

## **IAMS Assembly – Malaysia 2004**

### **Church Management and the Integrity of Mission**

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Church Management is a systematic approach in identifying, developing and utilizing the total resources of the church efficiently and effectively. It is a scientific study of how best to get things done in the church. It examines the principles, strategies and practices of management as a science and discipline and its application to the ministry and mission of the church. It uses critically the inter-related disciplines, such as, sociology, anthropology, psychology and theology to complement its application to the mission of the church.<sup>1</sup>

In an information, scientific and technological age, the church needs to constantly update and upgrade its management skills and practices and their impact on the missiological perspectives and mission endeavours of the church. If the church is not only to understand the world, but also to change it as co-workers in Christ's mission, prudent management should be applied to its organisational structure and to the achievement of its mission goals. If the church is to make the transition from a maintenance church to a dynamic community, it should reassess and re-evaluate its current management concepts and practices and their application to structures that produce and perpetuate poverty, corporate greed, injustice, conflicts deteriorating social services and escalating crime and violence.

The whole creation is the object of God's mission.<sup>2</sup> We are invited to become partners with God and faithful stewards in his service. Today, the church is challenged to participate in the process of the recreation of society and to be the sign of the new humanity.<sup>3</sup> God calls his people in every age to go out into the traumatised and lonely world, in the power of the Holy Spirit to care and love, to witness and serve a disenchanting people in a disenchanting society.

The failure of many national development policies and strategies has resulted in unsatisfactory housing, malnutrition, unemployment, drugtrafficking, school dropouts and broken families. The church should not ignore the suffering of the poor, the rootless, the weak and the voiceless of society. The command to love one's neighbour should inspire concern for the vulnerable, marginalised, dispossessed and outcasts of society.<sup>4</sup> As the church moves from a philosophical idealism to a sociological realism and from an ecclesiocentric understanding of salvation to a missiological understanding shaped by the sovereignty of God, it should become open to the creative zeal and empowerment of the Holy Spirit which calls, inspires, and equips us to become authentic and effective agents of reconciliation in a broken and divided world.

1 Edmund Davis, *Creative Management for Clergy and Lay-people*. Stephenson Litho. Press, Kingston, Jamaica (1994) 1.

2 Psalm 24:1 cf. John 3:16.

3 Edmund Davis, *Beyond Boundaries: Identity, Faith and Hope Amidst Fear and Insecurity*, Arawak Press, Kingston, Jamaica (2002) 39.

4 Edmund Davis, *Courage and Commitment*. University of the West Indies Publishing Association, Kingston, Jamaica (1988) 181.

In the Bible, there is an abundance of evidence with regard to prudent management and its application to mission. For instance, the Book of Genesis provides a graphic account of the Pharaoh's dream of the seven fat cows and the seven lean cows: seven healthy ears of corn and seven withered ears of corn.<sup>5</sup> After Joseph had interpreted the dream for him, a process of participatory leadership and strategic management began to unfold.

The Pharaoh appointed Joseph to the second highest position in the empire – ruler over all the land of Egypt. Joseph accepted the awesome responsibility delegated to him by the Pharaoh and used the authority entrusted to him to organise the citizens of Egypt in storing adequate goods during the seven years of plenty for the seven years of famine. Participatory leadership and strategic planning averted famine in Egypt and other countries. Joseph utilised his innate or developed leadership qualities in articulating the vision, embodying the values, defining the national culture, creating the appropriate environment and empowering others for participatory leadership.

Leadership behaviour determines, to a large extent, group decision and performance. The behaviour patterns of a leader can have positive or negative effects on the mission of the church. Because of the central importance of leadership to the integrity of mission, leaders of the church should develop and utilise appropriate behaviours. The challenges facing the church today require leadership that is sensitive, flexible, motivational and exemplary.<sup>6</sup> Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we may discover new ways of participating more meaningfully in the struggle for justice, peace, freedom and sustained development of the society. It is God's spirit within us that reconciles us to God and makes us agents of reconciliation in an estranged and disconnected world.<sup>7</sup>

The Feeding of the Five Thousand in St. John's Gospel demonstrates some sound management practices and principles:

- (a) Jesus took the loaves of bread and the fishes and blessed them. He acknowledged and thanked God for his gracious providence.
- (b) He instructed the people to sit down in rows of fifty. He applied the System Theory of Management by dividing the crowd into small manageable units. This ensured order and discipline, coordination and monitoring.
- (c) He distributed the available resources to the disciples and the disciples distributed them to the people. He involved the disciples in a process of participatory leadership by delegating responsibility and authority to them.
- (d) He advised that the leftovers should be collected.<sup>8</sup> A process of re-cycling and prudent stewardship was initiated. Surplus food should not be wasted while others are hungry. Jesus utilised appropriate management practices to avert what might have been a chaotic situation. The mission of the church was demonstrated in concrete terms and by prudent management of its resources.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 41: 39-57

<sup>6</sup> Peter Rudge, *Management in the Church*, McGraw Hill, London (1976) 163-164 cf. R. P. Bales, *Personality and Interpersonal Behaviour*, Rinehart & Winston: Holt (1970) 54 cf. Laurie Mullins, *Management and Organisational Behaviour*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Prentice Hall, London, 1999

<sup>7</sup> Edmund Davis, *Theological Education in a Multi-ethnic Society*, Boekencentrum, Zoetermer, Holland (1998) 173

<sup>8</sup> John 6: 5-13

In Acts of the Apostles, seven men were appointed to share in the leadership and mission of the church.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the spiritual needs as well as the physiological and social needs were met and there was growth in membership, fellowship and spirituality of the of the Christian community.

The church becomes effective and efficient in mission when the members pool and utilise their different gifts and resources for the individual and communal welfare. We are reminded in the Epistle to the Corinthians:

There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit  
And there are differences of administration, but the same Lord,  
And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all.<sup>10</sup>

The mission of the church should empower people for social and personal transformation. However, the pervading tendency in our contemporary global culture is the pursuit of loneliness which often results in isolation, fragmentation and individualism. We tend to be driven towards individualism rather than community.<sup>11</sup>

The church should help its members to affirm the corporateness of life and the centrality of team of spirit. Efforts should be made, particularly within large congregations to form and develop effective and cohesive groups, sharing some common purposes, a common identity, under carefully selected leaders.<sup>12</sup> Specialisation of ministries should involve not only, the division of the congregation into small units, but also the formation of groups to support the functions assigned to those units. They should develop self awareness to assist in problem-solving, to create new ideas, to recruit new members, to manage the available resources, to make decisions and to facilitate, coordinate and evaluate the mission of the church.

An important process in the efficient and effective mission of the church is to create and sustain cohesive groups. Cohesiveness in a group develops gradually. It enables the group to stick together and to attract new members. As a group becomes more cohesive, the individual members begin to adhere more to the norms and mission focus of the Church. A cohesive group will demonstrate strong loyalty to its individual members as well as high levels of performance, and sustained commitment to mission and growth in spirituality.<sup>13</sup>

Groups require training in order to be cohesive and effective in mission. The pastor should help the members of the groups to reach consensus on their common mission goals. It is not enough to have directives. The group should be able to translate these directives into specific, realistic and achievable mission objectives and goals. Furthermore, the pastor should possess the management knowledge and skills to analyse the structure of the church in order to decide if the way the groups and organisations are structured will result in maximum performance, sustained

9 Acts 6: 1-7

10 1 Cor. 12: 4-6

11 Davis, *Beyond Boundaries* (2002) 110

12 Elizabeth Sidney, Margaret Brown, Michael Argyle, *Skills with People*. London: Hutchinson (1983) 161- 6 cf. Likert, *New Patterns of Management*. New York, McGraw Hill, 1961.

13 Edmund Davis (1994) 10-11 cf. Michael Argyle, *The Social Psychology of Work*. Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1972.

commitment, cooperation, accountability, easy flow of information and appropriate leadership style.

There is no single style of leadership which is applicable to every situation. The situation should largely determine the style of leadership. This contingency approach should be evaluated in terms of its creativity, sensitivity, flexibility and effectiveness in addressing weakened community relationships, the effects of globalisation and globalism and the paradigm shift from urbanisation and industrialisation to urbanisation and crime in some countries.

In recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed on transformational and transitional leadership. However, many leaders have been assessed on the basis of whether their leadership style has been dictatorial, autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire or charismatic. These styles of leadership are critical to the efficiency and effectiveness of every organisation and should be applied with creativity, sensitivity and flexibility.

With the advent of information technology and computerisation, coupled with the increasing impact of globalisation and post-modernity on the expectations, aspirations, values and attitudes, the pastor should become the symbol of integrity and authentic mission to the various organisations and groups within the congregation. He or she is faced with the daily challenge of communicating clearly the mission focus of the church to the inter-related units. He or she should be able to identify the forces which frustrate and inspire the members to use their creative talents, their diverse skills and unreserved commitment as a crucial turning point in both contextual and global mission. However, this should not detract from the church's mission in enabling persons to experience fellowship, acceptance, spiritual growth and a sense of accomplishment in bearing witness of the Spirit. It is our Christian faith, rooted and grounded in Christ through the Holy Spirit which makes us new and transformed persons with a mission zeal to address urban and rural sociological concerns, such as: rapid population growth, unemployment, public health, national security, piped water, garbage collection, electricity and the emergence of slums and ghettos.

The evolutionary era of the third millennium requires new and creative patterns of mission to address effectively the changing circumstances. The church, like other institutions, should make assumptions of what the future might be like, while anticipating the nature and direction of the changes that are likely to develop in order not to be overtaken nor overwhelmed by the changing trends and situations.<sup>14</sup>

In order for the mission of the church in the Caribbean and the inter-connected world to be relevant and authentic we must consider empirically and critically the management practices and strategies which have informed and shaped the mission of the church. This is essential if contemporary theologians and missiologists are to come to terms with what is regarded as the technological and information age. Our dependence on modern technological systems has eroded our sense of interdependence on each other as people living in communities. Our social skills,

<sup>14</sup> Robert White, *Managing Today's Church*. Judson Press, Valley Forge (1981) 179-82 cf. Cyril Powles, *Towards a Theology of Mission for Today*. Canadian Churchman 1969.

such as helping each other to grieve, to celebrate or to cope with the challenges of life are diminishing. As a consequence, a crisis is emerging which is affecting adversely our value systems, our communication models, our sense of space and time, our energy base, our economy and our epistemology and leaving us with a sense of cynicism. We need to consider also whether the tension between the radical modernity of science and technology and the post modernity in the area of culture provides an opportunity for ministry and mission in the third millennium.<sup>15</sup>

As we continue our pilgrimage through the ambiguities and vagaries of history, with its general social decline, growing destitution, increasing illicit trade, HIV/AIDS pandemic, escalating crime and violence, fear and insecurity, the agenda of mission must be the transformation of society and of humanity. People everywhere are becoming anxious as they perceive the failure of national governments to find solutions for the current social problems, and their increasing inability to exercise control over their lives. The mission of the church, underpinned by appropriate management knowledge and skills, should work towards the realisation of an interconnected, interdependent, equitable, inclusive dynamic and holistic society.

The spiritual quest for wholeness and integration should undergird our missiological reflection and mission engagement. The transformation of the church will happen as the church is faithful to its mission. When the incarnate presence and power of God's invisible shaping of the creation and of the church is recognised and appreciated, then transformation of the church, society and humanity becomes a possibility. Furthermore, prudent management of the church may become the antidote of disconnectedness, hypocrisy, and irrelevance which, are so often associated with church life, where people feel that they have to wear masks of holiness. People should regard the church as a community of holiness and as an agent of the gospel of reconciliation and transformation.

Church management in the twenty-first century should become an exercise in critical interaction, professional sensitivity and creative flexibility in order to preserve the integrity and enhance the dynamism of mission. The pastors and lay readers of the church should acquire and improve their management knowledge and skills in order to facilitate the integration of inner spirituality and communal transformation. They should be engaged in strategic, tactical, operational and exploratory planning so that the mission of the church may be focussed, prioritised and evaluated. If the ecclesiastical leaders do not develop and utilise appropriate management practices and strategies, the missiological engagement of the church may descend to levels of unprofessionalism, incompetence and mediocrity.

15 Edmund Davis (1988) 15-16.

