature, and was contained and carried in the lives of individual believers and vibrant small communities. We catch glimpses of these through the New Testament writings. 1 Corinthians comments on the church that met at the home of Aquila and Priscilla ⁽⁴⁾ This was one of the many centres of spiritual energy that developed and multiplied. We likewise need to be recognising and encouraging these spiritual centres of energy and giving them freedom to develop and grow.



Having permeable edges

Jesus spends quite a bit of his time hanging around with people, often people who were thought to be unsuitable to be engaging with. We see a lovely response to this in Matthew's gospel where Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners ⁽⁵⁾ at home with him as he extended friendship to them. So we need to be 'open handed' with our gatherings and make them accessible. This is particularly true as people want to belong before they believe.



Chapter 7 Shifts in perspective

'I no longer call you servants but friends' ⁽¹⁾

Jesus

The early church under persecution headed in two distinct directions, west and east from Jerusalem. The church that was established in the west became rational and sought logic to try and answer its questions. The church that went east however embraced more of the mystery of God. This has been evident in our differing models. The western church has developed leadership around rational understanding and in so doing lost the mystery. Brian McLaren picks up on this thought as he looks at some components of western leadership. He uses the Wizard of Oz film as his text and compares the Wizard's leadership with that of Dorothy's. I have found this a very helpful reflection on leadership and include it here:

Dorothy on Leadership

"How a Movie from our Childhood Can Help us Understand the Changing Nature of Leadership in the Postmodern Transition"

1. Bible Analyst → Spiritual sage:

As we move beyond modernity, we lose our infatuation with analysis, knowledge, information, "facts," and belief systems – and those who traffic in them. Instead, we are attracted to leaders who possess that elusive quality of wisdom (think of James 3), who practice spiritual disciplines and whose lives are characterized by depth of spiritual practice (not just by the tightness of a belief system). These leaders possess a moral authority more closely linked to character than intellectual credentials; they are more sages than technicians; it's their slow, thoughtful, considered answer that convinces, not the snap-your-fingers-I-know-that kind of answer-man know-it-all-ness. Dorothy has this "softer" authority, a reflection of her earnestness and kindness as much as her intellectual acumen.

But why is all this important as we look at the way we lead? Simply because these underlying ideas and beliefs shape the way we view the world and therefore the way in which we understand it working. This in turn shapes the things we believe about leadership and how it should work.

Notes chapter 6

1. Journeys course. A five week DVD journey exploring the Christian faith through real people, amazing stories and changed lives. Designed to introduce interested 'spectators' to Christianity, Rob Harley, Willowcreek.org.uk
2. Dream interpretation, streamsministries.com
3. Essence is a six part course designed to be run off church premises. It aims to give an experiential introduction to the Christian faith in a culturally relevant way. The overriding objective is to help people who may view themselves as 'spiritual' to journey towards the Christian faith. sharejesusinternational.com
4. Theodore Roosevelt 29th President of US
5. R. Forster, Trinity, Authentic

Cultivating an Earthed Spirituality that is Jesus focused

I have found it interesting to reflect on how much of church life has been centred on Old Testament ideas and how much is informed by the New Testament. Now before anyone gets up tight, we believe in the whole canon of scripture from Genesis to Revelation. However, we are called to follow Jesus, and to live informed by his teachings and example. I find it fascinating that artists down the centuries have painted Jesus as a rather ethereal character in neatly pressed white robes with the all too familiar halo. Whilst I can understand why this has been done, I think the Jesus we follow is a far more earthy character and calls us to live in vibrant connectivity with our world; the sort of Jesus that would light a fire and cook breakfast on the beach with his friends.⁽⁶⁾



Nurturing Authentic Friendships and Healthy Community

The Cambridge online dictionary defines a friend as: 'a person whom you know well and whom you like a lot, someone who is not an enemy and whom you can trust: *You don't have to pretend any more - you're among friends now. Jesus calls us his friends*'⁽⁷⁾. It is from the basis of our friendship with Jesus that we can create friendship with others; friendships which like his are not conditional on our response back. Authentic friendships are those that are committed to the friendship without pre-supposed outcomes. They are also friendships that engage and deal with the real issues of life. From this foundation healthy communities can be formed and flourish.



Holding Deep Convictions but Being Unfazed by Questions

Our beliefs as Christians are distinct and form the basis for our values and actions that flow from them. We have often found ourselves trying to

defend our actions, which are often seen as negative, rather than our beliefs which inform those actions. It is therefore not surprising that we are known for what we stand against, and not known for believing in a God of love. I think we need to engage more in questions, and dare I suggest, invite questions around what we believe and why. This will engage us in dialogue much like the conversation that parents have with children around the age of three where everything is questioned.

They respond to every answer with another question, usually 'but why?' This is both because they desire to understand but more importantly because they have your undivided attention and delight in developing their relationship with us.

Stimulating Faith Development through participation at Every Stage of the Journey

At seventy seven years of age my Dad has just enrolled in the University of the Third Age. He will be learning in the way that he always has since leaving school at fourteen - by 'having a go'. The idea of life-long learning has become increasingly popular, which is good news for us as Christians as it has always been something we have subscribed to. We have however gone for the more knowledge- based learning style rather than the apprentice model that is more closely linked to discipleship.

I watched a TV programme with great interest recently that showed that our brain could rewire itself to learn new things even when we were quite old. The rewiring process was effective because it involved learning a new skill (in this case to juggle). So the Romans passage that speaks of having our minds renewed is a physical possibility, and should be an on-going process. It will be most effective through practical participation.⁽⁸⁾



towards God needing to reveal everything to us directly in all its minutest detail lest we should get it wrong.

How we view risk

Our view of failure and change can be so strong that we avoid making any sort of risky decisions, even though faith always involves risk. Decisions are pushed to those who are perceived to have a hotline to God and are able to get things right. In most situations these people are leaders. This would be a perfectly acceptable idea if we were Old Testament Jews where God spoke to the people through the priests, prophet or kings but we are New Testament Christians and believe in the priesthood of all believers!

How we view change within a changing world

The truth of the world in which we live is that everything is in a state of flux and to some degree this has always been the case. It is increasingly true in this age. The natural world around us is constantly changing and always has been. Shorelines and indeed whole continents shift and change over time. We as people are constantly changing; the things we know and understand, our relationships develop and change. I am not the same person I was yesterday and neither are you.

I find it fascinating to see how keen we are to try and keep everything the same. So why is it that some sorts of change we find really difficult to cope with or even contemplate, when in reality we live with and accept life changing on a day by day, moment by moment basis?

Our more settled rather than nomadic rhythm of life in the western world along with a scientific world view which wants to generally measure and pin things down so we can study and understand them, are two possible reasons why at least some change feels uncomfortable and often unwelcome. Much of the fear associated with change comes from our desire to understand and so control life. This is our attempt to take the chaos that exists around us and create some safety. The way we do this reveals our underlying insecurities and as such will be different for each of us.

not just because he is all powerful but because he chooses to use that power in ways that encourage rather than damage his relationship with us.

How we view God himself

If God is the 'immovable unmoved' God of Greek thought, how can we talk in terms of experimentation? Surely everything is fixed and preordained. Add to this the strong sense of determinism (mentioned and defined in earlier chapter) that is around in many areas which says that there must be only one right way. This leads to a double road block. So we convince ourselves that we just must keep doing what we have always done. Perhaps if we do it more or work harder at it, then it will work.

How we view failure

"The credit belongs to those people who are actually in the arena, who know the great enthusiasms, the great devotions to a worthy cause and who, at best, know the triumph of high achievement, and who, at worst, fail while daring greatly. So that their place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat." ⁽⁴⁾

Theodore Roosevelt

Linked to this is the idea that failure is sin. What do I mean by this? With its origin in Greek rather than a Hebrew view of God, as an unmoved mover, God had to be unmoved because the Greeks believed that God by definition was perfect. If He was perfect He could never change, because if he were to change, he would either no longer be perfect, or He would not have been perfect to begin with ⁽⁵⁾. From this we define perfection as the ability not to change. This line of thought influences our theology. We strive for perfection to be like God and in doing so resist the idea of change as God does not change. We can also be influenced by our initial statement, seeing failure as sin; we extrapolate that as God is perfection we must strive for perfection and anything less feels like sin. Getting it right becomes essential. Getting it wrong becomes not just failure but sin. This works against the idea of experimentation and pushes us

Notes Chapter 1

1. Matthew 28 v 19
2. Matt 13 v 33
3. John 14 v 19
4. 1 Corinthians 16 v 19
5. Matthew 9 v 11
6. John 21
7. John 15 v 15
8. Romans 12 v 1 & 2

Engaging with our world

In this time of great change and particularly where the pace of change is unprecedented, there is a very real danger that the way we engage with the world as Christians becomes increasingly irrelevant. This means that we need to find new ways of acting and responding to our world. In my view this will involve a series of experiments to see what sort of things might help. There are various resources available which have been produced to help us relate to individuals outside the church. Examples of this would include such things as the Journeys Course ⁽¹⁾, Dream Interpretation ⁽²⁾ and Essence ⁽³⁾ add more detail and maybe where to get them. In this season, experimentation is essential not just with these sorts of outreach tools but in the very way we experience church life. How we view this experimentation will depend on a number of factors:

Where our security lies

As Christians we know that our security should rest ultimately in God himself. But even here we have set up our defence structures just in case he proves to be unreliable. We can be influenced by our scientific world view and start by describing God himself as a force or an object that is disconnected from the reality of the chaotic world that we experience. He becomes the ultimate controller of all that is happening and as such takes the blame for anything and everything. He is often given this role by people who profess not to believe in Him!

God has been described like this from very early on in philosophical thought. Aristotle made the proposition that God is the 'unmoved mover', by which he meant that God set things going and then retired into the wings to watch what happened and was unmoved by what He observed. There are many statements about God that find their roots in this Greek style philosophy which is the basis for much of our western thought. This contrasts strongly with the more Hebraic view taken in the Bible, where things are interconnected and God is integrated and part of life rather than somehow separate. So the God we believe in is integrally connected to the world we inhabit and walks with us in every situation. He is the God who will never leave us or forsake us and so can be trusted

Chapter 6

24 / 7 engagement

How then do we learn to live out the riches of a 'whole-life' Gospel within the force fields of contemporary culture?

Bishop Graham Cray

Are we gathered or scattered?

The short answer is of course we are both. The secret is keeping these two areas in balance, keeping the support and engagement of individuals alive and dynamic in all areas of life and creating relevant areas of belonging and gathering within the Christian community. This is a task of the leadership at Network and one of our distinctives, we believe equally in both of these areas and try to put equal amounts of energy and emphasis on each. We believe that cell groups are fundamental and are the basic building block of the church, however we also believe in the need for the connectivity and support that the larger church dimension brings. Some, I feel would like the leadership to make up its mind and put its energy into one or other of these areas. Like Jesus we want to give equal value to each. He spent his time with both the crowd and the disciples. We could boil everything down and work only with the essentials, but we have a vast and creative God who challenges us to be like him and hold all these things in tension. He wants us to create as many possible connection points as we can, so we can be connected to him, each other and the world that we long to see discover him.

Church that is responsive to change

I believe that we should be a flexible and responsive expression of the Body of Christ and that our leadership should be flexible and responsive too. I want to lead in a way that encourages experimentation and gives permission to have a go and possibly fail, because I do not believe that failure is sin.

Chapter 2

Leadership that Encourages Participation

In this chapter I set out the context against which we are thinking about the relevance of the way we have led and the way it might need to change in the light of our rapidly changing world.

Leadership in a changing world

As Jesus played jazz it seems he spent much of his time challenging the preconceptions of those in his day and offered alternative ways of seeing the world. It has been the legacy of every successive generation of his followers to do the same. Our challenge is no different, but how good are we at looking at the world through a different pair of glasses? There is no doubt that old ways of thinking are in need of change and in every sphere of life pressure is being brought to bear on what has been until recently hallowed ground. I would like to bring a challenge here to some of the preconceptions that I have experienced as I have related to leaders of many different varieties of church.

It strikes me that there is a lot of truth in the statement that 'we see what we are looking for'. Margaret Wheatley highlights this using the example of particles and waves, light can be recorded in either of these two ways and the one you record is the one you set out to look for in the first place as your measuring equipment is set up to look in a particular way.⁽¹⁾

There have been several situations recently when this has been highlighted for me. We often, if not always, set out to prove our assumptions. It's natural for most of us to want to confirm that the world operates in the way we think it should, based on our preconceptions. What are our preconceptions about the way leadership should be? Is our model of leadership 'fit for purpose' in a changing world? Does our model of leadership fit with the call to discipleship that Jesus left us with? A few examples occur to me which demonstrate the era of constant change we are in which form the backdrop to our discussions on leadership:

- The scientific world is moving deeper in its analysis and seeing

beyond the laws of Newton. A world view based around the ideas of Einstein and relativity, embracing concepts such as sub atomics, has opened up a broader canvas on which to work.

- Our global society which is often referred to as the 'global village' describes a world where borders and boundaries are crossed more easily and trade is worldwide, often from individual to individual as well as being dominated by the powerful global corporate business empires holding more sway than those in government.
- The social revolution that has happened in the UK and other parts of the western world has seen the erosion of long held beliefs and values creating a society that is shaped by the desires of individuals and shows itself in an increased sense of isolation for many. The values of mutual engagement and sacrificial love have been replaced by a level of selfishness and desire for personal fulfilment that would have shocked our ancestors.
- The development of digital technology and the web has given rise to instant access of information that we all enjoy from mobile devices. We have moved from a place where a few had access to much and often used it to create an air of superiority and control to a situation where most have access to almost everything as far as information is concerned.
- The shift from 'Christendom' ⁽²⁾ to 'post Christendom' ⁽³⁾, recognising that the once held biblical values that underpinned our society are no longer our benchmark

Although there have been undeniable benefits, one of the unfortunate consequences of our scientific world view is that we have tried to reduce God to fit our rather limited scientific definitions. This is particularly focused through our 'either/or' understanding of the world rather than a 'both/and' philosophy. By which I mean that we often play one thing off against another rather than trying to see how two things could be mutually compatible rather than mutually exclusive. As a result we can

Notes chapter 5

1. Mark Green speaking at the Lausanne congress on world evangelisation 2010
2. Matthew 14 v 29.
3. The Second Reformation, William Beckham, Touch Ministries.
4. 1 Corinthians 12 v27
5. Matthew 6 v10
6. John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11
7. God at War, Greg Boyd
8. Ephesians 4 v 11)

in the western world, the dominant culture is consumerism driven by the economy and therefore it is not surprising that the church has been influenced by this and uses business as one of its shaping ideologies.

Leadership, a conduit for ideas, stories and thoughts

In this way leadership becomes the connecting conduit for ideas and information - highlighting stories that are shared in one part of the network and bringing them to other parts. This is one of the reasons I place so much value on having space to hear from each other in our Sunday gatherings. The question and answer sessions are another expression of this, where the diversity of views and ideas can be heard and appreciated. We will look at different topics each time and bring a real prayer focus so we can both bring our ideas to him but also anticipate hearing his voice speaking to us.

Leadership connects people together

Diversity is celebrated in the Godhead as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At Network we want to celebrate the diversity of God's ongoing creation as we learn to love and accept one another with all our differences. Just as there is honour and respect through the persons of the Trinity, so we aspire to experience this same dynamic through the varied expressions of Network. Our leadership role becomes one of drawing out these differences and making helpful connections across the spectrum of relationships. We are not seeking to create conformity of views and ideas but rather a tapestry of viewpoints that are knitted together. Our leadership role becomes one of stitching and shaping. In many organisations the ideal is to have everyone on the same page as it were, all lined up and neatly ordered, conformed to the pattern of the organisation. For Network this is not the goal. We want to experience and celebrate diversity.

find ourselves giving very narrow and one sided definitions to things that in fact are far more complicated and deserve a much bigger perspective. You may well be asking yourself what this has got to do with leadership at Network. I think it has a number of out workings in the way we think about Network's life and its leadership.

Theology is starting to explore new ground in light of many of the above developments. Can we assume that the way we think about leadership will not also take us on a journey of radical change and rethinking? A sense of determinism⁽⁴⁾ has been unhelpfully applied to our view of God's sovereignty driven amongst other things by our Newtonian world view where the world is seen in a rather mechanical way ('every action has an equal and opposite reaction')⁽⁵⁾. This is being challenged by a renewal of alternative views such as open theism⁽⁶⁾ and liberation theology⁽⁷⁾. Also a re emphasis towards Trinitarian thinking is moving us away from a more dualistic⁽⁸⁾ and often hierarchical pattern towards interdependent ideas and concepts that are reviving a more relational approach .

Our understanding of leadership and even the very shape and form of the organisations that we lead need serious reflection in light of all these changes. I am deeply indebted to Margaret Wheatley who stirred my thinking some years ago in this area through her writing 'Leadership and the new Science' and more recently by Gary Hamel in 'The future of Management'.

I have a hunch that the future will continue to bring new and even greater challenges. The sort of language that will describe leadership and organisations needs to be wrestled with. Will leaders look more like 'poets' or 'gardeners', could we describe ourselves as 'playing jazz together' where we pick up themes and improvise around these, keeping the focus moving from one person to the next? Recent research into swarms of birds, bees, and insects has much to teach us about the way we are starting to look at our natural world through different glasses. It appears the shape of the whole is determined by the contribution of each member rather than a key player who is somehow in control. Will we allow these insights to influence our leadership thinking and organisational constructs? For me this is one of the key questions.

'You know that the 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, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'⁽⁹⁾

Jesus

I think a series of shifts need to take place in our thinking about leadership and the type of communities we are helping to create. The five headlines below highlight where I think we need to focus our thinking and be challenged to have our practices re-shaped. We will use these as a guide as we move through the next few chapters

Current View	Future view
Consumers	Contributors
Leaders responsibility	Collective responsibility
Volunteers	Partners
Leaders Dreams or Vision	Each Persons Dream
1 Hour on Sunday	24/7 Engagement

Let’s take an example of a passage that came up in conversation with a friend just the other day. The conversation went something like this: ‘Well, Trevor what do you think about the fivefold ministry in Ephesians?’ This is in Ephesians 4 where Paul says ‘It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles some to be prophets some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers’⁽⁸⁾. It is generally assumed that this is a passage about leaders because we see these ‘ministries’ as leadership ministries; it has been leaders who would normally have held these positions in church life. This is not the case however as far as the context of the passage is concerned. This is a passage about the body of Christ, talking about one another, everyone in the body, not only leaders! Our conversation then moved in an even more interesting direction. If this passage is not about leaders, but is inclusive of everyone in the body, could we be saying that each and every one of us has at least one of these ministries? I could feel the need to check that my fire proof suite was up to speck as this sounded a bit like heresy to me. The flames grew even more vivid as I found myself suggesting that if the outworking of these gifts was to build up all of those in the body, then if we were all ministering to one another we would all be working in each of these areas to some degree or another as we were enabled by each other! This seems like a far cry from one leader or even a handful of leaders carrying these gifts. So by way of example if the church had 100 people you could have 20 in each of the five gifts listed. Speaking on this passage recently I asked people to identify with one of the gifts and gather with others to talk. It was fascinating to see how the spread worked out, and for everyone to see who went where.

Church - as family or business?

This idea of shared dreams leads to more of a sense of family rather than running a business together. This does not mean that I have anything against business because I don’t; business is great and I fully support it. However I am not sure that it should be the reason or the basis around which we form our Christian community. The metaphor of body or family I think is both more Biblical and also more helpful. It is interesting to see how in different eras of church history the structures and metaphors have mimicked the structures in that culture at the time. For most of us

the cross can all make sense when seen as acts of one kingdom overcoming another.

The leaders dreams or all our dreams?

When I think of dreams in this context I am thinking of those dreams that are our aspirations or godly desires. I think the ideal for our Christian communities is that they are a place where these individual dreams contribute to and shape the whole. The vision of the community is then shaped by the individuals that form it rather than being dictated by one individual who is 'the leader' bringing the vision that we all fall in with and follow. Why do I think this is important? We then have what I want to call 'say so' - we all have a contribution to make in shaping the purpose of the community. Our dream can become part of the collective dream; our aspirations can shape and form the corporate aspirations of the whole. This means that each of us will have increased ownership and participation because our thoughts and ideas are important and make a difference. This also means that the community as a whole will be richer as different and diverse ideas are folded in and shape the whole.

Old or New Testament models of leadership?

Over the past few years I have found myself becoming more and more exasperated in a number of discussions in different settings. I was puzzled and perplexed for some time, until I had something of a revelation. Many of the examples and the language we use to describe our structures and leadership models are from the Old Testament. Let me make something very clear before I continue, I am a Bible believing chap and the Bible includes the Old and New Testaments, so I am not about to throw most of it away. I do however want to highlight that we need to think carefully how we handle God's word to us and how we apply any of it, but particularly the Old Testament. To listen to some conversations it sounds as if we are advocating Judaism not Christianity as we use so much of the Old Testament to inform our leadership and organisational structures. Why should this be I wonder? Even when we do use New Testament passages I still find we default to unhelpful ways of thinking and interpretation.

Notes chapter 2

1. Leadership and the new science, Margaret Wheatley
2. Christendom: 'the worldwide body or society of Christians' oxforddictionaries.com
3. Post Christendom: The end of Christendom, where the Christian story was known and the church was central, invites Christians in western culture to embrace marginality and discover fresh ways of being church and engaging in mission. While the transition from modernity to postmodernity has received a huge amount of attention, the shift from Christendom to post-Christendom has not yet been fully explored. Stuart Murray Williams, Church Post Christendom, Paternoster Press.
4. The doctrine that all events, including human action, are ultimately determined by causes regarded as external to the will. Some philosophers have taken determinism to imply that individual human beings have no free will and cannot be held morally responsible for their actions. oxforddictionaries.com
5. Newton's third law. physicsclassroom.com
6. Open Theists believe God created humans and angels with free will and that these agents are empowered to have "say so" in what comes to pass. In Open Theism, therefore, what people decide to do genuinely affects God and affects what comes to pass. In particular, by God's own sovereign design, things *really hang* on whether or not God's people pray. www.gregboyd.org
7. A movement in Christian theology, developed mainly by Latin American Roman Catholics, which attempts to address the problems of poverty and social injustice as well as spiritual matters. oxforddictionaries.com
8. the division of something conceptually into two opposed or contrasted aspects, or the state of being so divided: oxforddictionaries.com
9. Matthew 20 v 25-26

that has been outworked in practice. The second reformation as Bill Beckham describes it in his book 'the Second Reformation' ⁽³⁾ has to happen to see this belief become a reality, which is every one having the opportunity to minister.

All of this leads me to believe that God's desire for us as the church is to work from these principles, to value joint responsibility and working together. Leadership is a team responsibility, the days of the singular omni-competent leader are over (if indeed they ever really existed). We have moved and need to continue to evolve methods of working where everyone is involved. This will demand new ways of thinking and won't always come naturally as we have been conditioned to think in particular ways. I want to encourage us to be up for the challenge.

What are we participating in?

The obvious answer is of course the church. We are called to be members of 'the body of Christ' ⁽⁴⁾ and so we participate in that body. In reality though, this is only part of the picture. What we need to ask is what is the body, (the church)? Well if it is Jesus' body it must be continuing to do what he did. He came to bring in the Kingdom of God, 'your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' ⁽⁵⁾. The word 'kingdom' is interesting and often overlooked in its meaning. It is of course made up of two words 'king' and 'dome'. It is where a king has reign over a domain. So when we see Jesus telling us to pray 'your kingdom come' it should pose a question, namely who's kingdom currently exists that God's kingdom has got to come in and replace it? John is quite clear about this in his Gospel. Three times he refers to Satan as the prince of this world ⁽⁶⁾ 'Here he uses the word archon, which was customarily used to denote the 'highest official in the city or region in the Greco- Roman world' ⁽⁷⁾. So we have the situation where 'Satan has illegitimately seized the world and thus now exercises a controlling influence over it'. This is a disturbing thought but does help us to make sense of Jesus' activity and also the activity that he asks us to participate in as members of his body. This idea of warfare where one kingdom is invading another is the back drop against which we make sense of Jesus' acts. His exorcisms, healings and other miracles as well as his work on

er's mind about the contribution that individuals need to make so they can ensure that the organisation continues because without it as leaders we are left high and dry.

The thing about God's kingdom is that it is not about our organisations, it is much bigger than that. Our leadership needs to be big hearted where we seek the growth and development of people for the sake of 'The Kingdom' and not just for 'our kingdom'. This means that our belief has to be in the individual for the sake of their influence into their spheres of influence where ever they are, for the sake of the Kingdom. This can appear to be suicidal when looked at from the perspective of the institution or organisation, but that must not be our sole perspective. This creates a different sense of why the organisation exists, namely to be a staging post to enable individuals and small group communities to be carriers of kingdom values into their spheres of influence, and not just to keep the organisation going for its own benefit.

Jesus and the Holy Spirit as team players

Jesus' model of leadership was one of servant hood, where the first shall be last and where argument of who will be the greatest was irrelevant. He also chose to be in team just as He experienced with the Father and the Spirit.

But there is more!

Because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost we are all able to participate. The shift has moved from prophets, priests and Kings (and the occasional donkey) connecting with and being used by God, to all of us being empowered whether we are leaders or not. This is why Paul can write about us all being members of Christ's body and playing our part. I think we know this on one level as head knowledge that we have acquired, but we don't experience the reality of it as personalised knowledge that changes the way we think and act.

The protestant reformation heralded the priesthood of all believers but sadly this has stayed for the most part as a belief only and not something

Chapter 3 Consumers to Contributors

The major challenge: For the most part, the church has been making converts not disciples, and has struggled to train and release God's people for a whole-life, life-long, growing adventure with Jesus on the frontline of engagement with our world. ⁽¹⁾

Mark Greene

Contributors who create community

This is one area where our recovery of the Trinity in theology that I mentioned earlier finds a very real expression. The God we believe in as Christians is unique amongst world religions. This is because He has chosen to exist in community. He is not a single entity or even a single person. He is three persons, in one person, Father, Son and Spirit. You might think that this is just theology, but as such it should inform and shape our methodology. Sadly this is often not the case. What most often informs and shapes our methodology is the current thinking of the age. So in an age where strong leaders in all areas of life have been dominant, it's not surprising that the church has followed this idea. In an age where hierarchical structures in business have been the norm and the work force has been seen as cogs in a machine, it's not surprising that our churches have adopted the same ideas. We even use language that reflects this...the Senior Pastor..running the Fathers business....our churches have departments and department heads. These structures tend to put the responsibility firmly on the shoulders of the few; we look to others to tell us what to do and how to do it. The larger the organisation the more this seems to be the case. I heard someone say recently that 'it feels as if we are working to feed the machine'. Could there be another way? Going back to our statement that 'theology breads methodology', is this organisational structure the way we see 'God as Trinity' working and how we perceive the natural world that God has created to work?

Over the last twenty years or so I have enjoyed exploring the way we grapple with the idea of Trinity with a whole range of different groups.

After doing some initial Biblical background with them I ask them to divide into groups of three. In these groups they choose someone to be Father, someone to be Son and someone to be the Holy Spirit. I ask them to spend a few minutes talking about how they would relate together in these roles. Then comes the interesting part, I encourage them to stand up and physically connect together in a way that will show the relationships in the Trinity. What always happens is that they spend all the time talking and are very reluctant to try and explore the concepts in three dimensions. For those groups that do get to their feet they find it hard at first but soon get into the flow of creatively working together to see how they can develop their ideas in physical space rather than just the rational world of their heads.

So what's the point of telling you about this little teaching tool? Well it highlights how reluctant we are to step out of our 'theory only please' head space and participate in a more encounter type way of learning - dare I say one that Jesus used quite a bit? More than this though, what comes out most visibly when these concepts are explored in the physical space are the often hierarchical views that exist. Often the Father is stood in an overarching way with the Son kneeling under him arms splayed as on the cross, followed by the Holy Spirit often laying on the floor. The other interesting thing about this physical representation is that it is static and conveys the idea of the unmoved mover that we will look at in more detail later.

CS Lewis describes the Trinity as 'a divine dance' ⁽²⁾; this brings a great energetic interconnected picture to mind. Often when we refer to God and especially when we read about him in our Bibles we are thinking in terms of the singular and probably God the Father as the dominant view. The reality of course is that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Even at the outset the language states this with the words 'let us make man in our own image' ⁽³⁾. So the creation of the world was a team effort. I also believe that part of us being created in God's image is that we were designed to function like Him. Unlike God we are singular and so to represent God and the way he operates we need to work with others. This allows us to demonstrate the very heart and nature of God which is love. This is something we cannot do in isolation. It is not a solitary occupation.

Chapter 5

Volunteers to Partners

'The Churches role is to equip the people of God for fruitful mission in all of their life' ⁽¹⁾
Mark Greene

We benefit in so many ways from everyone making their contribution. We are enriched by everyone else's contribution if we are able to allow the space for them. This exposes an underlying issue. If we are really going to see this value of everyone contributing becoming a reality we have to believe that everyone has a contribution to make! I think this is an area where we really struggle. We are often making judgements about others and writing them off before we have even given them a chance to have a go, let alone participate in a way that enables them to take any collective responsibility. Isn't it fascinating that Jesus even had Judas on his team?

I love the story in the Gospels where Jesus asks Peter to step out of the boat and join him, walking on the water ⁽²⁾. We tend to think that it is Peter's faith in Jesus that enables this. I wonder if actually it is the other way round. In other words, it's the fact that Jesus believes Peter can do it that makes it possible for him to step over the side. We tend to emphasise that we need to believe in Jesus, but do we believe that Jesus believes in us? I think that's a much harder question, particularly for us Brits. We often devalue ourselves and shame gets the better of us.

How does this effect leadership? We like being led by people who believe in us, not just for what we can contribute to the leader's organisation or team, but those who genuinely believe in us regardless of our input to anything. I guess we could call this unconditional belief; the sort of belief that Jesus had in his disciples.

This unconditional belief in others is often hard for leaders. Our need as leaders is for people to populate our organisations and structures to keep the whole thing going. This means there is a constant agenda in the lead-

Changing our Sunday celebration services into a more participatory and therefore shared ownership space has been challenging and taken some time. A regular slot of around 20 – 30 mins each week where we encourage people to share what has been happening in the week and often pause and pray for them and the situations is one way that this has been encouraged. We run around with the radio mic rather than asking people to come out to the front which means that it remains conversational and is easier for those sharing as they do not feel exposed.

Another way we have encouraged an atmosphere of ownership is to have what we call question and answer weeks. An issue or topic is announced in advanced and we have an open discussion in the slot that would traditionally have the sermon. This is facilitated by the leader explaining that the idea is to hear each other's perspectives and enjoy having our view challenged and possibly re shaped or enlarged through the conversation. One of the other spinoffs of this is that it allows us to rehearse some of the conversations that we may have with work colleagues or friends who enquire about our faith.

It is interesting to note that God's creation turns out to be more than just a partnership within the Godhead. It is one that is extended to us. We are invited to continue this work as we steward the earth and in particular multiply our own kind. The model here is the same as the Trinity, with the basic family unit being father, mother and child.

As children in a family environment we learn by doing, as we join in with what is going on we learn through participation. learn by doing and I think most of us operate on that basis. If we are creating learning environments there needs to be as many opportunities as possible for people to 'do' through which they can then learn. This kind of learning leads to growth as it does with children, but seems to get filtered out as we become adults. Interesting that Jesus encourages us to become like children ⁽⁴⁾.

So whether it is an understanding of 'the priesthood of all believers' ⁽⁵⁾, the teaching on the Body of Christ from Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians, or the encouragement in Romans 12 for us to use our gifts effectively, I am committed to all of us contributing and growing. This principle influences many of the choices that are made in the leadership style at Network.

Creating an Atmosphere of Growth

One of our many challenges as leaders is to create an atmosphere of growth. We are committed to establishing and participating in an environment where people find it easy to 'have a go', to step out and as a result, be better equipped to discover and use their core gifts that have often been left totally undiscovered buried or underutilised.

What enables us to grow?

I have carried out some research over a number of years now, where I have asked the question in all sorts of different groups, 'what has enabled you to grow as a Christian?' The most common answers that I have received have been these:

Notes chapter 4

1. Matthew 16v18
2. Hebrews 10:25
3. 1 Corinthians 12:21
4. UCB Daily reading notes Aug 2010
5. Ephesians 4 v12

- 1) One to one relationships....
(Often expressed as someone who took an interest in me or believed in me)
- 2) Being part of a small group....
(These can be cells, prayer triplets or social action groups)
- 3) Facing life's challenges.....
(Often expressed as being thrown in the deep end or coping with a life crisis)

These answers give us very strong clues as to where our focus as a church should be if we are really interested in seeing people grow and develop and perhaps the role that leadership takes in enabling that growth.

What creates this environment? I believe there are a number of choices that I make as a leader in order to encourage this type of atmosphere:

Openness and Vulnerability

Many of us as leaders have travelled quite a distance in our own development. We often feel we need to defend our status and seldom take the opportunity to share in an open and vulnerable way what this has been like for us. So, as with many things in leadership, it starts with us. We need to be open and vulnerable by sharing our experiences of growth honestly, including the ups and especially the downs. I sometimes think we feel that this will make us less attractive and people won't be able to put their trust in us. In reality I think the reverse is normally true as people can identify with our struggles and the reality of our walk with God.

A culture of experimentation

We can all be hampered by the belief that we can't 'have a go' at something until we have got everything sorted. "I won't be able to help someone else until I have got my act together completely". Our theology sometimes does not help us here as we can view failure as sin. Perhaps

weakest and oldest geese can make the trip. They accomplish together what they could never accomplish separately. There's a lesson here: when the Bible says, 'Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another...' ⁽²⁾, it means, 'Stay in fellowship with one another, and enjoy the uplift it provides.' You're not called to fly solo. 'The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"' ⁽³⁾. Occasionally a goose strays off on its own but soon becomes exhausted, loses altitude and ultimately pulls wearily back into the formation. 'Look at the birds', and learn. ⁽⁴⁾

This is where cell groups really come into their own. These small group communities become places where people have space to use their gifts and not only use them but develop them. This works against a common mindset, and even training amongst leaders, which says that we need to create opportunities, usually meetings that we can lead in order to demonstrate our leadership. Leaders then get to practice their gifts and become skilled, rather than enabling others to contribute. To use Paul's language, we need to have environments 'that equip the saints for works of ministry' ⁽⁵⁾. I think of this a bit like learning to swim; mostly in the water having a go with coaching and some occasional theory. Our preference in church life is often the reverse, loads of theory but little opportunity to have a go and little if any coaching.

Ownership is created through participation

As leaders we are often good at coming up with ideas, vision and strategy we spend time thinking things through, working out how things can look in the future. We have a tendency to do this all in isolation or at best in our leadership teams and are then somewhat surprised when everyone else does not immediately own what we have come up with! A very wise church secretary in the Church that I grew up in recognised this fact and at every church meeting would repeat the whole story of any discussion topic and included all the information from the previous meeting letting people have their say and make their contribution to the process and eventual outcomes.

There is a great deal of intentionality that has to come into play to ensure that leadership enables shared ownership and creates safe places for people to contribute their thoughts and ideas. The default back to previous ways of thinking is very strong and this combined with people's expectations that you as leaders are always going to step in and take responsibility means that this whole area needs to be intentionally worked at and constantly reviewed.

I had coffee just the other day with a church leader who was looking at what he contributes to church life and had written a list of the things he did. On reflection he described his disappointment at the fact that the list did not express what he contributed. We then embarked on a conversation that highlighted the softer unseen components of his leadership which included his ability to create and hold a space where people felt safe to contribute, the fact that he was the holder of the values of the churches life. These unseen and often unspoken areas are vital but seldom recognised.

I was recently sent a section from the UCB Word for today which contains an illustration that has become quite popular but helps to highlight a number of points we have just been thinking about.

What's Good for the Goose?

Look at the birds in the sky!... Matthew 6:26

Speaking to an anxiety-ridden crowd, Jesus said, 'I tell you not to worry about your life... Look at the birds in the sky!' You say, 'What can I learn from looking at a bunch of birds?' If you've ever been to Pennsylvania in early winter, you'll have seen the skies literally darken as multitudes of Canadian geese gather for their annual flight to the sunny south. For the next few days let's look at their behaviour, and learn from it. Geese fly united; they don't fly separately, in random style, because no goose alone can go that distance. They're designed to fly in their characteristic 'V' formation. When a bird flaps its wings the air movement created provides an up lift, easing the workload of the bird behind it. Together, their flight range increases about 71 per cent. Even the youngest,

the Christian life has been about 'getting it right'. I am regularly challenged by the words 'go and lo I am with you' from Matthew ⁽⁶⁾. It is as we step out that we experience God with us. It's fair to say that we seldom get things right the first time we do it, so we need to create opportunities for 'having a go'. Cells are of course great incubators for people in this respect as they encourage and support participation in a safe space. As a regular member of a cell group I have been thrilled to see individuals tentatively have a go at leading part of our time together. The creativity that has been unleashed is breath taking as I have seen God use often quiet and reserved individuals who have simply been given permission to have a go.

A need for encouragement

I am constantly amazed what a little positive encouragement can do. It can enable someone to step out of their comfort zone and try something new. Giving words of genuine and specific encouragement needs to be a regular part of our relationships in order to build people up. 'Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing but encourage one another and all the more as you see the day of the lord coming' ⁽⁷⁾

Always looking for potential

Every time I meet with someone I find myself looking for their untapped potential. What is it that God sees in them that we have overlooked? I get a clue when I see what they get passionate or excited about; what brings them alive that is not yet being outworked in their life. I am looking for what is in the embryonic stage of development that just needs fanning into flame.

Sorting the issues

For many there are good reasons why they don't want to step out and grow. I want to encourage people so that they are prepared to put the work in and discover some of the obstacles to growth. Sometimes previous hurts and failures have not been dealt with well and we need to walk people through a healing process so they are willing to have another

go. This is one of the reasons we encourage people to go on retreat with Head to Heart ⁽⁸⁾ (a charity working through guided retreats to enable people to look at their stuck places) these times are so good at opening up the patterns of behaviour that we have developed that keep us stuck in cycles of responses to situations that stop us moving on in our lives. Giving space and guided time to see what is happening and have simple processes to help us change some of our unhelpful patterns has proved invaluable for many, including me!

The level of contribution is directly proportional to the level of growth we experience. I find that people are keen to share the areas they are growing in. The reality is that we are sharing the challenges that we face through what is often a very painful process of growth. This happens as part of small group (cell) life and has a regular space on our Sunday morning gatherings where whoever is leading takes the microphone to those who want to share.

Notes chapter 3

1. Mark Green from the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. licc.org.uk
2. Mere Christianity, CS Lewis, Collins
3. Genesis 1 v26
4. Matthew 18 v 3: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'
5. 1 Peter 2 v5
6. Matthew 28 v 19
7. Hebrews 10 v 25
8. Head to heart retreats headtoheart.org.uk

Chapter 4

Taking collective responsibility

Whose Church is this?

I decided many years ago as we planted a Church in Sussex that this was primarily God's job and not mine. Jesus says 'I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it' ⁽¹⁾. We all know this deep down but in reality can find it difficult to fully live in this truth as our everyday experience. Our language can show this. The church leaders can be given such lofty positions that it seems as if the church becomes 'theirs'. We hear people saying 'oh do you go to Trevor's church?' This does two things. Firstly, it reduces church in our thinking to something that one person can own. It might seem that 'church' can only be happening when this person says so or has made it happen. Secondly, it means that the responsibility for that church rests solely with this individual. In turn this means that collective responsibility for the health and life of the church community is minimised.

I believe that we have a collective responsibility to create our Christian community at Network. This belief influences the way I lead. It might seem that in some areas I am refusing to take the lead or responsibility. This is because I want to make space for others to participate in leading and to share the responsibility. Our leadership team is there to support and enable others to lead, take responsibility and make their contribution.

In reality this often means that as part of our leadership team conversations we have to ask ourselves if we are taking too much responsibility? We talk in terms of creating leadership vacuums as a way of checking this and constantly encourage others to take ownership of initiatives and ideas that they come up with rather than feeling that we need to make everything happen. A few years ago I specifically announced that I didn't want people to come and ask me permission to start something but to just go ahead and let me know that it was happening! The reality is that people still come and chat things through but the message went out loud and clear that this is not all about my preferences and desires.