

Core capacities for the minister as missional leader in the formation of a missional congregational culture. Part 1: Role of a minister.

This article describes the journey of a congregational minister in his or her search for the essence of missional leadership. The journey led to a research project for a PhD at the University of Pretoria under supervision of Prof Nelus Niemandt. The research was done against the context of huge paradigm shifts within society and missiology, described by the WCC as a 'changed landscape', and within the context of the South-African Partnership of Missional Churches (SAPMC). The goal of the partnership is to equip congregational leaders with the capacities necessary for the journey of spiritual discernment and faith formation. The research recognised the changes within congregational partners of the SAPMC and explored the importance and role of the congregational minister towards the successful transformation of congregational culture. It went on to identify the core capacities needed for the role and these are described in part 2 of the article which will be published in Spring 2015.

Journey towards Missional Leadership

My own journey^[1] as a leader in the church started February 1980 when I was ordained as a young pastor in an inner city congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. What an experience! Though I never challenged my own calling as a minister within the church, I found it hard from the very beginning to come to grips with the formal and institutional culture of the DRC of the eighties. Although lay members within the congregation were involved in all kinds of activities, ministry within the church was seen as solely the responsibility of the ordained minister. At the time a new movement came to life within the DRC, called 'Dinamiese Gemeentebou' (English: 'Dynamic Church Growth'), with a focus on the empowerment of lay members within the congregation. Needless to say, I immediately became involved. When this movement caught the attention of the Theological Faculty at the University of Stellenbosch, I was part of one of the first groups to enrol for a Magister Degree in Ministerial Practice,^[2] which I achieved in 1991. I thus became involved in a movement within the DRC which was deeply rooted in the Church Growth Movement of North America, with a strong focus on strategic planning and management. This movement had a huge influence in the DRC, and in many ways prepared the road for the formation of a new congregational culture.

The process of democratising in South-Africa since 1994 led to a radical new landscape in which local faith communities had to function. And for the first time the South-African community was opened up to the forces of global transition. The combined forces of these local and global transitions resulted in a growing marginalisation and 'disestablishment' of congregations within the DRC.^[3] Old ministerial practices were no longer relevant nor helpful. Desperate for a new style of leadership, I sought help from Jurgens Hendriks at the Theological Faculty of the University of Stellenbosch and for the first time was introduced to missional church. Through Jurgens and Frederick Marais, another colleague at Stellenbosch, I was introduced to the South

African Partnership of Missional Churches (SAPMC). Our own congregation became part of the three year journey of missional formation, and I very soon was trained as facilitator helping other leaders and congregations on their journey towards missional formation.

The SAPMC and Missional Leadership

The PMC (Partnership for Missional Church) process was developed by Pat Keifert and the Church Innovations Institute of North America (CII-NA), and has been contextualised by the SAPMC since 2004.[4] The goal of the CII-NA and SAPMC is described as: ‘...[To] build capacities in these congregations and judicatory bodies for the spiritual discernment of where they are, who they are, what God is doing in their midst, how God is sending them, and to whom God is sending the(m) [sic]’.[5] An analysis of the process followed by the SAPMC and key concepts within the SAPMC,[6] as well as the material used within the SAPMC,[7] confirms the *missio Dei* to be the fundamental point of departure for the understanding of missional church within the SAPMC.[8] The role of the church is to participate in God’s mission in the world and the whole of creation.[9] Missional church within the SAPMC therefore focuses on the formation of a Christian community around God’s mission in and for the world[10] within the congregation’s own context.[11] ‘The missional church is an incarnational movement sent to engage its context’.[12]

-

In South Africa more than 170 congregations were already part of the SAPMC in 2010,[13] and the number is still growing. Although there is a dropout in the region of 40% before completion of the three year journey, and congregations completing the journey are not to the same degree successful in the formation of a missional congregational culture,[14] fundamental changes are reported in some of these congregations.[15]

-

Current research values *leadership as the most important contributing factor* towards the formation of a missional congregational culture.[16]

-

The key to the formation of missional communities is their leadership...Leadership is a critical gift, provided by the Spirit because, as the Scripture demonstrates, fundamental change in any body of people requires leaders capable of transforming its life and being transformed themselves.[17]

Due to the historical role, authority and function of a minister in the church,[18] the contribution of the *congregational minister* within the leadership team is of key importance to the formation of a missional congregational culture.[19] If the pastor for some reason does not buy into the concept of missional church, or is not actively involved in the process, or is unwilling to develop a new leadership and pastoral style, or is unwilling or incapable of the complex and challenging journey of missional formation, the process is doomed beforehand. Missional formation requires a new style of authority, a new role, new capacities and a new lifestyle radically different from the traditional congregational minister. It is true to say that the missional transformation of the

congregation starts with the transformation of the minister.[20] The question therefore needs to be asked: What is the unique and critical role and function of the minister within a missional congregation and leadership team?

It is important to note that the understanding of leadership within the PMC differs radically from that of the dominant culture.[21] The South African experience is unfortunately one where many models for leadership in the church are deeply influenced by Christendom and modernism, and when evaluated from the perspective of missional formation, these models do not serve missional or apostolic leadership.[22] The focus of missional leadership is not in the first place on *strategic planning or management*, but on *cultivating* within the missional community the *capacities* needed for *spiritual discernment* and *formation*. [23] 'What is needed, is not the training of religious technicians, but the formation of spiritual leaders'. [24] Missional leadership requires new capacities and new paradigms. [25]

Within the field of missiology there is an explosion of literature on missional church and missional leadership. There is, however, a need for more empirical research to be done in the field of missional leadership and missional formation. This qualitative research project attempts to respond to the need. The purpose was to find useful empirical data on missional leadership, which may lead to a better understanding of the role of the congregational minister as missional leader, and therefore assist the development of the *process of missional formation*, as well as the *formation of congregational ministers into capable missional leaders*.

A qualitative research design was followed. [26] The population was set on ministers and empowered lay members within congregations in South Africa who have completed the three year process of the SAPMC between 2004 and 2010, and remained after completion for at least two more years focused on intentional missional formation. These congregations can be described as congregations where transformation from maintenance to 'missional' has developed and they provide a rich database to investigate aspects of missional leadership. Forty seven congregations and eighty ministers within six different denominations fell within this framework. Sampling was set on cluster leaders and facilitators of the SAPMC process within the identified population. Five more lay leaders were identified with the help of cluster leaders. The total of twenty two respondents (sixteen ministers and six lay leaders) proved to be representative of the different denominations, regions, ministers, lay leaders and genders within the population. These focus groups were interviewed in unstructured in-depth interviews, within a broader grounded theory model.

The Role and Function of the Minister as Missional Leader [27]

The minister as missional leader in essence can be described as a *cultivator of congregational culture*. [28] Niemandt refers to the missional leader as a 'cultural engineer'. [29]

The findings of the research data were clustered and the responses of the participants grouped in terms of clear themes, to enable the researchers to identify the most prominent functions of the minister/pastor. [30] Four different roles or functions for the minister as missional leader or

cultivator of a missional congregational culture were discerned from this research data:[31]

-

1. The Minister as Apostle

The congregational minister first and foremost lives and modulates the spirituality, values, practices, and habits of a missional lifestyle.[32] It is crucial that congregational ministers individually (and as a team):

- Undergo a 'missional conversion';
- Are themselves carried by a missional calling and vision;
- Discern for themselves their missional vocation and live a life in the presence of God;
- Practice spiritual disciplines themselves; and
- Are being formed in totality through Scripture as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The importance to live and modulate what a missional lifestyle in practice is all about, is continuously accentuated.[33] Niemandt,[34] along with Sweet,[35] see the identity of the church as discipleship. 'The best way to start a movement for the kingdom of God is to show what it means to follow Jesus'.[36] 'The place of leadership is to be at the front of the community, living out the implications and actions of the missional church of God, so all can see what it looks like to be the people of God'.[37]

-

2. The Minister as Theologian and Cultivator of Language

As theologian and preacher the congregational minister is responsible for cultivating the missional language and dream in such a way that the congregation buys into it and that it becomes part and parcel of the identity and ministry of the congregation.[38] As such the minister fulfils the following functions at the beginning of the process

Introducing the congregational leadership and members of the church council to missional church and the process of missional formation;

- Cultivating the concepts and language of missional church; and
- Providing the theological foundation of missional church.

Once the missional concepts are cultivated and a missional identity formed, the function of the congregational minister shifts towards being a *custodian* of the *missional calling and identity* of the congregation.[39] Congregational ministers confess to having to concentrate hard not to default to old leadership and ministry styles, and to continuously keep the leadership and congregation aligned and true to their missional calling and identity.

3. The Minister as Facilitator of the Process of Adaptive Cultural Change

The minister as missional leader facilitates the process of adaptive cultural change within the congregation.[40] Respondents make it quite clear that, because the SAPMC process must not be seen as a programme to be presented and managed within the congregation, the leadership role of the minister as missional leader radically differs from the traditional role attributed to the congregational minister. As facilitator of a process of adaptive cultural change the minister fulfils the following functions:[41]

-
- Commits to missional church himself and sets the challenge;
- Builds and empowers a coalition of leaders to take joint responsibility for the process;
- Cultivates the practices and habits necessary for the formation of a missional culture, such as dwelling in the Word, dwelling in the world, crossing boundaries, taking risks, welcoming strangers, and cultivating an environment for listening others into free speech and discussion;
- Keeps the leadership in the process of spiritual discernment; and
- Sees that the different congregational ministries and goals are integrated towards achieving the missional vocation, while at the same time ensuring that balance is maintained and current traditions and expectations are respected.

4. The Minister as Spiritual Director and Mentor

Respondents often mentioned a shift in the leadership role of the congregational minister from *organising* and *management* to, what they called, a '*spiritual leader*'. Concepts such as 'spiritual directing', 'empowering', 'mentoring', and 'coaching' are frequently used to describe the new role of the minister in missional formation.[42] The role of the minister as professional pastor or professional technician or professional manager is replaced by a focus on *spiritual leadership* and *spiritual formation*.

Spiritual leadership involves two aspects closely related to each other:[43]

-
- *Spiritual discernment* – The minister as spiritual leader himself possesses the ability to discern and to establish *spiritual discernment* as a practice amongst the leadership team and the congregation; and
- *Faith formation and discipleship* – The minister as spiritual leader himself lives a lifestyle of discipleship and focuses on the *spiritual coaching and formation of members* within the congregation towards Biblical formation and discipleship.

Current research continuously accentuates the importance of *discernment* as well as *faith*

formation and discipleship towards missional formation. Niemandt[44] sees *discernment* 'as the first and most decisive step on the journey towards missional renewal' and as a 'key aspect of missional leadership'. Discernment is closely related to what Scharmer[45] calls '*presencing*', a new collective leadership capacity needed to be able to lead from the future as it emerges.[46] *Faith formation and discipleship* are equally important towards missional renewal.[47] Hirsch[48] calls discipleship 'the most critical element in the mDNA mix', and 'the single most crucial factor that will in the end determine the quality of the whole – if we fail at this point then we must fail at all others'. 'Apostolic movements make this a core task, because when we really think about it, this is perhaps the most strategic of all of the church's various activities'.[49]

-

Although respondents agree with the above mentioned, it is clear that congregational ministers find the shift towards 'spiritual leadership' to be the most challenging of all.[50] It seems as if congregational ministers to some extent succeed in fulfilling the first three roles identified for the missional congregational minister, but find the shift towards spiritual director or mentor very difficult.[51] The challenge facing the pastor is twofold: 1) This shift requires capacities which historically were not part and parcel of the formation and training of the congregational minister. As one respondent puts it: 'It is a huge ask from us moulded differently'.[52] And one lay respondent reflects: 'They cannot do it, they don't know how'.[53] 2) Congregational ministers experience huge resistance from congregational members when traditional expectations of the church and the minister formed over many centuries, are not met by the minister. As already mentioned, lay respondents particularly see this as the biggest challenge for the continuous formation and sustainability of missional churches.[54] One lay respondent calls this a 'missional struggle' and reflects that more research and effort are needed to overcome this struggle and maintain the sustainability of missional communities.[55]

Conclusion

The minister plays a vital and important role in the missional transformation of a congregation. In this research four different roles for the minister as cultivator of a missional congregational culture were identified: that of apostle; the minister as theologian and cultivator of language; a facilitator of adaptive change and the minister as spiritual leader and mentor. The core capacities needed to fulfil these roles are described in part 2 of this research in a forthcoming issue.

[1] That is Gert Cordier's journey.

[2] MTh Bedieningspraktyk at the Theological Faculty of the University of Stellenbosch.

[3] H.J. Hendriks, *Studying Congregations in Africa*, (Wellington: Lux Verbi, 2004), 20.

[4] See Pat Keifert, "PMC Southern Africa at 5 years!" *Partners in Innovation*, 9, 4 (2009) http://www.churchinnovations.org/05_news/pii_v9_i4/pii_v9_i4_keifert_pmc_s_africa.html (Last accessed 29.8.11); and H.J. Hendriks, "Trauma and Conflict as Prerequisites for Identity Transformation: Lessons from the South African Partnership for Missional Churches," *Nederduits-Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif*, 50, 1 & 2 (2009) 109-119.

[5] PMC-NA August 2011, Cluster Event 1; SAPMC, *SAPMC Consultant's Manual: 2nd Ed.*, (Stellenbosch: Communitas, 2008) 27.

[6] G.S. Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite van die predikant as missionale leier in die vorming van ? missionale gemeentekultuur*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, (University of Pretoria, 2014) 36-52.

[7] Pat Keifert, *Ons is nou hier. ? Nuwe era van gestuur-wees. ? Missionale ontdekkingsreis*, (Wellington: Bybel-Media, 2007); Lois Y. Barrett (ed.), *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004); SAPMC, *Consultant's*

Manual; SAVGG, *Gemeentereisgids vir hul reis van geloofsonderskeiding: 2e Uitg.* (Stellenbosch: Communitas. 2008); SAVGG, *? Reisgids vir Gestuurde Leierskap*, (Stellenbosch: Communitas, 2009).

[8] Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite van die predikant as missionale leier*, 52.

[9] J. Swart, "What is Missional Church?," *Partners in Innovation*, 7, 2 (2007)
http://www.churchinnovations.org/05_news/pii_v7_i2/pii_v7_i2_swart.html (Last accessed 29.8.11).

[10] B. Armstrong, "Discovering God's Future by Discovering Our Partners," *Partners in Innovation*, 10, 5 (2010)
http://www.churchinnovations.org/05_news/pii_v10_i5/pii_v10_i5_armstrong.html (Last accessed 29.8.11).

[11] Swart, "What is Missional Church?"

[12] C.J.P. Niemandt, "Trends in Missional Ecclesiology," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 68, 1 (2012) Art. #1198, 9 pages.

[13] C.J.P. Niemandt, "Five Years of Missional Church: Reflections on Missional Ecclesiology," *Missionalia*, 38, 3 (2010a) 397-412.

[14] Cordier, *Kernkapsiteite van die predikant as missionale leier*, 163.

[15] Hendriks, "Trauma and Conflict as Prerequisites for Identity Transformation," 112; Keifert, "PMC Southern Africa at 5 years!,"; Cordier, *Kernkapsiteite van die predikant as missionale leier*, 167-186.

[16] Cordier, *Kernkapsiteite van die predikant as missionale leier*, 186-190; Keifert, *Ons is nou hier*, 86; Hendriks, "Trauma and Conflict as Prerequisites for Identity Transformation," 117; Barrett, *Treasure in Clay Jars*, x-xi

[17] D.L. Guder (ed.), *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998) 183.

[18] Guder, *Missional Church*, 190-198; A. Hirsch and T. Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practise for the 21st Century Church*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012) 3-26; G. Heitink, *Een kerk met karakter: Tijd voor heroriëntatie*, (Kampen: Kok. 2007) 163-165.

[19] J. Van Kooten and L. Barrett, "Missional Authority," in *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*, ed. Lois Y. Barrett (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004) 141-142; A.J. Roxburgh and F. Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006) 3-4; Guder, *Missional Church*, 183;

SAVGG, *Reisgids vir Gestuurde Leierskap*, ii-iii.

[20] L.J. Venter, *Dans met Triniteit. Missio Dei: ? Nuwe Ekklesiologies-hermeneutiese raamwerk vir die NG kerk in Parow*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, (University of Stellenbosch, 2010) 62-63.

[21] Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite van die predikant as missionale leier*, 92; Barrett, *Treasure in Clay Jars*, 139.

[22] C.J.P. Niemandt, *Nuwe leiers vir nuwe werklikhede: Insigte wat nodig is om die nuwe uitdagings in die kerk en die lewe te hanteer*, (Vereeniging: Christelike Uitgewersmaatskappy, 2013) 46.

[23] Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 92.

[24] E. Gibbs and I. Coffey, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in Christian Ministry*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001) 121.

[25] Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, (Wiley, 2006) 10-13.

[26] The sample was taken from congregations that participated in the SAPMC process, and the population was established with the help of the SAPMC and cluster leaders. Data generation was done by semi-structured in-depth interviews. Transcription was done and verified by the researcher. The following outline was used in the interviews: a broad discussion on missional congregations, followed by a discussion on the role of leadership and the pastor. The next theme was missional formation of the pastor, concluded with questions regarding the core-capacities of missional leaders. Coding and analysing of data was done with the help of ATLAS.ti.7. The process as well as findings were part of a PhD research project. See Cordier, *Kernkapsiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 157-165 for a detailed description of the theoretical foundation and research methodology.

[27]The full findings were published as Gert S Cordier, *Kernkapsiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier in die vorming van ? missionale gemeentekultuur*, (University of Pretoria, 2014), and are available at the library of the University of Pretoria. Only the key findings regarding the pastor as missional leader are reported here.

[28] Cordier, *Kernkapsiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 213; C. Van Gelder and D.J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011) 163-165.

[29] Niemandt, *Nuwe leiers vir nuwe werklikhede*, 132-137.

[30] As mentioned, coding and analysing of data was done with the help of ATLAS.ti.7

[31] Cordier, *Kernkapsiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 214-231.

[32] Cordier, *Kernkapsiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 214-215.

[33] Guder, *Missional Church*, 186; A. Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*, (Michigan: Brazos Press, 2006) 114-115; Gibbs and Coffey, *Church Next*, 192.

[34] Niemandt, *Nuwe leiers vir nuwe werklikhede*, 53.

[35] L. Sweet, *I am a Follower: The Way, Truth, and Life of Following Jesus*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012).

[36] Niemandt, *Nuwe leiers vir nuwe werklikhede*, 53.

[37] Van Kooten and Barrett, "Missional Authority," 148.

[38] Cordier, *Kernkapsiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 215-217.

[39]Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*,217-218.

[40]Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*,218.

[41]Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*,219-223.

[42]Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*,223.

[43]Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*,224-225.

[44] Niemandt, *Nuwe leiers vir nuwe werklikhede*, 71-72.

[45] C.O. Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading form the Future as it Emerges*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009.

[46] Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 126-150; L. Venter and H.J. Hendriks, *Geloofsonderskeiding: Moontlikhede van 'n interdissiplinêre reis*. Unpublished article, (Stellenbosch: Communitas, 2012).

[47] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 101-125; Niemandt, *Nuwe leiers vir nuwe werklikhede*, 31; A.B. Robinson, *Changing the Conversation: A Third Way for Congregations*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 27-29; Van Gelder and Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective*, 148-151; A. Hirsch and D. Ferguson, *On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011) 128-130.

[48] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 102.

[49] Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways*, 113.

[50] Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 205-208, 226, 236-239.

[51] Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 226.

[52] Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 225.

[53] Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 226.

[54] Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 205.

[55] Cordier, *Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier*, 206-207.