LEADERSHIP IN EFFECTIVE AND GROWING AUSTRALIAN CONGREGATIONS: A STUDY OF THREE CASES
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Abstract:

This article reports on research into clergy leadership in three effective and growing Australian churches. Using qualitative methods a description of congregant's experience of their clergy leaders is developed and presented. The themes of realness, gender mix, equality, coaching, informing, example and rhetoric are identified and interpreted. From this interpretation a theory to explain the contribution of the leaders to the effectiveness and growth of the three churches is developed. Suggestions for further research based on this theory are made.

Introduction

Church attendance, as a percentage of population, is declining in Australia.[1] However, the National Church Life Survey (NCLS), which in 2006 involved 300,000 participants from 7,000 churches and nineteen denominations, has identified a number of churches that are growing. Some of these churches have large percentages of what the NCLS calls "newcomers"—those who have joined their church in the previous five years and had not previously attended a church.[2] These churches are "doubly effective" in the sense that not only

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[1] Phillip J. Hughes, "Are Australians 'Losing Their Religion?'" *Pointers: Bulletin of the Christian Research Association* 20, no. 2 (2010): 1-6.

[2] Sam Sterland et al., "Attracting and Integrating Newcomers into Church Life: Research in Four Countries," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 27, no. 1 (2006).

are they benefitting from a "circulation of the saints"[3] but they are growing by drawing people into church life who previously had no such engagement. As Sterland, et al. point out:

> Newcomers joining churches for the first time, or rejoining after an absence of years, are important to the future of the churches. In many respects they are a measure of the relevance of the churches beyond their own walls. For newcomers to become part of church life some relevant engagement between a church and the wider community has occurred. Rather than being simply a circulation of attenders between congregations, they represent a true addition to the total number of attenders within church life.[4]

Given that most churches have as a goal to be relevant and engage with the wider community and that many churches, especially evangelical ones, have the explicit goal of growth, these churches with high levels of newcomers may be considered effective.

Leadership has been identified as a factor in church effectiveness. Research based on the U.S. Congregational Survey of over 300,000 worshippers and 2,000 congregations has highlighted the importance of leadership in congregational strength.[5] Woolever and Bruce identified ten strengths that place congregations in the top 20% of strength and effectiveness. One of these strengths, identified as Empowering Congregational Leadership, includes the concepts of leaders taking the ideas of worshippers into account, a good match between the congregation and the leader, an inspiring leadership

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[3] Robin D. Perrin, Paul Kennedy, and Donald E. Miller, "Examining the Sources of Conservative Church Growth: Where Are the New Evangelical Movements Getting Their Numbers?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 1 (1997).

[4] Sam Sterland et al., "Attracting and Integrating Newcomers into Church Life: Research in Four Countries," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 27, no. 1 (2006): 40.

[5] Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *Beyond the Ordinary: Ten Strengths of U.S. Congregations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

style, and the leaders encouraging people in the church to find and use their gifts.

However, understanding the meaning that participants attached to the responses they made to these surveys is not possible simply through statistical research. Indeed, the language used in the survey questions limits the description of the reality to those words. In order to develop a deeper understanding of leadership in effective and growing congregations, a different research approach is necessary. As a result, a case study of three churches with high levels of newcomers was undertaken. In particular, the research focused on congregant's experience of the clergy leadership of their church. From these descriptions a deeper understanding of leadership in these church contexts emerged. The purpose of this article is to report on the findings of this research into leadership in effective and growing churches. It seeks to describe how congregants experience their leaders and, on the basis of this, develop a theory that explains the contribution of leadership to the effectiveness of these churches.

But before commencing this research, a review of the literature possibly related to church leadership behaviors was undertaken in order to construct a framework for investigating and understanding these behaviors and their impact.

Models of Church and Organizational Leadership

In seeking to understand leadership in these churches it is prudent to draw upon existing leadership research. However, there are many different leadership models from which to choose. Leadership paradigms—such as those of autocratic vs. democratic leadership, directive vs. participative leadership, and task vs. relationship oriented leadership—have dominated leadership research for the past 50 years.[6] In 1985 it was estimated that there were

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[6] Bruce J. Avolio and Bernard M. Bass, *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Manual* (Menlo Park, CA: Mind Garden, 2004).

over 850 definitions of leadership[7] and there are probably now even more concepts about what leadership is and what leadership does.[8]

Given the environment of this research—Australian churches—it was decided to initially focus on the constructs related to leadership developed by the NCLS because of its sensitivity to the context. The NCLS has statistically identified nine Core Qualities that contribute to the vitality of church life.[9] One of these is "empowering and inspiring leadership." The NCLS has contrasted three leadership styles in the survey: strongly directive leadership, leadership that inspires people to action, and leadership that allows other people to start most things. Of the three approaches, leadership that inspires people to action is the approach most statistically associated with church vitality. Leadership that places a high priority on encouraging others to find and use their gifts and skills (what the NCLS has called "Empowering Leadership") has also been related to church vitality.[10]

The use of the word "inspirational" by church attenders when describing their leaders suggests that the Transformational Leadership model would provide a lens to examine and build understanding about this behavior. This is due to its focus on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation and the use of the word "inspiration" in one of its components.

According to Burns,[11] the transforming approach to leadership creates change in people's perceptions and values, and changes their expectations and aspirations. Unlike the transactional approach, which is based on a "give and take" relationship, the leader's personality,

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[7] Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 4.

[8] Steve Echols, "Transformational/Servant Leadership: A Potential Synergism for an Inclusive Leadership Style," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 8, no. 2 (2009): 91.

[9] John Bellamy et al., *Enriching Church Life* (Adelaide: Openbook, 2006), 10.

[10] Peter Kaldor, Keith Castle, and Robert Dixon, *Connections for Life: Core Qualities to Foster in Your Church* (Adelaide: Openbook, 2002), 50.

[11] James M. Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

traits, and ability change their followers through example, articulation of an energizing vision, and challenging goals. Transforming leaders are idealized in the sense that they are a moral exemplar of working towards the benefit of the team, organization, and/or community.

Bass and Avolio developed Burns' ideas and developed the concept of Transformational Leadership.[12] The following have been identified as the distinct components of Transformational Leadership:

- Idealized influence. These leaders are admired, respected, and trusted.

- Inspirational motivation. Leaders behave in ways that motivate those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work.

- Intellectual stimulation. Leaders stimulate their followers to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways.

- Individualized consideration. Leaders pay attention to each individual's need for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor.

The Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was developed to expand and build upon the dimensions of leadership measured by previous leadership surveys.[13] The major leadership constructs used in the MLQ—Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and passive/avoidant leadership—address both the lower and higher order effects of leadership style. Because of its breadth of coverage—including Transformational Leadership—and frequency of use, the MLQ is a helpful tool to better understand the concept of inspiring leadership in churches.

The other leadership construct the NCLS has developed has been given the name "empowering leadership." Much has been written about empowering

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[12] A. Gregory Stone, Robert F. Russell, and Kathleen Patterson, "Transformational Versus Servant Leadership: A Difference in Leader Focus," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 25 no. 4 (2004).

[13] Avolio and Bass, 4.

leadership.[14] A popular model is that developed by Conger.[15] This model is used to inform the research process by alerting the researcher to possible empowering leadership behaviors. Another model is that of Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, and Drasgow.[16] Using an inductive and then empirical process, they identified five factors in empowering leadership: Coaching, Informing, Leading By Example, Showing Concern/Interacting with the Team, and Participative Decision-Making. They then developed an instrument, the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ), to measure each of these factors.

The social scientific literature on inspiring and empowering leadership provided a framework for developing a better understanding of the leadership behaviors reported in effective and growing churches. This literature influenced the Research Design, which is now described.

Research Design—Case Study

A constructivist epistemology and a methodology of case study provide the best approach to understand, describe, and interpret congregant's experience of clergy leadership at a deeper level. It also allows for a refined understanding of the meaning the respondents attach to various terms when they respond to empirical surveys such as the NCLS, the MLQ, and the ELQ.

Qualitative research methods have previously been used to gather information-rich data that contributes significantly to our knowledge of leadership processes.[17]

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[14] For a summary, see Robert P. Vecchio, Joseph E. Justin, and Craig L. Pearce, "Empowering Leadership: An Examination of Mediating Mechanisms within a Hierarchical Structure," *The Leadership Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (2010).

[15] Jay A. Conger, "Leadership: The Art of Empowering Others," *Academy of Management Executive* 3, no. 1 (1989).

[16] Josh A. Arnold et al., "The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire: The Construction and Validation of a New Scale for Measuring Leader Behaviors," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 21 (2000).

[17] Alan Bryman, "Qualitative Research on Leadership: A Critical but Appreciative Review," *The Leadership Quarterly* 15 (2004).

In fact, key paradigm shifts in the study of leadership have come from qualitative studies.[18] Because it is a dynamic process, qualitative research methods can add depth and richness that is lacking in data gleaned from mass surveys. Further, because leadership is considered by some researchers and theories to be a socially constructed role, qualitative methods can aid in understanding the construct from multiple perspectives.

The use of case study methodology is not without criticism. A weakness of the case study methodology is that the findings cannot be generalized—at least not in a simplistic fashion. However, carefully chosen experiments, cases, and experience have contributed significantly to knowledge. For example, they were critical to the development of the physics of Newton, Einstein, and Bohr. Similarly, in social science the strategic choice of cases, as in this research, can do much to develop knowledge and new theory.[19]

The cases for this research were three churches with relatively high percentages of newcomers (people who had attended the church for less than five years and had never attended a church before). The NCLS wrote to the fifty churches in Australia with the highest percentages of newcomers in 2006, requesting them to be involved in this research. Eight churches responded to the request and three were chosen on the basis of their geographical, demographic, and denominational diversity. The three churches studied each had over 30% newcomers and were either moderately or well above average in terms of the NCLS Core Qualities which contribute to the vitality of church life. EACH had also grown significantly in the period before and after the 2006 survey. The churches, studied during 2009, were:

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[18] Jay A. Conger and G. Toegel, "A Story of Missed Opportunities," in *Grounding Leadership Theory and Research*, ed. K.W. Perry and J.R. Meindl (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2002).
[19] Bent Flyvbjerg, "Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (2006).

- A Salvation Army church in regional Victoria composed of about 120 adults
- An Anglican (Episcopal) church in the western suburbs of Sydney composed of about 500 adults
- A Pentecostal church on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland composed of about 500 adults

These churches represented three quite distinct demographics. The Salvation Army church was in a depressed rural region with much social dislocation. In contrast, the Anglican church was in an upper middle-class area where there was a high percentage of nuclear families. The Pentecostal church was in an area dominated by nuclear families and retirees. The fact that all three churches were evangelical is acknowledged. However, no churches of non-evangelical traditions responded or satisfied the growth criteria. Nevertheless, the theological, demographic, and geographic diversity of the cases should also be noted.

Given that the NCLS data was collected in 2006, it was necessary to confirm that there had not been any major changes (for example, the exit of senior clergy or major conflict) in the life of the church in the intervening years which would have dramatically changed the qualities of the church. Enquiries confirmed that all three churches had been stable during the last five years.

During the three case studies, multiple research methods were used to understand the phenomena and triangulate findings. Interviews, three focus groups, observation over three days or more, and a questionnaire were used in each case study. This enabled the development of an holistic and contextual portrayal of the real life situations.

The participants from within each church were drawn from four major groups: the staff (including the Senior Clergy Leader), lay leaders, attenders, and newcomers (who have attended for less than five years). Over one hundred people from these churches participated in the research in some way.

During data gathering, the primary question was: "How do you experience the leadership of this church?" This open question allowed the participants to respond without any influence from the researcher. Questions informed by the literature review were only used subsequently to stimulate further discussion in the focus groups and interviews with leaders. The researcher interrupted only to verify emerging understandings and themes.

The in-depth interviews and interactions in the focus groups were recorded and transcribed. The raw data was prepared for further analysis by organizing it into categories (nodes) using a coding system. The large amount of data generated by the focus groups was managed with the assistance of NVIVO computer software. Using this tool, analysis was undertaken to identify themes and recurring patterns of meaning embedded in the data.

The anonymous closed question questionnaire was used with the lay leaders, attenders, and newcomers after they participated in the interviews and focus groups. The questionnaire incorporated the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ), and the NCLS questions related to inspiring leadership, empowering leadership, and the extent to which leaders took church attenders' ideas into account.

The questionnaire component of the research provided a distinctly different format for data collection from the verbal and spontaneous methods of interview or focus group. It gave the participants the opportunity to reflect upon the discussions in the focus group and integrate that reflection into the data they offered in the questionnaire, thus enhancing understanding of the phenomena being examined. It also provided them with a previously developed language to reflect upon and describe their experience of leadership in the church. The relative frequency of the phrases they most strongly agreed with when describing their leaders served to

demonstrate which aspects of the leader's behaviors had the biggest impact on the participants.

Initially, the tentative grasp of emerging themes from the focus groups was confirmed and refined through further interaction with the participants during each case study. Triangulation was achieved by reference to observations made by the researcher, interviews with leaders, and the questionnaires. Reflection, informed by the literature review, enabled the evolution of a more sophisticated understanding of the phenomena which incorporated the language of the focus groups and interviews but also utilized other findings, language, and concepts. The meanings derived from the first case study were verified, refined, or rejected by findings from the subsequent case studies. A number of factors related to leadership in these vital and growing churches emerged from this process and form the basis of the Findings and Discussion.

Findings

The findings from the focus groups related to the question, "How do you experience the clergy leaders of this church?" are summarized in Table 1. The questionnaire (n=89) contained of eighty-five items related to leadership: three NCLS questions, the thirty-seven items of the ELQ, and the forty-five items of the MLQ.

Table 1: Categories and Themes Related to Leadership Emerging From Focus Groups

Salvation Army	Anglican	Pentecostal
Leaders like us too (RL)	Leaders informal (RL)	Leaders like us (RL)
Leaders real (RL)	Leaders authentic (RL)	Leaders real (RL)
Leaders humble (RL)		
Leaders show care and concern (CL)	Leaders care (CL)	Leaders know us (CL)
Leaders support (CL)		Leaders willing to listen (CL)
Leaders relate to all ages (CL)		
Leaders empower (EL)	Ministers approachable (EL)	Leaders support when we fail (EL)
Leaders help us grow (EL)		Volunteers honored and needed (EL)
Leaders help us find and use our gifts (EL)		
Leaders inspire (IL)	Leaders give outward focus (IL)	Leaders inspire and encourage (IL)
Leaders challenge (IL)	Leaders work hard (IL)	Leaders impart vision (IL)
Leaders energetic and enthusiastic (IL)	Leaders lead by example (IL)	Leaders challenge and hold accountable (IL)
Leaders set example (IL)		Leaders have integrity (IL)
		Leaders love or sacrifice for church (IL)
		Church is his family (IL)
Husband wife team effective (TL)	Husband wife team effective (TL)	Husband wife team effective (TL)

The categories were allocated to emerging themes, coded as follows:

    RL = Real Leaders
    CL = Caring Leaders
    EL = Empowering Leaders
    IL = Inspiring Leaders
    TL = Husband/wife Team effective

The fifteen most strongly affirmed of the eighty-five statements related to leadership in the questionnaire are presented in Table 2. The instrument from which the statement was derived and the particular factor it is related to are also presented:

Table 2: Most Strongly Affirmed Statements about Leadership

Statement	Level of Agreement	Instrument-Factor
The leader works as hard as he/she can.	76.4% strongly agreed	ELQ - Leads by Example
The leader leads a group that is effective.	75.3% said frequently if not always	MLQ - Effectiveness
The leader leads by example.	75.3% strongly agreed	ELQ - Leads by Example
The leader sets a good example in the way he/she behaves.	75.3% strongly agreed	ELQ - Leads by Example
The leader works as hard as anyone in the church.	74.2% strongly agreed	ELQ - Leads by Example
The leader treats church members as equals.	71.9% strongly agreed	ELQ - Showing Concern
The leaders take into account the ideas of the people.	70.8% said to a great extent	NCLS
The leader talks optimistically about the future.	69.7% said frequently if not always	MLQ - Inspirational Motivation
Leaders encourage me to find and use my gifts and skills.	68.5% said to a great extent	NCLS - Empowering Leadership
The leader articulates a compelling vision for the future.	68.5% said frequently if not always	MLQ - Inspirational Motivation
Leaders help our church focus on goals.	68.5% strongly agreed	ELQ - Coaching
The leader sets high standards for performance by his/her own behavior	67.4% strongly agreed	ELQ - Leads by Example
The leader shows concern about church member's well-being.	67.4% strongly agreed	ELQ - Showing Concern
The Leader provides help to church members.	66.3% strongly agreed	ELQ - Coaching
Leaders here inspire me to action.	61.8% strongly agreed	NCLS - Inspiring Leadership

By taking the emerging themes from the focus groups, interviews, questionnaire, and observation and triangulating the findings, the following emerged as the salient leadership factors in the followers' experience of the leaders in these vital churches:

- Realness
- Caring/showing concern
- Husband-wife teams
- Leadership by example
- Empowerment through coaching and taking ideas into account.
- Inspiration by rhetoric.

They are discussed below in light of the literature and theological reflections.

Discussion of Findings

These churches can be considered effective because, as evangelical churches, they have achieved their goal of growing significantly through the integration of non-church people into their congregations. They also consider themselves effective as reflected by the high level of affirmation of the statement: "The leader leads a group that is effective." Given that leadership has been identified as a factor in church effectiveness and growth, this section will discuss the findings related to leadership in these churches.

Realness

"They are real people and they share their lives."

"They are not plastic."

When asked about their clergy leaders, "realness" was the first response in many of the groups. Attenders and newcomers at these vital and growing churches experience the leaders of the church as "real" people—just like them. "They don't have a Sunday face." This experience is in contrast to the real or perceived nature of clergy in other churches. Newcomers described perceptions of other clergy as unapproachable in contrast

to the highly approachable nature of the leaders in the strong and growing churches.

This realness is created by the openness of the leaders to describe their own weaknesses and struggles. "Just their own lives, their own stories, they are very, very real people." It is enhanced by the strong commitment of the leaders to be personally involved in the lives of many people in their churches, even if the churches are quite large. Despite this realness, or probably because of it, the leaders of these vital and growing churches are held in high esteem by regular attenders and newcomers alike.

The leader's honest transparency is a key component in building this realness. This transparency is only possible through humility. In order to appear real, leaders must be willing to acknowledge their weaknesses and struggles. It is not surprising, then, that attenders experience the leaders as humble people: "[They are] in no way puffed up about themselves. They are very humble." This humility is a component of the biblical model of servanthood:

> Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Phil. 2:5-8)

Honest acknowledgement of personal struggles is sometimes seen as weakness and counterproductive. Yet humility is true strength, and enables leaders to be real.

The realness of these leaders also serves another purpose. A precondition of effective role modeling and of generating viable vision is that leaders need to be knowledgeable about the realities of life for those served.[20] Leaders must be seen to be broken and human

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[20] Milbrey W. McLaughlin and Shirley Brice Heath, "Casting the Self: Frames for Identity and Dilemmas for Policy," in *Identity and Inner-City Youth*, ed. M. W. McLaughlin and S. B. Heath (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993).

as well, or their examples and encouragements to invitation and service are hollow. Church leaders can only be inspirational role-model leaders if they are first seen to be human. In order for this perception to develop the leaders must also be open and humble to share their weaknesses and struggles.

Of course, the apparent relationship of this described "realness" to the construct of Authentic Leadership must also be recognized. George[21] popularized Authentic Leadership in the general community as did Luthans and Avolio[22] for the academic community. Authentic leadership includes consideration of the leader, follower, and the context. There appears to be general agreement on four factors that cover the components of Authentic Leadership:[23] balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness. Relational transparency refers to presenting one's authentic self through openly sharing information and feelings as appropriate for situations. The realness reported by the participants in this research would seem to reflect this aspect, especially of Authentic Leadership. There is scope for future research on the other aspects of Authentic Leadership in the congregational setting.

Caring/Showing Concern

"They never rush you to think that they haven't got time to talk."

"The first day we came [to this church] we had three out of the four ministers come and say hello and K came up and said hello as well. And J and K came and spent

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[21] Bill George, *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

[22] Fred Luthans and Bruce J. Avolio, "Authentic Leadership: A Positive Developmental Approach," in *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*, ed. K.S. Cameron, J.E. Dutton, and R.E. Quinn (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2003).

[23] Bruce J. Avolio, Fred O. Walumbwa, and Todd J. Weber, "Leadership: Current Theories, Research, and Future Directions," *Annual Review of Psychology* 60 (2009): 424.

quite a lot of time with us finding out who we are and where we were from."

This research indicates that members of these vital and growing churches have a strong sense of being cared for by the clergy leadership, even if the church is quite large. The leaders at all three churches were observed by the focus groups and the researcher to have meaningful personal relationships with a very large number of attenders.

Two of the ELQ statements related to the "Showing Concern" factor were strongly affirmed: "The leader treats church members as equals" and "The leader shows concern about church member's well-being." Showing Concern refers to the ability of leaders to demonstrate a general regard for members' wellbeing and taking time to discuss their concerns. They reflect the pastoral injunction to "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers" (1 Pet. 5:2).

Whether this is a natural gifting or something that they deliberately work on, the outcome is that most people in the church have a meaningful connection with the leader, believing the leader cares about them as people rather than as means to an end.

It would be possible for a church leader to rationalize that the size of their church makes it impossible to know many people in the church at a significant level and so they do not attempt it. However, in order to be able to lead effectively, as these leaders in effective and growing churches are doing, leaders need to recognize the importance of having meaningful relationships with a large number of people in the church. By meaningful, this does not mean hours of investment in each person, but the remembering of names, some personal circumstances and details of the attender, physical contact and a smile. This seems to be sufficient to communicate care to the attender and this experience is extremely significant in their lives.

In the same way that realness allows for effective leadership, this expression of personal care creates the environment where the leader can influence church

attenders. Until people know leaders care, they don't care what leaders know. When they know that the leader cares for them personally they are more open to accept advice and guidance and to make personal sacrifices.

The caring quality of these leaders is congruent with the theory of Servant Leadership. Robert K. Greenleaf is credited with initiating the Servant Leadership concept.[24] In Greenleaf's opinion, the focus of Servant Leadership is to serve and meet the needs of others, which optimally should be the prime motivation for leadership. Speers, after some years of considering Greenleaf's original writings, concluded servant leaders are essentially *caring* leaders[25] who demonstrate ten characteristics of effective, caring leadership: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Further research in a congregational setting would demonstrate whether it is these servant leadership behaviors which create a sense of care in strong churches.

Husband-Wife Teams

"An outstanding partnership—I have never seen anything like it, between a Minister and his wife."

"There are not many pastors that work together as a team so well."

The wives of the clergyman in the three strong and growing churches all had a very high profile in the life of the church.

In the Salvation Army church, the woman has the status of "Officer" although the man is recognized as the "Senior" Officer. But there is a widespread perception in the church that this is a team effort and ministry of the wife is fully validated and recognized by the church.

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[24] A. Gregory Stone, Robert F. Russell, and Kathleen Patterson, "Transformational Versus Servant Leadership: A Difference in Leader Focus," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 25 no. 4 (2004).
[25] Larry C. Spears, "Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders," *The Journal of Virtues & Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2010).

Even though the Sydney Anglicans do not ordain women or grant them authority to be official leaders of the church, clearly the wife of the Anglican minister exercises powerful leadership in the church. Not only does she lead a group of 70 women in a mid-week Bible study but many in the church recognize that she has not only a contributory role, but a leadership role in the church, albeit only informally.

Again at the Pentecostal church, even though they hold to "male headship" of family and church, the Senior Pastor's wife also carries the title "Pastor" and is clearly a very high-profile leader in the church. She appears next to her husband in most of the promotional material of the church, plays a significant role in church worship, and is held in equally high esteem as her husband throughout the church.

It has been asserted that the sustainability of community in fundamentalist churches depends on the acceptance of male authority and rigid conceptions of gender roles.[26] According to this view, as much as the weekly church services work to reinforce community relations, they are simultaneously rituals of patriarchal display. The ideology of domesticity is acted out and reinforced in a way that is no longer possible in the world outside the church.

However, women in these strong and growing churches have powerful, but sometimes less visible, influence. The women-only activities in churches create and sustain a "parallel world"[27] within the organization where women exercise leadership and are able to alter the patterns of congregational life. Women leaders in these vital and growing churches play a significant leadership function, especially with women, but sometimes with men as well.

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[26] Amy Johnson Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[27] Brenda Brasher, *Godly Women: Fundamentalism and Female Power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutger University Press, 1998).

Even though all three churches have theologically conservative positions relating to the role of women in leadership, all three, whether formally or informally, benefit not only from having a female role model to complement her husband, but from the individual leadership of the women. Though these churches have not officially placed the women leaders in the senior leadership role, as some denominations have, they have enabled the women to lead powerfully and effectively within the existing structures of the church. The lesson to be learned may well be that the issue is not female leadership or male leadership, but team leadership.

Leadership by Example

"I think they are great examples of selfless people. They are forever putting others before themselves. I think that is a great model to follow within the church. To be so God-focused. I couldn't ask for better leaders in the church."

"They love the church. They live and would die for the church."

The first ELQ factor, Leading by Example, emerged as particularly important. The example of the leaders was often cited in the focus groups as a strong motivator for participants. Setting an example of hard work emerged as particularly significant. The statements, "The leader works as hard as he/she can" and "The leader leads by example," were among the most strongly affirmed statements in the questionnaires. Participants told stories of how the leaders themselves had been, and still were, directly involved in leading people to become Christians and involving them in the church. All three leaders set an example in their community involvement and efforts to invite non-Christians to attend church.

Given that the leading by example factor of the ELQ was so strongly affirmed by the participants, it seems reasonable to conclude that this is the key element of empowering leadership in these churches. Although the leaders in these churches are inspiring orators, it is in actually "living out" their teaching that they empower

their followers and move them into action. Referring again to 1 Peter, these leaders do not motivate by "lording it over those entrusted to you, but by being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3).

Of course, the attenders do not know for sure whether the leader does work hard, as many would only see him for a couple of hours per week. However, the clear perception is that they do. This perception is generated by the stories of their own evangelistic activities and their personal involvement in outreach events. Whether the church leaders consciously foster this perception or not, the outcome is the same.

Empowerment Through Coaching and Taking Ideas into Account

"They believe everybody has a gift. They're here to help us find what that gift is and to help us develop it and use it. It doesn't matter what the gift is."

Two of the statements related to the ELQ factor of Coaching were also strongly affirmed: "Helps our church focus on our goals" and "Provides help to church members." According to the ELQ model, Coaching refers to a set of behaviors that educate team members and help them to become self-reliant. While expressions of value from the leader may empower the follower psychologically, practical skills are also needed for full empowerment.

This finding provides an important insight into the NCLS construct of empowering leadership. It explains how these empowering leaders are able to encourage the attenders "to find and use their gifts and skills." Explaining how their ministry fits into the goals of the church and helping members become self reliant are the essence of this empowering leadership activity. Casting vision is an important part of leadership, but equally important is showing followers how they can contribute to the fulfillment of the vision and equipping them to be able to do it.

The leaders also demonstrate a second ELQ factor—Participative Decision-Making. The statement: "The leaders take into account the ideas of the people to a

great extent" was strongly affirmed in each church. When asked about their experience of being part of their church, the focus groups identified an experience of egalitarianism and informality. This communicates to the attender that they are competent and valued and so gives them confidence to participate in the activities of the church. When attenders perceive themselves to have an equal value and an equal part to play in the life of the church as others, their sense of empowerment is enhanced.

These churches are not democratic—they are hierarchical or lead by a non-elected board. However, the leaders are able to create the perception that they personally value the ideas of all attenders in the decision-making process. Members believe that the leaders take their ideas into account to a large extent.

The leaders are psychologically empowering to the congregants in another way. The statement, "The leader frequently if not always leads a group that is effective," was strongly affirmed. Yet, despite the apparent "success" of the leaders in their personal lives and evangelism, they are also "just like the rest of us," thus providing hope that each member in the church can be as successful as the leaders.

It was also observed that the leaders demonstrate the empowering leadership through their language, as described by Conger.[28] They provide a positive emotional atmosphere through speaking positively about the future and through their example of enthusiasm for the cause. They also reward through encouraging and visible ways, the prime example being the "Unsung Hero Awards" at the Pentecostal church. The award winners received some gifts from the church in recognition of their service, but equally important was the opportunity to have a photograph taken with the Senior Pastors. Hence, the leaders empower by allowing relatively close contact to themselves, as those in authority, and expressing approval from that position.

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[28] Conger, 17-24.

These leaders also express their confidence in people during sermons, meetings, and casually. "I think they just believe in you. If you make a mistake they do not walk away…" "But now I am doing things I thought I could never do, but I can. So he just has that gift of inspiring you and challenging you." They persuade people that they possess the capabilities to master given tasks and so promote greater sustained effort. The focus groups confirmed that the leaders foster initiative and responsibility. People in these churches feel free to make suggestions and fail. Participation in meetings and decisions, appropriate resources, and network-forming opportunities are all present in these churches. Finally, these leaders build on success. They use the success of the church, and individuals in it, to empower others to strive for success as well.

These churches reflect the idea that "It was [God] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:11-12). The clergy leaders serve the other members of the body through empowering (preparing) them for works of service, for the building up of the entire body.

Inspiration by Rhetoric

The leaders of all three churches were also frequently identified as being imparters of vision. Of the forty-five questions in the MLQ, some of the highest-scoring questions related to vision. The MLQ revealed that the leaders of these vital and growing churches frequently, if not always, "talk optimistically about the future." They also "articulate a compelling vision for the future." The leaders in these churches enunciate powerful visions of the future which motivate and inspire the attenders to greater levels of outreach and service.

As suggested by this finding, the leaders in these churches, both male and female, are outstanding

communicators. They "frame"[29] the organization's purpose with accompanying values and beliefs in such a way that it is an appealing and motivating force for change and transformation. Then they use symbolic language ("rhetorical crafting") to give emotional power to his or her message (for example, the motto at one church was, "Storming the Fortresses of Darkness.") While the message provides a sense of direction, rhetoric heightens its motivational appeal and determines whether it will be sufficiently memorable to influence day-to-day decision-making. While the leader's message is critical, the process by which it is communicated appears to be just as significant.

Being forward-looking is important for leadership. Leaders are expected to have a sense of direction and a vision of the future. People are unwilling to commit themselves to an organization where the leaders do not have a clear idea of where it is going. The followers' perceptions of self-efficacy or confidence, as well as their developmental potential, are enhanced through the confidence expressed in them by their leaders. The leaders also motivate followers to transcend their own immediate self-interest for the sake of the mission and vision of the organization.

Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to report on the findings of research into clergy leadership in effective and growing churches. It sought to describe how congregants experienced their leaders and on the basis of this, develop a theory of leadership that explains the contribution of leadership to the effectiveness of these churches.
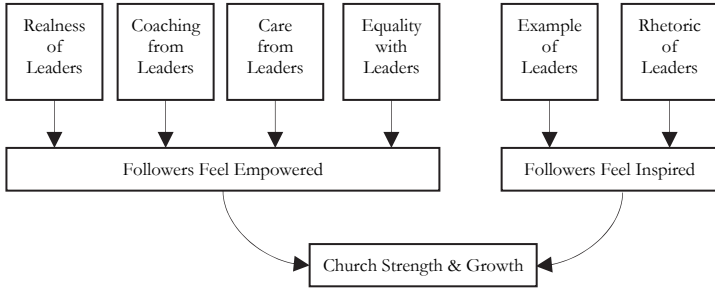
As discussed, the clergy leaders in these churches are experienced as real people who truly care for their followers. They are part of husband/wife teams where the wife has exercised a significant ministry in the life of the church and provided a female role model to complement her husband. The leaders have empowered

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[29] Conger, 17-24.

their followers through their treatment of them as equals, through explanation of how they contribute to the goals of the church and through equipping them for ministry. The leaders have inspired by example and speaking eloquently, optimistically, and compellingly about the future.

On the basis of these described experiences, it is possible to develop a theory which explains the role of leadership in these effective and growing churches. In order for an organization to be effective it must have a strategy and then mobilize resources to implement the strategy. Each of these churches had a successful strategy for growth. However, the role of the leaders in the success was not only in the design of the strategy but in the inspiration and empowerment of the congregants to implement it. The congregant's experience of the leaders informs a theory of how this happens.

The realness of the leaders in these churches communicates to the followers that the leaders are just like them—with limitations, weaknesses, and struggles. Yet, simultaneously the followers believe that the leaders are highly effective, as reflected by their response to the MLQ Effectiveness item (see Table 1). This means that the follower can reasonably aspire to be as successful as the leader, whether they are male or female. When the leader affirms this through his/her care for the followers, through expressing their equality and through helping them to identify and use their skills, they are empowered towards the achievement of organizational strategies and goals. The leader's example of hard work and use of rhetoric provide further inspiration towards the achievement of these goals. As individuals and the church attain these goals the church develops strength and grows.

Realness of Leaders	Coaching from Leaders	Care from Leaders	Equality with Leaders		Example of Leaders	Rhetoric of Leaders

Followers Feel Empowered	Followers Feel Inspired

Church Strength & Growth

This theory cannot be simplistically generalized. However, the contextually specific findings suggest a model of leadership in effective and successful congregations. The theory can now inform more rigorous empirical research on leadership in effective churches.

It should also be noted that the case study of these churches has highlighted the interrelatedness of models of leadership. This research has shown that the leadership behaviors demonstrated in this context strongly reflect elements of different popular models of leadership, but no single model adequately describes all the phenomenon.

Table 3: Factors/Components of Leadership Theories Demonstrated by Leaders in Case Studies

Leadership Theory	Trans-formational Leadership	Empowering Leadership (ELQ)	Authentic Leadership	Servant Leadership
Factor/Component demonstrated in this context	Inspirational Motivation	Leads by Example; Showing Concern; Coaching	Relational Transparency	Caring

Although the Empowering Leadership Model (ELQ) best describes leadership in these churches, as Echels[30] points out, the complexity of leadership means we are unable to encapsulate leadership in a single universal

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[30] Echols, 114.

definition. The effectiveness of husband-wife teams do not feature in any of these popular models. This further supports Echels' observation. However, that does not mean that we cannot discern important leadership principles such as those described and test their validity in different contexts.