

## **THE EQUIPPING PASTOR: A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR BAPTIST CHURCHES TODAY**

**David Devine**

**Baptist Union of Victoria's Church Health and Capacity Building Team**

There are many challenges facing those called to serve as pastors in Baptist churches today. The following examples from my consulting with Australian Baptist churches over the past few years illustrate this:

- a church of 200 people polarised between those who esteemed the pastor as their divinely anointed mission leader and those who criticised him for failing to provide adequate personal care and follow the direction of the Church Board;
- a church of 45 remove its pastor for failing to collaborate with the elders as co-leaders of the church;
- a church of 120 withdraw its call of their long-term pastor because she focussed on preaching at the expense of visitation and development of new leaders; several experienced effective Pastors resign from their positions due to stress. (It should be noted that these examples pre-date the Coronavirus pandemic, which anecdotal evidence indicates has exacerbated the tensions and stress discussed in this paper.)

A survey conducted for Australian Baptist Ministries in 2019 found that 90% of pastors surveyed reported having a strong sense of calling and purpose and 80% regarded themselves as being highly effective.<sup>1</sup> However, 21% were in the high end of emotional exhaustion, with 25% having sought treatment for mental health issues in the preceding two years.<sup>2</sup> Some pastoral ill-health is due to deficiencies in self-care. For example, on average, respondents work 32% more hours than they are expected or contracted to work.<sup>3</sup> The role the pastor is expected or chooses to play within the congregation is also a factor. The survey found a mismatch between what Pastors consider they should do, as an expression of their calling, and what they actually do in response to congregational expectations and needs. The principal areas in which pastors considered they were not doing enough were training, vision-casting, being a role model and evangelism. They considered that they were spending too much time on administration, visitation/counselling, teaching and worship leading.<sup>4</sup>

Further, as one Baptist consultant observes, pastoral stress is a common part of collateral damage from church dysfunctions, including factionalism and inward focus, because “it is in the relationship between the pastor and the church where either health is fostered, or disease arises.”<sup>5</sup> Beasley-Murray writes that “in recent years the question of “authority” has become a central issue in Baptist churches.”<sup>6</sup> He notes that in the past, Baptist pastors were regarded as “paid servants of the church”; whereas recently a recognition of a pastor’s calling to “lead the people of God” has arisen. He links this trend to the impact of

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<sup>1</sup> Sam Sterland, *Leadership Sustainability and Related Issues for Baptist Pastoral Staff in Australia* (Sydney: NCLS Research, 2019), 3, 29.

<sup>2</sup> Sterland, *Leadership*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Sterland, *Leadership*, 36.

<sup>4</sup> Sterland, *Leadership*, 50.

<sup>5</sup> Ian G. Duncum, *The Impact of Church Consultancy: Explore the Impact of One Model of Church Consultancy on Church Health and Church Growth in NSW/ACT Baptist Churches* (Euge, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019), 8–9.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers: The Baptist Way of Being Church* (Oxford: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2006), 82.

the Church Growth and Charismatic movements.<sup>7</sup> However, this issue is not new. Manley reports conflicting views regarding pastoral authority among Australian Baptists in the 19th Century. Some asserted that authority was granted upon ordination or appointment; while others contended that pastors had no authority apart from that earned through gaining the respect of the congregation.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to conflict regarding pastoral authority, Manley recounts conflict about pastoral activities. For example, he cites the 1870 case of Charles Clark, whose preaching drew large crowds, yet who resigned following criticism for his lacking in visitation.<sup>9</sup> Manley, notes that a “Minister was expected to be competent in a great variety of skills,” quoting from the Southern Baptist: “He [*sic*] must be lawyer, money-lender, friend, counsellor and guide, and always be cheerful. He is sought by the sick, the sorrowing, the sinful and the starving, and he must always be ready for service. In his preaching he must be interesting or he is doomed. He must be sound in the faith... If he is not sound, there will be the sound of war in the camp!”<sup>10</sup>

Stress and conflict related to the pastors’ place and activity are not confined to Baptist churches. Various authors address these issues in the context of the wider Church and identify a number of relevant factors. For example, Pneuman names “structural ambiguity” as a source of church conflict, with no clear guidelines about the roles and responsibilities of clergy, laity or committees. “No one is sure who is to do what; therefore, people challenge anything anybody tries to do.”<sup>11</sup> Brubaker notes that such conflict is common between paid staff and volunteers, “regardless of congregational polity.”<sup>12</sup> When the pastor is viewed as the “steward who is responsible for the performance of paid staff and volunteers” and yet is accountable to those volunteers as members of a Church board or membership, it is unclear who works for whom.<sup>13</sup> Gibbs sees unbalanced expectations of pastors as a consequence of the professionalizing of ministry.<sup>14</sup> Since congregants are paying the pastor, they expect him/her to perform a variety of tasks for them, serving as a “general practitioner rather than specialist.”<sup>15</sup>

The Pastor is expected to be not only pastor and preacher but also a priestly liturgist, children’s friend, biblical interpreter, business administrator, programme organiser, moral guide, denominational servant, ecclesiastical representative, ecumenical advocate, community organizer, social activist, gospel evangelist, prophetic voice and increasingly a media personality as well. It is unsurprising that with such an open-ended and unstructured role, a significant proportion of ministers face disillusion and burnout at some stage in their ministry.<sup>16</sup>

In some contemporary models, the senior pastor is the primary leader of the church, with the underlying premise that “congregations will succeed or fail in the long term based on effective pastoral

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<sup>7</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers*, 83.

<sup>8</sup> Ken R Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to ‘Eternity’: A History of Australian Baptists, Volume 1: Growing an Australian Church (1831-1914)* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 325–26. He cites several statements from Australian Baptists in the late 19th Century.

<sup>9</sup> Manley, *Woolloomooloo*, 76–77.

<sup>10</sup> *Southern Baptist*, 17 August 1911, 535–36. Cited in Manley, *Woolloomooloo*, 325.

<sup>11</sup> Roy W. Pneuman, *Nine Common Sources of Conflict in Congregations*, in *Conflict Management in Congregations* (Bethesda: Alban Institute, 2001), 46. Similarly, David R. Brubaker, *Promise and Peril: Understanding and Managing Change and Conflict in Congregations* (Bethesda: Alban Institute, 2009), 40, found that “many power struggles within a congregation are fights over who has the right to exercise authority in a given situation.”

<sup>12</sup> Brubaker, *Promise*, 73.

<sup>13</sup> Roger Heuser and Norman Shawchuck, *Leading the Congregation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 194–95.

<sup>14</sup> Eddie Gibbs, *The Rebirth of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 121, 235.

<sup>15</sup> Scot McKnight, *Pastor Paul: Nurturing a Culture of Christofority in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2019), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament Patterns for Pastoral Leadership* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008), 239. Similarly, John R. W. Stott, *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor* (Nottingham: Intervarsity Press, 2007), 79.

leadership more than any other human factor.”<sup>17</sup> Such views create disproportionate focus on pastoral performance, which is often conflated with church growth. This pressures pastors to pursue satisfaction of congregational expectations rather than their divine calling, with resultant anxiety and/or acedia.<sup>18</sup> Pastors are tempted to over-function, taking on more responsibilities and working excessive hours. This contributes to the burnout discussed above and also reduces congregational vitality, as members respond by under-functioning, becoming passively dependent upon the pastor. So Hirsch contends that within churches “emphasising pulpit ministry,” only about 5% of the congregation is active in ministry, with congregants operating in a receptive/consumptive mode.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to this unbalanced focus on the pastor, there is a psychological dynamic that contributes to conflict centring on pastors. Congregants, across denominations, often confer a mythic status on pastors as “the larger-than-life holy one of God” who fulfils a need for a parental or saviour figure. When pastors inevitably disappoint, conflict arises.<sup>20</sup> Brubaker discusses Pastors’ symbolic role in terms of Family Systems Theory’s “identified patient” and notes the “tendency of congregational systems to blame all crashes on ‘pilot-error.’”<sup>21</sup>

Another factor contributing to pastoral conflict and stress is failure to adapt ministry to the dynamics of church size.<sup>22</sup> Keller observes that there is a “size culture that profoundly affects how decisions are made, how relationships flow, how effectiveness is evaluated, and what ministers, staff and lay-leaders do.”<sup>23</sup>

### **THE ADDITIONAL COMPLEXITY OF BAPTIST ECCLESIOLOGY**

While these various factors apply across denominations, they are exacerbated by some features of Baptist ecclesiology. Baptist origins are disputed, but it is generally agreed that Baptists emerged from the confluence of European Anabaptist and English Separatist streams in the early 17th Century.<sup>24</sup> John Smyth is commonly credited with establishing the first Baptist church.<sup>25</sup> He defined a church as “two, three or more saints joined together by covenant with God and themselves.”<sup>26</sup> This definition was based on Matthew 18:20, an oft-cited text in Baptist ecclesiology.<sup>27</sup>

For Baptists, the constitutive element of “church” is not an episcopate nor sacrament, but the

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<sup>17</sup> John Edmund Kaiser, *Winning on Purpose: How to Organize Congregations to Succeed in Their Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006), 95–97, 108.

<sup>18</sup> Heuser and Shawchuck, *Leading*, 9–10, 106.

<sup>19</sup> Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 43.

<sup>20</sup> Warner White, Should I leave? A Letter from One Priest to Another, in Lott, *Conflict*, 68–69.

<sup>21</sup> Brubaker, *Promise*, 10–11.

<sup>22</sup> Roy Oswald, *How to Minister Effectively in Family, Pastoral, Program, and Corporate Sized Churches* (Bethesda: Alban Institute, 1991), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Timothy Keller, *Leadership and Church Size Dynamics: How Strategy Changes with Growth* (New York: Redeemer, 2006), 1.

<sup>24</sup> Brian Winslade, *A New Kind of Baptist Church* (Sydney: Morling Press, 2010), 22–23.

<sup>25</sup> Winslade, *New*, 24. However, some dispute that Smyth is fully representative of the Separatist movement and that the subsequent Baptist movement is continuous with Smyth. For example, Kevin J. Bidwell, *The Church as the Image of the Trinity: A Critical Evaluation of Miroslav Volf's Ecclesial Model* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 63–65.

<sup>26</sup> John Smyth, *Principles and Inferences Concerning the Visible Church* (1607). Cited in Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 135.

<sup>27</sup> Manley, *Woolloomooloo*, 255.

obedient faith of those who gather in Christ's name, confessing the Lordship of Christ.<sup>28</sup> Through faith in Christ, believers are joined to Christ and to one another. This shared unmediated relationship with Christ forms the "priesthood of all believers" (1 Pet 2:4-9) – a central Baptist principle.<sup>29</sup> Beasley-Murray explains, "In spiritual terms we are all equal before God. No one group has a greater claim on the Holy Spirit than another."<sup>30</sup> This ecclesiology rejects any conception of the pastor as priestly mediator.

The understanding that every believer has unmediated access to Christ underlies the Baptist concept of "soul competency." "If all Christians are priests unto God, with equal and open access to him [*sic*]... then each Christian is able to discern the Word and will of God for him/herself. There is no need for the Church to arbitrarily dictate or control interpretation and belief."<sup>31</sup> The corporate implication of this is that all members are equally competent to participate in congregational discernment. As they share together, they discern the "mind of Christ", without giving privileged status to the contributions of either congregational leaders, including Pastors, or external authorities. Each local church, in its Members' meeting, is held to be autonomous and authoritative under Christ. "The church of Christ has power delegated to themselves of announcing the word, administering the sacraments, appointing ministers, disclaiming them, and also excommunicating; but the last appeal is to the brethren or body of the church."<sup>32</sup>

While Baptists have always appointed leaders to serve the church in various roles, such leadership has never been considered absolute; for leaders are accountable to the Body that appointed them, with the members together holding ultimate authority under Christ.<sup>33</sup>

For Baptists, believers' equal unmediated access to Christ also equips them to serve within and beyond the church. As part of expressing their faith together, members seek to serve one another. In Volf's terms, the polycentric structure of the church gives rise to "symmetrical reciprocity" as members use their God-given capacities for mutual service.<sup>34</sup> Within this, Baptists have always recognized that some are called to serve in various leadership roles, but no special authority or privileges have been attached to this recognition.<sup>35</sup> There are no functions that are the preserve of some.

## THE PLACE AND PURPOSE OF THE PASTOR: AN EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS 4:11-16

What then is the place and role of the pastor in a Baptist church? Baptists will seek to answer this with

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<sup>28</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 63.

<sup>29</sup> Volf, *After*, 224, contends that the Free Church pioneers applied this doctrine more fully than Luther.

<sup>30</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers*, 79.

<sup>31</sup> Winslade, *New*, 36.

<sup>32</sup> John Smyth, *Short Confession Faith in XX Articles*, #13. Cited in Daryl C Cornett, "Baptist Ecclesiology: A Faithful Application of New Testament Principles," *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 2 (2004), 28. Note re autonomy, Thomas Helwys, *A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland* (1611), #12: "...no church ought to challenge any prerogative over any other." Cited in Cornett, *Baptist*, 28.

<sup>33</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers*, 86, 118. The Baptist Union of Victoria's Sample Church Constitution states: "5.1 The church, through the church meeting, has final authority in deciding every matter which affects the church's life" (May 2020 <https://www.buv.com.au/resources/constitutions>).

<sup>34</sup> Volf, *After*, 217.

<sup>35</sup> Manley, *Woolloomooloo*, 340, cites a Baptist statement from 1918 that ordination "conveys no authority, confers no privilege – contributes nothing."

reference to Scripture, for they hold that Scripture outweighs any creed or tradition.<sup>36</sup>

The noun “pastor” (*poimen*) was commonly used in the LXX to refer to shepherds (Gen 46:32) and sometimes, metaphorically, leaders (Zech 10:3). There are some similar uses in the New Testament (Lk 2:8; Mk 14:27). The term was used of Jesus (Jn 10:11; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4). Though the verbal form is sometimes applied to leaders’ tasks (Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet 5:2), the noun is used only once to describe Church leaders (Eph 4:11). That passage focuses on function. It is unlikely, then, that “pastor” was an office, but rather it was a function that some members performed within the church.<sup>37</sup> Taking Jesus as the archetype, the pastoral function may have involved “knowing people intimately (Jn 10:3,14), leading them (10:4), protecting them from ‘wolves’ (10:7-10, 11-13), and loving them sacrificially (10:11-13,15).”<sup>38</sup> Thus, Jesus’ commissioning of Peter highlights the teaching and caring aspects of shepherding God’s flock (Jn 21:15-17).

In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul describes how this Pastoral function operates within a church. The pericope is book-ended by references to the gifting and ministry of all believers (vv7, 16), leading some to conclude that the list of roles in v.11 applies to all believers rather than categories of individuals who are given to serve the church in particular ways.<sup>39</sup> However, the latter reading is better because the emphasis is on what some do for the body, rather than what the whole Body does. “Christ supplies the church with gifted ministers.”<sup>40</sup> The five ministries listed do not represent all ministries, as there are many other ways in which believers are gifted for service.<sup>41</sup> Nor do these ministries represent all categories of leaders, for they describe functions rather than offices.<sup>42</sup> These functions are all related to the Word, which reflects Paul’s immediate concern with false teaching and the church growing in “the Faith” (vv13-15). “Those listed are ministers of the Word through whom the gospel is revealed, declared and taught.”<sup>43</sup>

Apostles and prophets play a foundational role, bearing witness to and revealing God’s plan for the Church and individuals (Eph 2:20; 3:5) and thus opening up new territory for Christ and new insights for Christians.<sup>44</sup> Evangelists usually go out from churches to proclaim the gospel of Christ (Eph 6:15). “The evangelists would win converts to the faith, the apostles would establish churches, and the prophets would fill in needed revelation for the perfection of the saints. Some of these functions seem to have overlapped.”<sup>45</sup> Pastors and teachers serve within the church. Because one article is used for both categories, there has been debate about whether Paul is referring to one or two gifts. Hoehner cites a study of this grammatical structure suggesting that the first noun is a subset of the second, so “all pastors are to be teachers, though

<sup>36</sup> Helwys, *Declaration*, #23, “The Old and New Testaments...contain the Holy Word of God, which only is our direction in all things whatsoever.”

<sup>37</sup> Harold W Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 544.

<sup>38</sup> Clinton E Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 261.

<sup>39</sup> For example, Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2012), 21; and Gibbs, *Rebirth*, 235.

<sup>40</sup> Peter T O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1999), 297.

<sup>41</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 539, notes that there are overlaps as well as omissions between the lists of gifts in Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 12, and Romans 12.

<sup>42</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 256, notes there is no reference to the overseers/elders of Acts 20 or Deacons (1 Tim 3).

<sup>43</sup> O’Brien, *Letter*, 298.

<sup>44</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 542.

<sup>45</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 543.

not all teachers are to be pastors.”<sup>46</sup> He comments, “Teaching includes instruction in doctrine and its application to daily life but the teacher may not have all the administrative and shepherding responsibilities of the pastor.”<sup>47</sup>

In v.12 Paul describes how the pastors and teachers serve the Church.<sup>48</sup> The relationship between this verse’s three prepositional phrases is debated. Some take them as coordinated, with Paul writing that pastors serve three purposes: equipping the saints, the work of ministry, and the edification of the body.<sup>49</sup> Others note that the phrases are not syntactically parallel and highlight Paul’s focus on the gifting of all believers for service (vv. 7&16). They read the phrases as building on each other, so pastors equip the saints for the work of ministry to edify the body.<sup>50</sup> The latter reading, which is the one adopted in this paper, understands responsibility for ministry and the resultant growth and health of the church to be shared between Pastors and the other members.

So, what does it mean for pastors to “equip” (*kataartismos*) the saints? The prepositional noun is used only here in the New Testament, though the cognate verb is common, with meanings including repairing (Matt 4:21), making complete (1 Thess 3:10) and training (Lk 6:40).<sup>51</sup> Before New Testament times, the term was used extensively in a medical text describing the setting of bones.<sup>52</sup> This meaning fits well with the physiological metaphors in Ephesians 4. Thus, Pastors help members to be well set in relationship with God and one another so that all can contribute to the health and growth of the Body as God directs and enables each of them.

Pastoral ministry is primarily about helping congregants to discern God’s will, respond in obedient faith and to relate to one another in love. “Lay persons are not assistants to the pastor, to help him [*sic*] do his work. Rather, the pastor is to be their assistant; he [*sic*] is to help equip them for the ministry to which God has called them.”<sup>53</sup> This accords with the priesthood and ministry of all believers discussed earlier. It recognises that congregational leadership occurs within an organic relational system rather than a hierarchical institution in which leaders determine God’s will and seek to assert their way. When it is recognized that Christ is the head of the body and that every member is in unmediated relationship with him, the equipping pastor works like a spiritual director, helping people to discern God’s calling and leading and to respond to that in collaboration with their fellow believers.<sup>54</sup> “Leaders who are committed to empowering the members for ministry will create the structures and processes that will help the members respond to God’s call and acquire the necessary ministry skills (and relational qualities) to actualize their

<sup>46</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 544. Daniel B Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 284.

<sup>47</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 545. Here “administrative” refers to overseeing the life of the flock for its wellbeing and functioning (1 Thess 5:12; Rom 12:8).

<sup>48</sup> This paper will refer to pastors only, since that is the usual title used in Baptist churches. It will be contended that teaching is a major component of the Pastoral role.

<sup>49</sup> For example, R. Alastair Campbell, “The Elders: Seniority Within Earliest Christianity,” in *Studies of the NT and Its World*, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 110.

<sup>50</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 278.

<sup>51</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 263.

<sup>52</sup> Apollonius Citiensis’ commentary on Hippocrates’ *De Articulis* cited in Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 549.

<sup>53</sup> R. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor: A Systems Approach to Congregational Leadership* (Bethesda: Alban Institute, 1993), 89.

<sup>54</sup> Stevens and Collins, *Equipping*, xiv.

spiritual gifts.”<sup>55</sup> As members use their gifts in faith and love, the church is built up in relation to Christ and one another.

In Eph 4:13-16, Paul expands on this. The “building up of the body” refers not to the expansion of the church through mission, but to its internal development. Further, this goal is applied to “all” (*pantes*) the saints rather than some (4:13). So Tidball comments: “Paul has a concern for individuals... However, his greater ambition is for the church as a whole... His vision is essentially to see the body of Christ transformed. In this respect, Paul mounts a profound challenge to the individualism that characterises our Western church and culture today.”<sup>56</sup>

One implication of this is that while pastors are called to serve the church by equipping members for ministry, they are not servants of each individual member and responsible for their personal growth. The pastor will care for individuals, but in the context of his or her call to serve the church as a whole with the aim of supporting its corporate growth.

Paul uses three parallel prepositional phrases to describe this goal from different angles (4:13). In summary, the goal is union with Christ in all his fullness. First, Paul describes the church as arriving at “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” This refers to sharing “a common set of doctrines and a common experience of knowing Christ on whom those doctrines are focussed.”<sup>57</sup> The second aspect of congregational growth is becoming “a mature person”. The emphasis here is on attaining adulthood rather than perfection and it likely stands in contrast to the infantile instability that false teaching produces (4:14).<sup>58</sup> The singular noun depicts unity in Christ as opposed to the plural “infants” (4:14). Thus in 4:13, maturity is corporate rather than individual.<sup>59</sup> The nature of this maturity is described in the third preposition – “the measure of Christ’s full stature”. This refers to the body of Christ becoming Christlike, with all of the members together aligned with the head.<sup>60</sup>

In 4:15, Paul writes that this Christlike maturity and unity is developed as believers confess the truth of Christ to one another in love, in contrast to false teaching of 4:14.<sup>61</sup> The more a church’s beliefs and behaviours are aligned with Christ, the more it is seen to be not simply a body of Christians, but the body of Christ, deriving its life and shape from its head.<sup>62</sup>

Paul concludes in 4:16 with the observation that while the church derives its life from Christ, it is not a passive recipient, for each member participates in its growth. Notably Paul does not limit this work of edification to those listed in v11, but to all members together. The leaders equip the members to serve in order to build up the body. The term often translated “tendons” or “ligaments” (*haphē*) is better read as

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<sup>55</sup> Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations: Discerning Church Dynamics* (Herndon: Alban Institute, 2004), 194.

<sup>56</sup> Tidball, *Ministry*, 109.

<sup>57</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 281. This unity echoes Eph 4:1-6. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 554, notes that while “the faith” is static, “knowledge” is dynamic.

<sup>58</sup> O’Brien, *Letter*, 307.

<sup>59</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 555.

<sup>60</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 266.

<sup>61</sup> O’Brien, *Letter*, 311. He comments, “The Apostle is not exhorting his readers to truthfulness in general or speaking honestly with one another, however appropriate or important this may be. Rather he wants all of them to be members of a “confessing church”, with the content of their testimony to be ... the gospel of their salvation (1:13).”

<sup>62</sup> Stevens and Collins, *Equipping*, 99. They state that “Pauline Ecclesiology is nothing other than a Christology. It is an organic systemic unity that finds its life in the Head, Jesus.”

“connections”, referring to interactions between members.<sup>63</sup> As members use their gifts to share truth and love in relationship with one another, they serve as “channels for focussing divine power in the life of the church.”<sup>64</sup> So, acting in faith and love, the church grows in dependence upon Christ and interdependence with one another. “This has,” Stevens and Collins maintain, “implications for the equipping pastor, whose primary responsibility is to facilitate and deepen the dependence – indeed the interdependence – of the members of the church and the Head. To do this a pastor must lead the process by which people find their maturity in their life together in Christ.”<sup>65</sup>

The ecclesiology of Ephesians 4 accords well with the Baptist principles of the priesthood and ministry of all believers. Paul’s model of pastors serving the church by equipping members through biblical teaching and spiritual direction and facilitating interdependent service addresses a number of the issues identified in the discussion of pastoral stress and congregational conflict above. Nevertheless, before suggesting how this model of pastoral ministry might be applied in some contemporary contexts, it is important to determine if the model is consistent with New Testament teaching on pastoral leadership more broadly.

## **A SURVEY OF LEADERSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The following survey of teaching on leadership is limited to the New Testament because there is a significant difference between the two Testaments regarding how God relates to God’s people and therefore the role leaders play. The promised “New Covenant” (Jer 31:31-34; Joel 2:28-29) was inaugurated through Christ (Matt 26:28; Acts 2:16-21, 32). This opened direct relationship with God and ministry in the Spirit to all believers, with the church being fraternal rather than hierarchical.<sup>66</sup> Within this fraternity, leaders no longer serve as mediators telling believers God’s will (Matt 23:8-12), nor as elite Spirit-endowed heroes representing the church,<sup>67</sup> but as equippers who encourage and empower their fellow believers to discern and follow God’s leading. This delegitimises approaches to church leadership that are hierarchical, mediatory or authoritarian.<sup>68</sup> A popular example of such an approach is the “Carver Model” that identifies the senior pastor as a church’s “primary leader” whose function is to provide the church’s vision and direction.<sup>69</sup> Ecclesial structures that posit one or more leaders between the head and body do not reflect the New Covenant.

This is not to say that the Church lacks structure or leaders, for we see both in the New Testament church from its beginning. There was the initial apostolic leadership (Acts 2:42) and the emergence of “elders” (Acts 14:23), along with a general recognition of leadership functioning within the church (Rom

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<sup>63</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 287.

<sup>64</sup> O’Brien, *Letter*, 315. Stevens and Collins, *Equipping*, 35, comment that “A systems approach to spiritual gifts suggests that we do not have gifts in ourselves, but only in relationships.”

<sup>65</sup> Stevens and Collins, *Equipping*, 41.

<sup>66</sup> Tidball, *Ministry*, 88-90. He notes the frequent use of “*adelphoi*” in Acts.

<sup>67</sup> Heuser and Shawchuck, *Leading*, 121, refer to the OT model of heroic leadership (eg. Moses, Elijah, David, Nehemiah) reinforcing a “divide between leaders and followers.”

<sup>68</sup> Tidball, *Ministry*, 238. See Mark 10:42-43 (“not so with you”) and 1 Peter 5:3.

<sup>69</sup> Kaiser, *Winning*, 108, and Galindo, *Hidden*, 140. It is notable that Kaiser cites a list of OT leaders as examples.



12:8; 1 Thess 5:12). However, notably there is no reference to priesthood other than that shared by all believers (1Pet 2:9) and Christ as sole mediator (1Tim 2:5; Heb 9:15).<sup>70</sup> Rather than a priestly function, the early church leaders served as parental or patron figures within churches that were essentially extended households.<sup>71</sup>

There is a “rich diversity of leadership words in the New Testament,”<sup>72</sup> and Jesus did not “institute the church with given structures and mandated forms of leadership.”<sup>73</sup> Rather the communities formed around Christ and then created and adapted institutional structures to meet the needs of their evolving communal life and mission (e.g. Acts 6:1-6).<sup>74</sup> Lacking an organizational blueprint, at least some of the offices were adopted from Jewish synagogues and Greco-Roman households and councils.<sup>75</sup> Volf concludes, “The New Testament does not contain any unified, theologically reflected view of church organisation, but rather only the various witnesses concerning the manner in which the early churches regulated their own lives within various cultural spheres.”<sup>76</sup>

Given this, it is not surprising that there is diversity in denominational ecclesiologies and debate about the titles and functions of leaders. It is noted here that while Paul appointed “elders” in each church (Acts 14:23), he addressed the “overseers and deacons” in Philippi (Phil 1:1) and enunciated the qualities required for those two roles, rather than elders, in the Ephesian church (1 Tim 3:1-10).<sup>77</sup> While 1 Timothy contains the words “overseer”, “elder” and “deacon”, there is no reference to a three-fold polity.<sup>78</sup> In Acts 20:17,28 and Titus 1:5-7, the titles “elders” and “overseers” are applied to the same people and Peter referred to elders “serving as overseers” (1Pet 5:1-2). Hence some equate the terms.<sup>79</sup> However, it should be noted that in addition to the caring, guarding and teaching work linked with overseers (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Pet 5:1—2; Titus 1:7-9), elders also carried out administrative tasks that may be associated more with deacons (Acts 11:30).<sup>80</sup> So it seems that while the “overseers” were “elders”, not all elders were overseers, for some elders served as deacons.<sup>81</sup> It is best to take “elder” as a term of status rather than function, a recognition of seniority and respect, perhaps related to age and/or character.<sup>82</sup> “The term ‘elders’ is probably a covering for both overseers and deacons.”<sup>83</sup> It may be clearer to read “elder” as synonymous with “leader”.

1 Timothy 5:17 says that elders are responsible for directing the affairs of the church and preaching

<sup>70</sup> The priestly ministry in Rom 15:16 refers to mission to those outside the Church.

<sup>71</sup> Tidball, *Ministry*, 94-95. Charles A Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Text Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 193.

<sup>72</sup> Stevens and Collins, *Equipping*, 88.

<sup>73</sup> Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry Among the First Christians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 18.

<sup>74</sup> Winslade, *New*, 14, comments that “polity serves the purpose of the church.”

<sup>75</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1998), 279.

<sup>76</sup> Volf, *After*, 245.

<sup>77</sup> Giles, *Patterns*, 58.

<sup>78</sup> Giles, *Patterns*, 111.

<sup>79</sup> Benjamin L Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church*, Studies in Biblical Literature, vol 57 (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 140.

<sup>80</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, Academic, 2007), 418, comments that these Elders worked alongside the Apostles taking care of administrative and daily matters. Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio- Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 374, sees a possible allusion to those chosen in Acts 6:1-6. Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 382, suggests that as deacon, Phoebe led some sort of practical charitable work (Rom 16:1- 2).

<sup>81</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary, (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1984), 174.

<sup>82</sup> Campbell, *Elders*, 246. Similarly, Merkle, *Elder*, 156

<sup>83</sup> Fee, *Timothy*, 22.

and teaching. The former can mean “managing” or “caring for”<sup>84</sup> and earlier was applied to “leaders” (Rom 12:8; 1Thess 5:12). It is likely that both overseers and deacons did such work, for it is a quality required of both in regard to how they function within their families (1 Tim 3:4, 12). The point being that since, as noted earlier, the churches were mostly extended households and familial in nature, those to be entrusted with leadership in churches should have demonstrated capacity to lead well within their families. Together these leaders are to care for the wellbeing of the church family.

Preaching and teaching were done only by some elders and it seems there was remuneration for this (1 Tim 5:18). Since the ability to teach is required of overseers (1 Tim 3:2), but not of deacons, it may suggest that the overseers were “teaching elders” (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17).<sup>85</sup> This teaching consisted of “encouraging others by sound doctrine and refuting those who oppose it” (Titus 1:7-9; cf. 2 Tim 2:24-26; Acts 20:27-31). It involved “preserving, transmitting, expounding, interpreting, and applying the apostolic gospel and tradition along with the Jewish Scripture.”<sup>86</sup> The aim was not only to transfer information about a shared set of beliefs so as to deepen believers’ understanding of the faith, but to encourage application to life resulting in transformed behaviour leading to growth into maturity in Christ (Col 1:28). So, commenting on Paul as teacher, Tidball writes: “His aim was to strengthen believers, providing them with further knowledge about their identity and salvation, give them a greater appreciation of and confidence in Christ and his work, encourage their unity as a reflection of the gospel of reconciliation and instruct them in ethical living.”<sup>87</sup>

As discussed earlier, this growth into maturity is not only personal, but is primarily corporate, with the church to be transformed into Christlikeness in its relationships, values and actions. To be true to its identity and calling in Christ, the church needs to be as true to Scripture in its decision-making and operations as it is in its doctrinal statements and proclamations. So, Tidball affirms Quicke’s call for the recognition and practice of preaching as a crucial component of church leadership.<sup>88</sup>

If leadership and preaching are disconnected in the church, leadership will become humanistic, dispense with the Holy Spirit, will distort theology and flatten spiritual paradoxes and encourage pride. The separation will take its toll on preaching as well, for leadership brings a realism to preaching and is ruthlessly honest about the need for change.<sup>89</sup>

The contemporary role of pastor is usually equated with the overseer,<sup>90</sup> with an emphasis on preaching/teaching and care as discussed above. So, Stott concludes, “Pastors are called essentially to a teaching ministry.”<sup>91</sup> More broadly, emphasising the application of teaching, Tidball writes, “Pastoral work is simply bringing to full flower the bud of the gospel.”<sup>92</sup>

Within the nascent Church this teaching was delivered through congregational preaching (1 Tim

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<sup>84</sup> Fee, *Timothy*, 128.

<sup>85</sup> Merkle, *Elder*, 160.

<sup>86</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Bible Commentary, vol 42 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 251. See Matthew 13:52.

<sup>87</sup> Tidball, *Ministry*, 131.

<sup>88</sup> Tidball, *Ministry*, 167.

<sup>89</sup> Michael Quicke, *360-Degree Leadership: Preaching to Transform Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 62ff. Cited in Tidball, *Ministry*, 166–67.

<sup>90</sup> Giles, *Patterns*, 70. Campbell, *Elders*, 258.

<sup>91</sup> Stott, *Living*, 80.

<sup>92</sup> Derek Tidball, *Skilful Shepherds: Explorations in Pastoral Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Leicester: Apollos, 1997), 100. Cited in Tidball, *Ministry*, 134.

4:13), house-to-house visitation (Acts 20:20), personal instruction (Acts 18:26; 2 Tim 2:2) and epistles (2 Pet 3:15-16). However, given the aim of application and growth and the relational context of ministry (Eph 4:11-16), it is not surprising that the pastor-teachers' personal experience and example played an integral part in their ministry.<sup>93</sup>

Both Peter (1 Pet 5:3) and Paul (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; 1 Tim 4:12) identify modelling as a core aspect of leadership. Tidball notes that "imitation of respected people...was the way in which character developed and maturity was reached."<sup>94</sup> Paul did not seek imitation of his personality or circumstances (1 Cor 7:7; 9:3-19), but of his character, faith and sacrificial service (1 Cor 4:9-13; Phil 3:17-4:1). He provided an embodied example of living out the faith that he taught, so that others might follow in it. Paul's aim in this was not only personal transformation, but growth in corporate Christlikeness—the creation of a church culture reflecting Christ. Leaders play a central role in the development of group culture not only by promulgating shared beliefs, but by exemplifying values and embodying vision.<sup>95</sup> "Leaders embody the future that the group holds in view. They function as a prophetic sign of that reality."<sup>96</sup> So, McKnight comments that "the pastor inevitably is understood to display what true godliness in the way of Christ is like."<sup>97</sup> This is why, against the threat of false teachers, Paul emphasised that leaders must have exemplary character (1 Tim 3:2-13; 4:16). It also shows the need for leaders to relate closely with those they serve, because people need to witness what the leader wants them to imitate (2 Tim 3:10). So, McKnight concludes, "A pastor is a leader who...nurtures a Christlike culture, seeking wisdom from appropriate sources and inspiring and motivating congregants by vision, preaching, teaching and example to participate in that culture."<sup>98</sup>

A key and distinctive component of Jesus' teaching and example of leadership was servanthood (Mk 10:42-45; Jn 13:4-20). In marked contrast to Gentile leaders, who exercised authority over people, Jesus exemplified sacrifice for people (Jn 10:11-18). Just as following Christ involves self-denial (Mk 8:34-35), so Christlike leadership is cruciform.<sup>99</sup> For the leader who is primarily a servant, all expressions of authority are to be directed to serving the needs and interests of others.<sup>100</sup> So Tidball cautions, "Pastorally, we can be over-directive... Organisationally, we can drive a strong programme and manipulate people's commitment to 'our programme'. Even in the pulpit ... we can assume an authority beyond what either the Holy Spirit or the text of Scripture warrants... So, as servants of Jesus, we need constantly to be on our guard against the spirit of authoritarianism and status-seeking."<sup>101</sup>

Most New Testament references to "authority" (*exousia*) relate to Christ, with the recognition that "all authority in heaven and on earth" has been given to him (Matt 28:18). His followers are sent into mission under his authority (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 5:20); teach under his authority (Matt 28:20; 1 Thess 4:2) and confront the demonic and illness with his authority (Lk 9:1-2; James 5:14). However, there is no reference to one

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<sup>93</sup> McKnight, *Pastor*, 127, "The pastor is first and foremost a witness."

<sup>94</sup> Tidball, *Ministry*, 118.

<sup>95</sup> Gibbs, *Rebirth*, 236.

<sup>96</sup> Eddie Gibbs, *Leadership Next: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 2005), 134.

<sup>97</sup> McKnight, *Pastor*, 14.

<sup>98</sup> McKnight, *Pastor*, 26.

<sup>99</sup> Tidball, *Ministry*, 50.

<sup>100</sup> Heuser and Shawchuck, *Leading*, 27.

<sup>101</sup> Tidball, *Ministry*, 52.

Christian having authority over another.

So, is any authority given to church leaders? Paul refers to “the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down” (2Cor 10:8; 13:10). This “building-up” is explicated in Ephesians 4:11-13, which describes how leaders serve the church that is headed by Christ (Eph 4:15). As noted earlier, rather than controlling members, such leadership is to equip them to serve as God empowers them.<sup>102</sup> So, Greenleaf writes that the test of servant- leadership is whether those served grow as persons. “Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?”<sup>103</sup> In terms of Ephesians 4, we would add, do they become more faithful to Christ and loving toward one another?

It is noteworthy that in Ephesians 4:11 Paul refers to several leadership roles, with no individual performing them all – “some to be apostles...some evangelists, some pastors and teachers”. Typically in the New Testament, leadership is a shared responsibility, with a plurality of elders appointed in churches (Acts 14:23) and the apostolic mission involving teams of “co-workers” (Acts 11:25-26; 15:39-40). Contrary to this, some argue that Titus and Timothy served as solo overseers, providing a model for singular congregational oversight by pastors today.<sup>104</sup> However, rather than serving as overseers in a particular church, they both acted as Paul’s itinerant envoys (1Thess 3:1-10; 1Cor 16:10-11; Phil 2:19-22; 2Cor 7:6-16), exercising temporary ministries alongside local leaders.<sup>105</sup> Fee concludes: “It is a mistaken notion to view Timothy or Titus as model pastors for a local church.”<sup>106</sup>

In Ephesians 4, “leadership is a gift given by God to the church and not merely to the Pastor.”<sup>107</sup> Pastors serve alongside other leaders in equipping the members to serve together as God leads and empowers them. This understanding that pastors are to share leadership with others and seek to empower rather than control members is a corrective to the pastor-centric approaches that contribute to the over-functioning and role ambiguity discussed earlier.

In summary, this survey of New Testament teaching finds that pastors serve collaboratively with other leaders with the aim of edifying fraternal relationships within the church and strengthening believers’ unmediated relationships with Christ. For pastors, teaching the Faith through didactic proclamation and personal example is a major component of this ministry. Pastors also care for the wellbeing and unity of congregations, overseeing them as shepherds do flocks and parents families. In so doing, pastors help create relational systems and corporate cultures that express faith in God and mutual love.

Paul’s presentation in Ephesians 4 is consistent with this broader teaching. Though the caring activity of pastors is not explicit in Ephesians 4, it is implied in the call for love and the emphasis on the building of

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<sup>102</sup> Neil Cole and Phil Helfer, *Church Transfusion* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 117 and 129, comment: “In the kingdom we are simply to connect people to Christ’s authority and rulership, not submit them to our own....Authority is not delegated downward in the Kingdom; it is distributed outward....The true missional objective of virtually every person in Christ’s body is: listen to Jesus and do what He says.”

<sup>103</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 13-14. Cited in Heuser and Shawchuck, *Leading*, 27.

<sup>104</sup> Campbell, *Elders*, 243, 258.

<sup>105</sup> Tidball, *Ministry*, 150.

<sup>106</sup> Fee, *Timothy*, 21.

<sup>107</sup> Stevens and Collins, *Equipping*, 88.

relationships aligned with Christ (vv15-16). In part, pastors equip the saints for ministry and growth by addressing personal and relational issues that inhibit loving connections within the body. “As relationship shepherds, equippers should be able to discern dysfunctional relationships: this involves taking appropriate actions to deal with over- and under-functioning, addictions, triangles, and the domination of the weak.”<sup>108</sup> Pastors are not called primarily to comfort or satisfy people, but to equip believers for growing faith and service; not simply meeting people’s needs, but encouraging them to mature in Christ.<sup>109</sup>

It should be noted that Ephesians 4 focusses on developing the internal life of the Body.<sup>110</sup> Other New Testament passages refer to believers on mission in the world (Acts 1:8; 2 Cor 5:20) and provide metaphors depicting the church’s corporate mission (Matt 5:14-16; 1 Pet 2:9-10). Instead of expecting pastors to lead this mission in addition to their equipping work, churches should recognize and empower their gifted apostles and evangelists to complement the leadership of pastors (Eph 4:11). With others providing the diaconal ministries of administration and patronage discussed earlier, this would be closer to the biblical plurality of leadership than the emphasis on pastor-centric leadership and ministry that is common in contemporary churches. A more collegial and complementary model of church leadership would alleviate the pastoral over-functioning, stress and conflict highlighted in the survey cited earlier. It would release pastors to focus on their primary vocation of equipping the saints for ministry through teaching and modelling the faith and fostering loving relationships that facilitate edifying service.

In regard to the reflection on pastoral activities reported in the survey, the biblical material discussed above suggests that pastors are right to resist investing so much of their time in administration and worship leading and to give more emphasis to training (equipping) and serving as models. They should maintain a strong commitment to teaching the faith and visitation, particularly where the latter involves encouraging people to live out the faith in loving fellowship and shared ministry. Pastors should resist temptation or pressure to take on prime responsibility for the development of the church’s vision and goals and instead encourage a shared participation in this that reflects the New Covenantal dynamic of the whole body being in relationship with Christ and discerning his will together.

## **PASTORAL MINISTRY IN CONTEMPORARY BAPTIST CHURCHES**

This model of pastoral ministry, with pastors serving among rather than over the congregation, and an emphasis on encouraging believers to develop their relationship with God and participate in serving one another, fits well with the Baptist principles of the priesthood and ministry of all believers. But what might it look like practically in contemporary Baptist churches of various sizes?

As discussed above, teaching the faith is a major component of the pastoral vocation. Regardless of church size, the pastor is called to expound the biblical basis of the beliefs that are central to a church’s

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<sup>108</sup> Stevens and Collins, *Equipping*, 37.

<sup>109</sup> Duncum, *Impact*, 26-27.

<sup>110</sup> Stevens and Collins, *Equipping*, 105, observe: “In Pauline thought, Christ does not use his body to get his work done on earth... The metaphor is inward looking... It is concerned with the structure and interrelationships within the church rather than how the church relates to the world.”

identity and shared life. This teaching will adopt various modes including preaching, group-work and personal instruction. As part of “equipping the saints”, such teaching seeks to create a context that is conducive to believers, individually and corporately, growing in relationship with God and one another. So, pastors should approach preaching and other teaching as strategic opportunities to lead the formation of faith and the fostering of Christlike love. Equipping pastors will not only expound Scripture, but will encourage its application in the life of individuals and the congregation. While “proclaiming the whole will of God” (Acts 20:27), the strategic pastor will give particular focus to grace-based relationship with God; the Spirit’s leading and enabling for service; following Jesus into life and mission; the corporate nature of the Faith and what it means to be an active member of the Church; and the practicalities of loving others. Such teaching builds up the body in truth and love.

A key aspect of pastoral leadership and teaching is modelling faith and love. In smaller churches members interact personally with the pastor and thus experience the pastor’s example directly. In such churches, pastors should invest time in cultivating relationships with members through participation in the various activities of members’ and the church’s life, because it is a feature of small churches that faith is shaped primarily through personal relationships marked by trust and intimacy.<sup>111</sup> As the pastor personifies faith and love in the course of shared life, he or she exerts influence on members (Acts 20:18; 1 Cor 11:1). In large churches members may have little personal interaction with the Pastor, with knowledge being limited to “a projected image, the persona of the pastor as presented in sermons and various leadership roles.”<sup>112</sup> Through sharing personal stories and overtly undertaking activities reflecting the church’s beliefs, values and mission, pastors of large churches serve as personified symbols for others to follow. For example, in my previous church, the senior pastor’s position description included serving as the “public face” of the church with the goal of raising its profile in the local community. As part of that, I made it a priority to develop relationships with community leaders, engage in local events and appear regularly in local media. This modelled to the church a commitment to community outreach and service that inspired and encouraged others to act in similar ways.

The impact of church size on pastoral practice is not simply a matter of scale, but of sociological dynamics. Rothauge’s work on joining churches of various sizes has been extended to describe how church size affects congregational life, including pastoral leadership.<sup>113</sup> Galindo has summarised this with reference to forces of togetherness and separateness.<sup>114</sup> He describes smaller churches (less than 150 members) as “high-touch” and larger churches as “high-organisation”. He observes that the former value intimate relationships and such churches need “both to love their pastor and to feel loved by the pastor in return.” Whereas, “high-organisation” churches function on a more contractual relationship between members and with the Pastor, valuing competence and effectiveness in achieving the church’s vision and goals. This difference determines how pastors best engage with churches. In “high-touch” churches, “Pastors

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<sup>111</sup> Galindo, *Hidden*, 92

<sup>112</sup> McKnight, *Pastor*, 14.

<sup>113</sup> Arlin J. Rothauge, *Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry* (New York: The Episcopal Church Centre, 1982). Cited in Oswald, *Minister*, 1.

<sup>114</sup> Galindo, *Hidden*, 25.

pastor people,”<sup>115</sup> delivering care and teaching directly to congregants in relational settings. However, in “high-organisation” churches, pastors must adopt more systemic approaches, engaging with the congregation through leadership structures and programmes.<sup>116</sup> Such pastors serve as “shepherds of systems”, with a focus on establishing and supporting various sub-systems within the life of the church.<sup>117</sup> In “high-touch” churches, the challenge for the pastor is to be acknowledged as more than the “family chaplain” addressing personal and communal needs, but as someone like a spiritual director using pastoral conversations and presentations to encourage individuals and the congregation to continue growing in Christ and Christlikeness.<sup>118</sup>

In “high-organisation” churches, the focus on systems and need to function through organised structures challenges the organic participatory model of church outlined in Ephesians 4. A large church can become bureaucratic and hierarchical with discernment and control confined to an elite Leadership, including the pastor, undermining the dynamics of the priesthood and ministry of all believers.<sup>119</sup> However, pastors can overcome this and fulfil their equipping vocation. For example, pastors can intentionally broaden participation in discerning church vision by teaching about the New Covenant and spiritual gifting so that all members are seen as potential “ears” through which the body may hear God and then providing forums in which all members are given a voice. In very large churches, such forums could engage small group discussions rather than congregational gatherings to encourage wide participation.

In my previous church, members were regularly invited to share ministry and mission ideas with the pastors and other leaders. If these ideas were compatible with the congregationally-agreed church vision and values, they were presented to the congregation to see if a sufficient number of volunteers were willing to support implementing the initiative. There was an understanding that pastors and other leaders were not responsible to cover any shortfall. This approach resulted in a number of programmes and events being launched (e.g. single parent’s support group, community dinner, “Kids Hope” mentoring). These initiatives were “grassroots” responses to God’s leading rather than “top-down” plans. They proved to be missionally fruitful and strengthened the faith and interpersonal relationships of those serving. As pastor, my part was to foster the culture which facilitated the initial discernment and then support those involved to maintain a vital relationship with God and to resolve any interpersonal or operational problems so as to enable people to serve together well. This empowering model resulted in a relatively large proportion of members actively participating in the church’s life and mission.

Critical to this approach is the pastor shifting from directing members of the body to pursue his or her agenda to directing members to Christ so as to discern and follow his will for them. This requires pastors see themselves as supporting members to carry out their ministries rather than viewing members as extensions of the pastor to be mobilised in support of the pastor’s ministry. In part, this calls for humility

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<sup>115</sup> McKnight, *Pastor*, 3.

<sup>116</sup> Keller, *Leadership*, 3.

<sup>117</sup> Stevens and Collins, *Equipping*, 76.

<sup>118</sup> McKnight, *Pastor*, 9.

<sup>119</sup> Winslade, *New*, 185, quotes Helwys’ 1611 declaration that “a church ought not to consist of such a multitude as cannot have a particular knowledge of another.”

that allows others to do things differently from how the pastor would do them, acknowledging that they bring different gifting, perception and personality to tasks.<sup>120</sup> For example, as senior pastor I worked with three youth pastors across a decade and while the church gave each of them similar goals, they adopted differing approaches in pursuing those goals. As their leader, I understood my task to entail holding them accountable for outcomes while supporting them as they expressed their faith, gifts and callings. I adopted a similar approach to working with the volunteer leaders whom the church entrusted with authority to lead various aspects of the church's life and mission. This reflects the truth that Christ is the head of his body and that leadership within the body is vested in a plurality of leaders. Stevens and Collins sum up the role of an equipping pastor within the congregational system:

The spirit of plural leadership is destroyed when the pastor puts him or herself in the centre of the group as the leader among advisers, the visionary goal-setter, and the solo helmsperson. To nurture this (lay leadership) sub-system, a pastor-equipper must take lay leaders seriously and allow them to lead!... Equipping is not delegating the pastor's ministry and leadership. Equipping involves releasing the ministry and leadership of the people.<sup>121</sup>

In "high-organisation" churches, that value competence and effectiveness, pastors need to champion such an understanding of leadership, church and ministry through teaching and modelling and to promote the development of a congregational culture and systems that support such practice.

While in larger churches there are usually sufficient people resources to allow pastors to focus on tasks related to their vocation; in smaller churches there is often limited capacity to cover what needs to be done to simply keep church life going, so that pastors feel obligated to devote time to tasks that may distract from their call and gifting. Part of the solution to this is pastors and congregants accepting volunteers doing these tasks, even if they do them differently and less competently than the pastor could. Additionally, a lack of capacity may be addressed by churches co-operating with neighbouring churches, either sharing members who have the required abilities or even merging to benefit from economies of scale and synergies from combining resources. Given the emphasis on autonomy in Baptist ecclesiology, such initiatives usually need to be led by pastors who may not be as constrained as others by the togetherness force at work in many small churches.

## CONCLUSION

This paper began with noting issues of stress and conflict related to the place and role of pastors within local churches. Various factors were identified as contributing to this. While these apply across denominations, it was contended that some features of Baptist ecclesiology may exacerbate this. The priesthood and ministry of all believers give rise to a polycentric church structure, with all members being deemed competent to discern truth and God's guidance and to serve as gifted and led by God, with no ministry tasks restricted to pastors. What then is the role of the pastor? It is proposed that pastors are given

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<sup>120</sup> Brandon J. O'Brien, *The Strategically Small Church* (Minnesota: Bethany, 2010), espouses "high- accountability/low control leadership."

<sup>121</sup> Stevens and Collins, *Equipping*, 89.



to the body to equip members for ministry (Eph 4:11). This entails helping members to be in healthy relationship with Christ and one another, so that as they respond to Christ in faith and serve one another in love, they all contribute to the church growing in Christlikeness. This model of pastoral leadership accords with Baptist ecclesiology and with New Testament teaching on leadership. It was noted that pastors serve alongside other leaders, with a particular focus on teaching and modelling the faith as part of overseeing and caring for the growth and wellbeing of individuals and the congregation as a whole. Finally, the impact of church size on pastoral practice was discussed, with recognition that pastors of smaller churches must serve relationally; while in larger churches a more systemic approach is required.

It is the contention of this paper that as pastors and churches adopt an approach to ecclesiology and pastoral leadership in line with that described in Ephesians 4, there will be some resolution of the prevailing structural and functional ambiguities and resultant pastoral stress and pastor-centred conflict. Along with this, there will be an increase in church vitality as pastors are released to give more attention to their primary vocation of equipping the saints for ministry and so more church members grow in relationship with God and one another reflecting faith and love in Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Eph 4:14-16 NIV)