ABSTRACT: This article describes the results of a research project for a PhD at the University of Pretoria, under supervision of Prof Nelus Niemandt. The research was done against the backdrop of huge paradigm shifts within society and missiology and within the context of the South-African
Partnership of Missional Churches (SAPMC). The importance, role, and core capacities of the congregational minister towards the successful formation of a missional congregational culture were explored and identified. Part 1 (previous issue) described the importance and fourfold role of the minister as cultivator of a missional congregational culture, as identified by the research. This issue (Part 2) continues to describe the core capacities needed for the fulfillment of this fourfold role for the pastor as missional leader. It also describes the illustrative journey of a congregation within the SAPMC towards missional formation.

1. Journey towards Missional Formation

At the time of my[1] ordination as third pastor for the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) Randfontein-North[2] in 1995, the congregation was torn in two as result of a dispute between two previous congregational ministers. The fallout from this conflict was that negativity became part and parcel of congregational life, and members were constantly leaving. My job description was ‘Gemeentebou’ (English: ‘Church Growth’). I was, therefore, expected to facilitate the process of rebuilding relationships and ministries, as well as to assist with several outreach-programs. I obtained a Magister Degree in Ministerial Practice[3] at the University of Stellenbosch in 1991, and was therefore deemed qualified for the challenge.

The need for congregational change was widely accepted, and the desire for immediate results was communicated clearly by the lay leadership. The ‘Gemeentebou’ movement that was very popular at the time was deeply rooted in the Church Growth Movement of North-America, with (in South Africa) a strong focus on strategic planning and management. We embarked on a course to create a new congregational vision,[4] and by the end of 1997 vast organizational changes had been implemented in worship style, ministerial practices, and management. The results were positive. Internal relationships within the congregation improved; new members joined the congregation (mostly from other churches); a group of enthusiastic lay leaders had come to the fore; lay members were empowered to take responsibility for several aspects of ministry; and the congregation created several partnerships with missional organizations (these partnerships consisted mostly of the giving of financial support to missions far away). This model can best be described as ‘attractional’, and certainly was ‘successful’ in terms of management, finances, internal relationships, recruitment of new members, ministry, and a growing involvement with outreach programs.

Notwithstanding the ‘success’ of our chosen model, it became evident that the congregation (and the DRC as a whole) was struggling to find its calling within a new democratic South Africa. In many cases, members within the DRC viewed congregations as ‘safe spaces’, where things could remain more or less the same. Though quite a few of the previously advantaged South Africans did physically emigrate to Western countries, the majority emigrated emotionally inwards, and the DRC and its members tended to become disconnected from the larger surrounding community and its challenges. When the congregational leadership embarked on a new envisioning process in the early 2000’s, I was exposed to...
the ideas of missional church by Prof Jurgens Hendriks at the University of Stellenbosch. This introduction proved to be transformative in my own life, but also in the whole culture of the congregation.

This led to the formulation of a new vision in 2003: ‘A Sent Community. Faithful. Obedient. Spirit driven’. Soon afterwards, we were introduced to the South-African Partnership of Missional Churches (SAPMC), and became part of a new cluster for the Western region of Gauteng in August 2007. Although only four of the initial ten congregations completed the three year journey, our congregation was transformed on all levels of congregational life. A new language was introduced, with concepts such as ‘missio Dei’, ‘missional church’, ‘spiritual discernment’, ‘missional practices’, ‘spiritual formation’, ‘God-questions’, ‘bridge-communities’, and more became part of the new language of the congregation. New practices and habits were formed, such as ‘dwelling in the Word’, ‘dwelling in the world’, ‘plunging’, ‘welcoming the stranger’, and ‘to experiment and learn’. These new practices and habits cultivated within congregational leadership the capacities to listen and to discern, to cross boundaries and to take risks for the sake of the kingdom; to focus, to learn, and to mentor. The style and focus of leadership was transformed from planning and management to spiritual discernment and formation, and lay leaders were empowered. Bible reading, Sunday worship, and cell groups shifted from a focus on information towards a focus on spiritual formation – in order to equip members and leaders for participation in the missio Dei in their daily lives and practices. Bridge-communities between members of the congregation and members from the surrounding communities were established, and became partners for the empowerment of disadvantaged communities.

After completion of the three year journey with the SAPMC in 2010, the congregational leadership remained committed to the idea of missional church. This choice for a missional identity for the congregation was confirmed with a new vision statement. With a God-given focus on children within the congregation and community, new doors opened for inspiring partnerships between faith community, businesses, and the broader community. Within these partnerships inspiring work was done to create opportunities for kids of all races towards good education and a better quality of life, especially amongst the most disadvantaged communities. The empirical research on the core capacities necessary for the minister as missional leader, brought greater clarity on the role and capacities of missional leaders at all levels of congregational life, and enhanced the process of missional formation.

The journey thus far has been well worth the effort. The focus of the congregation has shifted from a focus on the life of the congregation towards a focus on God and his mission in our immediate context. The implication of this shift is that the division between church and community is becoming more and more of a dotted line.

Of course, some resistance does remain in the congregation. And there are always new challenges that await us, such as the broadening of the base of missional leadership and formation. All the more reason for a clear identification and understanding of the key role of the minister as missional leader and the core capacities needed to fulfill this role. These will be explored in the following part of this article.
2. Core Capacities for the Congregational Minister as Missional Leader

This article is based on the results of a research project done for a PhD under the supervision of Prof Nelus Niemandt at the University of Pretoria. As previously stated, the research was done against the backdrop of huge paradigm shift within society, the field of missiology, and within the context of the SAPMC.[12] Four different roles, or functions, for the minister as missional leader or cultivator of a missional congregational culture were identified and fully described in Part 1 of this article series: 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 focus of Part 2 is to continue on from this and to describe the core capacities needed to fulfill this fourfold role of the minister as missional leader.

As mentioned in Part 1, twenty two respondents were interviewed in semi-structured interviews within a broader grounded theory model. Although different sections of the interview framework were intended to assist in the identification of the core capacities for missional formation, the following question – asked specifically towards the end of the interview – was directly put to all respondents: ‘What, in your view, are the core capacities (i.e. knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits) necessary for a minister to successfully assist his/her congregation in the formation of a missional congregational culture and practice?’ The results are categorized and elaborated upon according to the fourfold function (or role) of the missional congregational minister.

2.1. The Minister as Apostle

Describing the congregational minister as ‘missional leader’ first of all defines the pastors’ calling and identity as participation in the missio Dei, which implies a lifestyle demonstrating the spirituality, values, and habits of being called and sent by God.[13] Sixty four percent of respondents identified the minister’s own journey with God and his/her own missional or apostolic formation as the first and most fundamental capacity necessary for the his/her role in the missional formation of the congregation. One respondent put it this way:

What happens to the minister on this journey, is what will happen to the congregation...You cannot give something to somebody else if you haven’t received it yourself. And I think it to be terribly true of this process. I would therefore argue the minister’s own journey with God to be one of the most fundamental factors crucial for the journey. If the shift doesn’t take place within the minister, you can try all the tricks in the book.[14]

Respondents identified different aspects of the building blocks (knowledge, skills, values, and habits) underlying this fundamental capacity.[15] The first building block is a grounded, clear, and internalized missional theology and calling. This involves more than mere intellectual acknowledgement of the missio Dei and missio ecclesia, but presupposes knowledge that is
internalized, and leads towards a new discovery of the self and a personal missional calling. The second building block is spiritual formation and discipleship. Personal submission to Christ and a deepening relationship with God the Trinity is the point of departure for the minister as missional leader. Helland and Hjalmarson argued that a missional spirituality is imperative during transformation.[16] In the transformation to a missional church, the minister is first and foremost disciple and follower of Christ. Sensitivity for the movements of the Holy Spirit and the cultivation of personal spiritual practices and disciplines are nonnegotiable. It is a spirituality that carefully balances the reality of the world with the reality of inner life.[17] This echoes the statement by the World Council of Churches in the new mission affirmation Together towards life:

Authentic Christian witness is not only in what we do in mission but how we live out our mission. The church in mission can only be sustained by spiritualities deeply rooted in the Trinity’s communion of love. Spirituality gives our lives their deepest meaning. It stimulates, motivates and gives dynamism to life’s journey.[18]

Another important aspect is personal integrity and self-knowledge. Respondents refer to the importance of honesty (i.e. ‘to be in touch with yourself’), integrity, accountability, and love as part and parcel of who the minister as disciple and missional leader is. These findings confirm the argument of Verstraeten for a self-awareness of leaders: leaders must learn to understand who they are and what they value.[19]

2.2. The Minister as Theologian and Cultivator of Language

As theologian, the minister as missional leader provides the theological foundation for the journey towards missional formation; while also always remaining a student, reflecting on the meaning of being missional. The minister also functions as a ‘missional conscience’, or ‘custodian’, constantly reminding the congregation of her missional identity and vocation. As the person primarily responsible for the preaching and interpersonal communication within the congregation, the minister is responsible for the establishment of 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 self-understanding of the congregation.[20]

The above mentioned role supposes three different capacities closely related to one another.[21] First of all, a missional Biblical hermeneutic – the capacity to unlock the Biblical message hermeneutically from a missional perspective. The second capacity is a coherent missional language – the capacity to be able to create a new language to give expression to the missional identity of the congregation. Roxburgh argued the case for the importance of a missional language, because we all live inside a particular story that tells how the world works and how we ought to live in it.[22] Missional transformation is dependent on the ability of leaders to tell an alternative story, because stories shape and create the identity of congregations, communities, and cultures.[23] Lastly, the pastor needs good, energetic, and enthusiastic
communication in order to be able to engage people - the capacity to communicate in such a way that the leadership and members of the congregation commit to the missional journey. Lay respondents use concepts such as ‘selling’ and ‘buying’ to stress the importance of communication skills that will convince people of and commit them to the missional journey.

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

The minister as missional leader facilitates the complex process of adaptive cultural change within the congregation. The building of capacities that enable the minister to be a skilled cultivator of culture are therefore of key importance. The importance of these capacities becomes evident when the church is seen as a complex organic system. Joubert argues:

The kingdom of God is a subversive, upside-down empire. It is a relationally driven, evolving environment in constant flux. It is complex, but not unintelligible or complicated...[25]

The empirical research underscores the importance of a cultivator of culture - the number of responses related to this category (almost fifty percent of all responses on core capacities) underlines the challenge of this transformation process. The capacities needed for this change together form a ‘cluster’ that will empower the minister on different levels for the complex journey of cultural change. [26]

The first cluster of capacities empowers the minister to handle complexity, uncertainty and change. This includes a deep conviction that missional formation is God’s will for the congregation, combined with a commitment to succeed with this transformation. Gibbs listed attitudes that are indispensable to manage complexity and included intellectual curiosity, a mindset that crises are normal, the idea that tensions can be promising and a conviction that complexity is fun.[27] The research amongst congregations confirms this and found that leaders needs openness, teachability, and the ability to change; as well as the ability to handle conflict, resistance, and criticism in a mature way. This is enhanced by the minister’s ability to persevere with patience.

The next cluster of capacities empowers the minister to transform and cultivate the congregational culture. This includes deep knowledge and understanding of existing cultures within the congregation, as well as the ability to understand and facilitate a process of adaptive change. This is undergirded by creativity and innovation – to be able to visualize and explore a new and alternative future. Innovation pushes leaders beyond the bounds of what can currently be envisioned and breaks the bonds of tradition to forge new solutions to complex problems.[28] Ministers must be able to maintain a balance between different groups, while also being able to integrate different interests and groups with one another. This boils down to ‘transformation credibility’ – the ability to earn the credibility to be trusted with the implementation of important changes.
The minister needs the capacity to cultivate missional practices and disciplines. This capacity to cultivate a missional or transformational spirituality includes the ability to cultivate and establish missional practices and habits, e.g. the practice of welcoming strangers. Welcoming strangers is the ability to enter into friendships and is thus dealing with the essence of human relationships. It creates opportunities to communicate the gospel to a world entangled in individualism. Ministers must also be able to cross boundaries[29] and to cultivate rituals of pilgrimage.[30]

Adaptive cultural change also entails the ability to experiment and take risks. Gibbs talks about the hunch that most risks are there not to be avoided but to be taken.[31] It is important to note that leadership empowerment must happen at all levels of the congregation to fully enable the journey of spiritual discernment and missional formation.[32]

2.4. The Minister as Spiritual Director and Mentor

We have already noted that ‘spiritual leadership’ involves two aspects closely related to one another: 1) The capacity to discern and to cultivate practices of discernment amongst congregational leaders and members. 2) The capacity to practice spiritual disciplines, and a focus on spiritual coaching and formation towards Biblical formation and discipleship.[33]

The research into missional congregations showed that the following capacities support discernment and the cultivation of practices of discernment: [34] First is the capacity to listen others into free speech. This refers to the skill of listening to others and articulating the insights. The second is the cultivation and facilitation of discerning processes in the congregation, which include the cultivation of four unique and related listening skills: to listen to God, to listen to the Word, to one another, and to the context.[35]

Spiritual leadership focuses on discipleship, spiritual coaching, and Biblical formation. This relates to the capacity to practice spiritual disciplines as part of a daily lifestyle, as well as the ability to teach it to others, and the capacity to identify the gifts of members and empower them to use those gifts towards the missional vocation of the congregation.[36]

Respondents accentuate that this new role implies the capacity to adopt a new style of authority. This implies the ability to lay down authority and the need to control, i.e. to ‘let go’, with the goal of cultivating an environment for lay ministry. Another issue is the ability to take up the new responsibility for the affirmation and empowerment of lay members for their new role within the faith community. A further ability is to integrate spiritual coaching and mentoring into every aspect of ministry: preaching and groups, as well as pastoral care.[37]

3. Discussion
Considerable changes were reported within congregations on their journey towards missional formation. The SAPMC process itself brought about some of the leadership capacities described. Perhaps the most inspiring aspect are the changes pastors experienced within themselves. Pastors were asked: How did participation in the journey transform your own person and ministry? Responses reflected deep and substantial changes ministers experienced in their relationship with God, towards the changing context surrounding them, and towards their experience of ministry.

Respondents reflected on the deep and substantial changes regarding their personal journey with and experience of God. They report a sense of awe when reflecting on this. As one put it: ‘Personally this journey surprise me again and again. I was rendered speechless and just could say ‘wow’! ... God just absolutely surprised us!’ And someone else reflects: ‘This changed me from a modernist explaining Scripture towards ‘n travelling companion with God being able to listen; someone who don’t have all the answers, but knows to expect God and knows that hope actually is in God.’

At the same time pastors reported that they had become much more aware of changes within their immediate context and were transformed from leaders with a desire to manage and control towards leaders able to embrace and handle uncertainty and change with hope and endurance. ‘A control freak who had to embrace uncertainty. I can’t tell you what shifts had to come within myself, my personality, and my journey with the Lord. The most important aspect of this journey is the ability of leaders to experience this as a journey on which God will bring you unto places you did not expect to be!’ This ability to handle change and uncertainty leads towards a reduction in levels of anxiety and a revitalized hope and stamina towards the road forward. One facilitator reflects: ‘He (the pastor) is kind of down and out. The congregation still is very fragile, but he himself has hope. And he has fire in his eyes!’ And another: ‘I think I am less nervous about things going wrong within the congregation. Former years I would take everything to bed, but I can honestly say that I am not that nervous anymore. Because I have learnt I am a very small gear within the coming of the Kingdom.’

Lastly respondents reported the experience of a new focus and passion within ministry. One respondent reflected on how the journey towards missional formation shifted his own focus towards the formation of the members of the congregation. ‘It changed me towards somebody who for the first time realised the importance of habits towards your own journey with the Lord and towards your own formation of faith. And for the first time I understood: this actually is the journey on which we must accompany members of the congregation. ... It is enormously fulfilling!’ In some instances respondents reported that contact with the SAPMC journey actually kept them from resigning ministry. ‘If it wasn’t for that..., I think I would have left the church. ... It had an unbelievable deep transformation in the whole of my theology and outlook on ministry, my own spirituality... I think it was kind of a second conversion... How many conversions do one have? But it was a conscious conversion, I think.’

Training

The findings of this research pose considerable challenges for the training of ministers by the denominations involved. The DRC adopted a new policy document that reflects many of the issues
raised in this research,[38] and recognized the importance of a re-imagined training of pastors. For example missional leadership is about understanding and describing God’s preferred future – leadership development will thus need to give special attention to eschatology. In addition theological training ought to attend to a theological understanding of discernment and must include training regarding ‘processes surrounding listening.’ The work of Scharmer[39] may provide a new appreciation for listening and presencing skills. There is also a need for skills regarding the nature of cultural change.

**Dwelling in the World**

One of the discernment practices that support the interaction with the local community is *Dwelling in the World*. Roxburgh describes this as the development of new eyes for your neighborhood. It is to see again with fresh eyes, *to wake up to the fresh and not-so-obvious ways God is present.*[40] Keifert says it is the habit of asking: *What in heaven’s name is going on here? What is God up to in this place and time?*[41] The DRC congregation Weltevreden starts many of the church leadership (church council) meetings by reading the local newspapers, and then sharing discussion in terms of two questions: *What is God up to? What does God want to do?* This practice has also been extended to small group meetings.

**Welcoming strangers**

Welcoming strangers has been described as the ability to enter into friendships and is thus dealing with the essence of human relationships. It creates opportunities to communicate the gospel to a world entangled in individualism. The DRC congregation Weltevreden[42] has implemented the following practice: There must always be a *stranger* in the core leadership team of the congregation. A *stranger* refers to a person who is a member of the congregation for less than a year. The idea is that such a *stranger* will make the leadership team aware of the experience of an outsider in the discernment processes of the leadership. The leadership team also invited non-Christians to participate in the yearly planning session of the congregational leadership, so as to be able to hear the voices of outsiders in regard to the witness, life and practice of the congregation.

4. **Concluding Remarks**

This research confirmed the importance of leadership towards missional formation. Within the leadership team the role of the congregational minister is of key importance for missional renewal and transformation. The study identified a fourfold role for the minister as cultivator of a missional congregational culture. We found that the capacities to empower the minister for his or her role as *apostle* (or disciple), *theologian and cultivator of language*, *facilitator of the process of adaptive cultural change*, and as *spiritual director or mentor*, are of key importance; and may be regarded as core capacities necessary for a congregational minister to successfully facilitate the formation of a missional congregational culture and practice. These capacities differ radically from those applicable to the
traditional ministry for which ministers in South Africa were mostly trained.

Part 1 of this paper is published under the title “Core Capacities for a Missional Leader in the Formation of a Missional Congregational Culture. Part 1: Role of a Minister.” Journal of Missional Practice, Spring 2015.

[1] This is Gert Cordier.
[2] A large congregation with close to 1 800 members in Gauteng, South Africa.
[4] The vision statement was formulated as: ‘Christ visible in us, so that the world may believe’ (Afrikaans: ‘Christus sigbaar in ons, sodat die wêreld kan glo’).

See also P. Keifert, We are here now. A new missional era, (Eagle: Allelon, 2006), 68-71.

[9] Dwelling in the World is a practice that focuses on the interactions - deliberate and spontaneous - of believers over a seven-day period with others (strangers and acquaintances). Its aim is to help believers discern that their everyday encounters with others are missional opportunities for conveying God’s peace to those with whom they interact. See also Keifert, We are here now, 74-79. See also Roxburgh’s description: Develop new eyes for your neighborhood in A.J. Roxburg, Missional. Joining God in the neighborhood, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 183.
Plunging refers to the practice of deliberately crossing a congregation’s cultural boundaries (which includes conceptual and geographical boundaries) to enter the world of those with whom members of the congregation do not ordinarily interact.

The missional vocation of the congregation was formulated as: ‘Sent together. To God’s open doors. With a heart for children’ (Afrikaans: ‘Saam gestuur. Na God se oop deure. Met ’n hart vir kinders.’).

See Part 1 of this article in the previous issue for a description of the research design and methodology.


Cordier, Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier, 261.

Cordier, Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier, 261-263.


[26] Cordier, Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier, 267–273.


[29] Roxburgh illustrates the crossing of boundaries by posing provocative questions such as: What if the period we are in is another one of those times when the boundary-breaking Spirit is pushing apart the settled, managed, and controlled ecclesiologies that came out of a specific period of European history with its nation-states and the emergence of its hegemony over the world? What if the great shifts of global populations, which have changed the face of continents, are all elements of this boundary-breaking work of the Spirit in our time? See A.J. Roxburgh, Missional, 114.


[32] Cordier, Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier, 271.

[33] Cordier, Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier, 273.

[34] Cordier, Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier, 274–276.


[36] Cordier, Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier, 276–278.

[37] Cordier, Kernkapasiteite vir die predikant as missionale leier, 278–279.

Core Capacities for the Minister as Missional Leader in the Formation of a Missional Congregational Culture. Part 2: Capacities and Conclusions.

By Gert S Cordier and Professor Cornelius JP Niemandt

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[40] Roxburgh, Missional, 183.

[41] Keifert, We are here now, 74.

[42] Prof. Nelus Niemandt is minister in the DRC congregation Weltevreden. See www.ngweltevreden.co.za

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CORE CAPACITIES FOR THE MINISTER AS MISSIONAL LEADER IN THE FORMATION OF A MISSIONAL CONGREGATIONAL CULTURE. PART 2: CAPACITIES AND CONCLUSIONS.
By Gert S Cordier and Professor Cornelius JP Niemandt
Journal of Missional Practice

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