

# Are Contemporary Concepts of Leadership Relevant to Christian Ministers in UK Baptist Churches?

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## Abstract

The Baptist church is one of the largest religious denominations in the United Kingdom and part of the wider global Baptist congregation. This study offers an initial exploration of whether contemporary concepts of leadership are relevant in the role of ministers in the Baptist Church in the UK. A qualitative review of literature examines both contemporary and biblical sources of leadership knowledge, to identify potentially relevant concepts of leadership which are then examined initially through the lens of *inappropriate* approaches (which ministers should avoid), followed by contrasting *helpful* ideas which can be aligned with principles of Christian faith. Final analysis asserts the relevance of both perspectives (negative elements to actively un-learn on one hand, and helpful areas to learn on the other) to enable the best development of ministers, by summarizing a set of ten aspects of leadership which are suggested as suitable approaches in Baptist ministry.

## Keywords

Faith Leadership, Organizational Design, Systems Thinking, Servant Leader, Baptist Church, Competencies

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## 1. Introduction

The social climate within Western Europe and North America has seen a repositioning of religious interests in general and a decline in church membership in particular (Tromp et al., 2020; Molteni & van Tubergen, 2022). In the US, adult attendance of churches, synagogues and mosques fell below 50% for the first time in 2020 (Jones, 2021). In Christian denominations, leadership, management and mobilization of church communities are considered important, albeit under

different traditions, structures, priorities and constraints. The Baptist Church, one of the larger Christian denominations in Europe and North America and with significant presence across the world, is no exception. The Baptist community's longest history is in the United Kingdom where the first Baptist churches emerged during the English Reformation led by Protestant, Puritan and Separatist movements in the early modern Renaissance circa 1500-1700 (Payne, 1982).

### 1.1. The UK Baptist Church Community

The Baptist movement arose both from reformist Christians rejecting Roman Catholic Church doctrines, and the English monarchy taking control of the church during the mid-1500s (Bebbington, 2010). Reformists in England experienced phases of persecution into the early 1600s and under this pressure a small exiled English group established a community in Amsterdam, founding the first Baptist church in 1609 (Payne, 1982), later returning to London in 1612, whereupon new churches arose to establish the Baptist movement.

Baptist church membership is based on believer's baptism, namely a person's own confession of faith, rather than infant baptism used by other denominations (Bebbington, 2010). Baptists were the first to call for religious freedom from state interference (Greasley, 2009). Women had prominent roles as early as the 1600s and have had access to formal ministerial training in the UK for over 100 years (Payne, 1982). Importantly, Baptist churches differ from many other movements in that Baptist ministers, elders and deacons (leaders) are voted into roles by local members (Early, 2009). Membership and leadership are therefore based upon people in each church knowing each other on a personal level.

Whilst various developments in UK non-conformist churches under the Baptist banner have occurred over the centuries, each church retains self-governance under agreed principles and codes of conduct (Baptists Together, 2023); autonomy differs from hierarchies observed in the state-institutionalized Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, or structures in other protestant denominations. The Baptist Union of Great Britain (governing body for most UK Baptist churches) includes nearly 2000 churches and over 100,000 members (Baptists World Alliance, 2023) and is part of the Baptist World Alliance, an association of 169,000 churches, for 45 million people in 122 countries (Baptists Together, 2023).

Modern Baptist churches in England vary greatly in size, demographics, activities, and tradition. All but the smallest are required in UK law to be registered charities with suitable governance structures and accountability, and each church is recognized as an organization that provides public benefits (Baptists Together, 2023). UK Baptist churches therefore essentially remain free from religious interference and religious obligations to the state.

### 1.2. Baptist "Marks of Ministry" Guidance on Church Leadership

In recent years, The Baptist Union of Great Britain published a set of "Marks of Ministry" for licensed ministers (Baptists Together, 2020), which include a defi-

dition of a “Relational in approach to leadership” which specifies the following broad areas of competence:

- Good level of self-awareness and personal understanding.
- Collaborative approach.
- Inspirer, encourager and enabler of others.
- Good interpersonal skills.
- Ability to bring about transition and change.
- Team builder.
- Valuing and responding appropriately to diversity and difference.
- Working with others beyond the local church.

### 1.3. Objectives of the Study

Each of the areas of competence within the Baptist Union’s description of relational leadership (Baptists Together, 2020) are plausible and have been carefully considered in the light of the demands and experiences of Baptist ministry in the UK. However, across the plethora of concepts, tools, techniques and behaviors described across leadership literature it is entirely possible for ministers to choose leadership approaches which appear to match the Baptist Union requirements yet which on closer examination (and direct observation of effects on others in practice) are in conflict with principles of Christian behaviour.

This study involved a preliminary exploration of whether any specific contemporary concepts of leadership either contradict, or positively align with the ministerial role, and therefore could inform approaches to support development of ministerial leadership. A summary of both biblical and contemporary sources of leadership knowledge was initially reviewed to interpret leadership context in Baptist churches. The review then further examined contemporary leadership concepts initially through *inappropriate* approaches (i.e. contradict biblical principles and therefore are pitfalls to avoid when conducting a ministerial role), followed by contrasting *helpful* ideas which can be demonstrated as being aligned with Christian faith. The final analysis asserts the relevance of both perspectives for learning, or “un-learning” (Seddon, 2003) as needed by missional church ministers and how these concepts might inform better leadership in Baptist church ministry.

## 2. The Broad Landscape of Leadership Knowledge

Leadership knowledge is vast and varied, having been popularized in secular life since the 1950s in the military, politics, business, and education (Grint, 2010; Northouse, 2013). Many experts (often called “gurus”) have become well-known, such as Maslow, Bennis, Mintzberg, Peters, Handy and Covey, alongside several Christians (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Kennedy, 1994; Kilian, 1992; Kouzes et al., 2006) such as Ed Deming (a father of modern management), Ken Blanchard (Situational Leadership), John Adair (Action-Centered Leadership), Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner (Leadership Practices Inventory).

It is worth noting that the fêted experts in leadership in management are pre-

dominantly male. Carol Kennedy's (1994) collation of twenty famous management gurus includes only one woman, and although John Adair usefully devoted a chapter in one of his books to "Women as Leaders" (Adair, 1989), he nevertheless quotes just five women in that female-focused text alongside quotes by no less than fifteen men.

Interestingly, one contrasting example among the most famous American management gurus was a Christian, Ed Deming (a man who also encouraged and recognized the professional contributions of many women), who lived quietly, attended church, and composed hymns in his free time (Kilian, 1992). He even quoted scriptural passages by the apostle Paul in his management books (Deming, 1994: p. 65). Despite his international fame and extremely busy working life into old age, Deming remained a humble person. Neighbors often saw him mowing the grass on his front lawn at his modest home in Washington DC (S. Leslie, pers. comm.).

### 3. Contextualizing Leadership in Church Ministry

For church ministers, being Christ-centered stands ahead of any leadership philosophy (Davids, 2017) and in the Baptist tradition biblical scripture forms the basis of all Christian principles. The Bible describes activities, behaviors, and attributes of many different leaders, including well-known men such as Moses, King David, the Apostle Paul, and Jesus Christ (Adair, 1989), as well as somewhat less well-known women such as Junia, Priscilla and Phoebe in the New Testament and Deborah and Huldah in the Old Testament (McKnight, 2018). Those leaders provide insights for ministry, so it is therefore possible to examine contemporary notions of leadership and make reasonable consideration of leadership theories and practices in the light of biblical principles.

Even management experts find leadership difficult to define (Bennis, 1994; Northouse, 2013) so it is a challenge to specify approaches for leaders in a church ministry setting. However, reviews of various classifications and observations (Rowdon, 2002; Davies & Dodds, 2011; Kessler & Kretzschmar, 2015) suggest leadership in church ministry covers:

- (1) *Leading spiritual development* (teaching, encouragement, or correction);
- (2) *Church leadership* (governance, organization, strategy and finance);
- (3) *Practical leadership* (decision-making, pastoral care, administration);
- (4) *Missional activity* (outreach, community services, networks, partnerships).

Across those four areas of responsibility, three other dimensions distinctively influence and characterize Christian leadership in a Baptist context:

#### 3.1. Christ as Head of the Church

Christian leaders must submit to Jesus Christ's authority and biblical example (Løvaas et al., 2020; Merkle, 2017; Davids, 2017; Bible citations: Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18). Additionally, the general public view ministers as representatives of the Church (and as such, ministers should consider themselves "ambassadors for Christ"; see Tidball, 1999), such that a minister's words, behavior and priorities

may signal either a positive example of Christ, or conversely may provide a bad example. People will make choices to follow or reject any involvement with the church from these observations. Essentially, *ministerial behavior is leadership in itself* (see Kouzes et al., 2006), yet in leading their congregations, ministers must also show that Christ alone heads the church, locally and globally.

### 3.2. The Family Metaphor for the Church

The notion of the church as a family, as well as the metaphor of “body”, characterizes optimal organizational design for church life (Viola, 2008; Deming 1994); church is not a corporation, nor is it a club. Jesus Christ’s biblically stated central expectations of love, fellowship, and hope, differentiate Christian ministerial leadership from secular leadership. In Baptist church congregations there is no hierarchy, but rather interdependence amongst believers. In Baptist church tradition this is reflected in appointments to a formal role (or “office” such as minister, elder or deacon) which, whilst elected in one church (or congregation) that role cannot be assumed if the individual moves to another church; only subsequent election of that person by the new church gives the individual any authority (Payne, 1982; Early, 2009).

### 3.3. High Ethical Standards for Ministers

High ethical standards are expected from church ministers (Watt, 2014; Baptists Together, 2020), over and above standards in other vocations. For example, while some behavior in *any* work context is clearly unacceptable (e.g. bullying, insults, discrimination, fraud), other somewhat dubious actions observed in secular leaders, and which may be tolerated or even admired by others (e.g. ambition, favoritism, deception, borderline-ethical decisions) must also certainly be avoided in any instance by Christian leaders.

## 4. Leadership Pitfalls: What to Avoid in Church Leadership

The standards set by Christ for Christian leaders, followers and the organization of churches, set a tone for considering the types of leadership approach relevant to Baptist ministry. Simply put, some secular leadership approaches may or may not be appropriate for consideration in the development of Baptist ministers. For example, many biblical views on leadership either subvert or challenge certain conventional leadership notions of power, organization, and administration (Adiprasetya, 2018). Specifically, the biblical concepts of a leader as a servant and shepherd (see the following Bible citations: Num. 27:16-18; 2 Sam. 5:2; 1 Chron. 11:2; Ps. 23:1-3; Ps. 78:72; Acts 20:28; John 13:14) is unfamiliar in many traditional secular settings. Similarly, the commonly encountered human hierarchies seen in secular organizations should be replaced in church settings (in principle at least) by having Christ as sole Head of the Church.

That said, as a consequence of a combination of mainstream education, cultural traditions, and socio-political history, many secular notions of leadership

(in politics, business, public services, education and the military) are deeply embedded across society (Deming, 1986; Seddon, 2003). Perhaps unsurprisingly, in church life the same leadership assumptions remain present or are reinforced, for example the obvious episcopal church structures (namely a hierarchy of bishops and lower levels of clerical ranks) in the mainstream Anglican church in the UK. Yet, independent as they are, Baptist churches and other reformed churches can still persist with the same incorrect underlying assumptions about leadership, management and organisation design (Viola, 2008).

However, modern leadership theory already challenges the effectiveness of many of these otherwise well-established patterns of hierarchical leadership (Stevens & Collins, 1993; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Senge, 1990; Greenleaf, 1998). The contrast in ministerial expectations suggests that there is value in ministers making the effort to identify and un-learn any damaging, inappropriate leadership ideas (Jacobs, 2009), to avoid falling into error. To assist this, the summary below outlines a series of common but unhelpful practices which not only oppose scriptural expectations and Christian behavioral norms, but also contradict the most resilient and coherent modern contemporary leadership theories.

#### **4.1. Suppression through Personal Ego, Arrogance and Ambition**

Personal Ego, Arrogance and Ambition may be admired in secular leaders yet ignores the needs of others, hinders collaboration, suppresses others' contributions, and directly contradicts Jesus' teaching (Marshall, 1991; McIntosh & Rima, 1997). Like the best secular leaders, a minister must cast off ego and personal pride (Setran, 2016); modern leadership proponents recognize that humility in a leader also allows a better focus on work (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Humility makes space for Christ-centered purposefulness, vision, and opportunity to notice how others can contribute.

#### **4.2. Power as a Corrupting Force**

Power can be used in unethical or inappropriate ways. Sexual manipulation is clearly corrupt, as is the use of legal influence, political coercion, or the use of threat (e.g. job security or personal safety); but the same is true for more subtle avenues (e.g. status, money) which insidiously feed exploitation and will damage church communities (Marshall, 1991; de Vries, 2001). Secular symbols of status (job titles, clothes, privileges, salary, deference, limited access to leaders) can be mirrored in churches. Preservation or deference to status causes separation in a church community, through relational distancing of leaders from members, and potential misdirection of appreciation, or silencing of legitimate questions (Marshall, 1991); all aspects challenged in scripture (Bible citations: Luke 14:8-11; John 13:12-15; 1 Cor. 12:24, 4:9).

#### **4.3. Destructiveness Arising from Aggression**

Aggression is universally perceived as negative and yet is still commonly encountered in leaders across many organizational sectors. This behavior occurs

when individual leaders place their rights above others (Smith, 1975). For church leaders, this behavior is directly contrary to God's expectations (Bible citations: Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22: 37-40). Instead, ministers must express value-based assertiveness to avoid them falling into damaging behaviors (Smith, 1975; also Bible citation: Rom. 11:18). An assertive attitude can maintain a value-based approach even if challenging injustice, ungodliness, or aggression from others.

#### **4.4. Dangers of Personal Preference and Prejudice**

Personal preference and prejudice can lock a leader into thinking "I know best" or "this is the way things are done" or even "we did that once and it does not work". For a church leader this self-focused mindset is unbiblical and damages relationships, suppresses creativity and undermines loyalty. Instead, a more open-minded approach is needed, since leaders should recognize that no-one has complete knowledge and expertise (Deming, 1994).

#### **4.5. Confusing Separation of Leadership and Management**

Separation of Leadership and Management should be avoided, or it risks dividing the attention of the leader, as well as complicating relationships (since the leader may attempt to construct different personas of "a leader" or "a manager" in different situations, which confuses others). This false dichotomy potentially creates conflicts in effort (for example, by attempting to be "motivational" as a leader, yet also seeking "control" as a manager). Deming (1986) suggests that "To manage, one must lead. To lead, one must understand the work that he and his people are responsible for". Christian leaders and ministers in particular, must lead and manage, just as was the case for biblical leaders (e.g. Old Testament: Moses, Joshua, Deborah. New Testament: Jesus, Stephen, Paul, Timothy, Phoebe); so both inspire and organize, encourage and correct, teach and assist (Bible citations: Deut. 34: 10-12; Judges 4-5; 1 Sam. 1-28; Mark 10: 42-45; John 13:3; Heb. 12:1-3; Rom. 16:1-2).

#### **4.6. Oppression through Command-and-Control Hierarchies**

Command-and-control hierarchies are now recognized in many sectors as being unhelpful since chains-of-command mask problems due to hesitancy or fears raised in people lower in the structure (Seddon, 2003; Deming, 1986). Nevertheless, command-and-control remains stubbornly common in church as well as in business (Seddon, 2003; Viola, 2008). This is a problem, particularly for the dynamics of Baptist communities, since command-and-control relies on power, not servanthood, and stifles collaboration and contributions which should normally be expected from members of a thriving church community.

#### **4.7. Exclusion Driven by In-Groups**

In-groups (and cliques) or out-groups in a church cause division contrary to God's expectations, the worst cases being issues of racial division (even if entire-

ly unintended) such that minorities are isolated by majority routines, behavior, ignorance, insensitivity, language, or prejudice (Lindsay, 2019; see also the Bible citation: Rev. 7:9). Similar separation can be de-marked by involvement or exclusion of different age groups. Favoritism by leaders causes resentment in those out of favor, or a sense of abandonment by those in need.

#### 4.8. Limitations Caused by Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking appears to be a logical element of leadership, but for church leaders an adherence to human strategies and budgets may hinder God's will, or smother possibilities and restrict ministry (Viola, 2008). Although plans are useful where a physical item (e.g. a building) is developed (Clayton, 2012), a church must avoid becoming subservient to its own plans instead of actually serving Christ. Instead, a blank sheet of paper alongside thoughtful, prayerful consideration and discussion can bring transformation; this approach allows decisions and priorities to adapt to evolving needs, opening creative opportunities to serve local communities, or to meet needs outside the immediate sphere of the church.

#### 4.9. Distractions of Results-Driven Leadership

Results-driven leadership seeks outcomes but lacks compassion, reducing people to numbers. Church leaders may mistakenly choose to focus on counting new members, or how many people have been baptised, or the number of activities being delivered. Whilst it is exciting to see good results, data means little without relationships, which are the very essence of church (Coleman, 2010). For a Baptist minister, God's kingdom should be seen in people's spiritual growth, personal development, or impact on others by living as a follower of Jesus Christ (Viola, 2008).

### 5. Towards Effective Leadership Competencies for Ministers

Church communities and Christian people, like any collection of human beings, are not perfect, and personal motivations may shift away from the biblical calls made by Christ. Sometimes Baptist churches paradoxically *WANT* hierarchy and rely on ministers and rules, rather than shared responsibilities of priesthood, discipleship, and community presence. To counteract this, elimination of church-limiting habits is needed (Viola, 2008), and this review suggests that progress can be made by ministers learning to pursue the following ten areas in their development as leaders.

#### 5.1. A Purpose-Driven Spiritual Perspective

A purpose-driven perspective is fundamental (Deming, 1986; Coppin & Barratt, 2002; Senge, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 1993), *NOT* primarily chasing a vision, and certainly not pursuing targets (for example not to obsess about 'doubling the membership' or 'run cultural events' or 'host more home groups than last year'),



since these are often human-constructed assurances of progress. Rather, instead of setting targets, leaders should seek for themselves and their congregations to serve Christ by living, demonstrating, and communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ. Empowerment by the Holy Spirit is a very specific feature for Christian leaders who, as believers, rely on God through faith, and not themselves (Bible citation: Acts 20:28). At a practical level, the “status syndrome” seen in secular leadership (Marshall, 1991) must be dismantled in church ministry; no single person has an exclusive connection with God, nor an exclusive vision of church. In addition, whereas secular leader primarily focus on personal development through self-reflection and self-management, ministers must, before anything, place themselves before God in humility and prayer.

### 5.2. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is nevertheless important (Baptists Together, 2020) and is built by seeking feedback from others (usually through discussion during day-to-day work), or self-reflection (Bennis, 1994), or in constructive discussion away from normal activities. Any team leader “must be open enough for others to learn from their mistakes” (Wright, 2003), and the same is true for ministers in churches. In corporate circles formal 360° questionnaires can sometimes help if used, and perhaps could apply in larger church settings but must always be implemented with caution, since a questionnaire must not become a proxy for conversations which scripture says are better aired in the open (Bible citation: 1 Cor. 6:1-5).

### 5.3. Humble Servant Leadership

Humble servant leadership (Adair, 1989; Adiprasetya, 2018; Baptists Together, 2020), modelled by Christ (Bible citations: Mark 9:35; John 13:1; Acts 3:13, 4:27, 4:30; Rom. 15:8.2 Cor 10:1), arises from “sacrificial service” (Viola, 2008) and is shown in attention, listening, understanding, collaborating, and learning, as well as questioning one’s own motives. The servant leadership message has previously been identified in the prophetic biblical words of Ezekiel reflected in the New Testament letter of Jude; influence and service, vision and hope, character and trust, relationships and power, dependency and accountability (Wright, 2003). To emphasize this aspect of servanthood Marshall (1991) emphasizes that in church ministry:

“leadership is a special function but it carries no status with it whatsoever”.

### 5.4. Leading through Thoughts, Tasks and Enabling Others

The idea of leadership as a collection of thoughts and tasks (i.e. not a role), is less familiar but important. Management guru Ed Deming (1986) started his career in the 1920s, in the heyday of Command-and-Control (or “Scientific Management” as it was known; Grint, 2010), yet he described a very different way of management thinking (i.e. systems thinking). Deming only started using the con-

temporary word “leader” after suggestion by a friend (Aguayo, 1991; Neave, 1990). For Baptist ministers, new leadership thinking requires a focus on; work (understanding what God wants us to do), the people (as individuals and as a church community), their contributions to the work, and a shared sense of mission. This is quite different to seeing oneself as the sole responsible expert.

In serving others, ministers should learn to encourage contribution (Bennis, 1994) to develop the capacity of the church, including discipleship and maturity of church members (Kouzes et al., 2006). A useful situational approach, to enable ministers to decide the best ways to involve and enable congregational members is described by the Complementary-Empowering Model of Ministerial Leadership (see Wright, 2003). Any Baptist church minister needs to be courageous and willing to encourage people to speak up, and where needed for people to be free to disagree with prevailing views without fear of judgement, to enable truthful, collective, prayerful discernment by the whole membership community (i.e. consensus across the church congregation).

### **5.5. Balancing Head, Heart and Guts**

Head, heart and guts are three perspectives to balance in ministerial leadership: all three should be used to ensure a correct, blended approach (Dotlich, Cairo, & Rhinesmith, 2006). Sometimes logical decisions are needed, other moments require compassion, and occasionally courage is required. At a ministerial level this combination of capabilities reflects the “knowledge-character-skills” balance used in many Baptist colleges to describe aspects for development in licensed ministers (Clarke, 2015). All of these behaviors must be present, with measure and in balance, within individuals and across a ministerial leadership team.

### **5.6. Relational, Universal and Cultural Sensitivity**

Church leadership is seen first and foremost as relational; between people (Wright, 2003). Relational, Universal and Cultural Sensitivity (Lewis, 2006; de Vries, 2001) are elements which help to build an inclusive church (Hellerman, 2017; Warren, 2005). A relational approach is a challenge in large churches, and so requires shared leadership responsibility, as well as accessibility and approachability in leaders (Watt, 2014). The principle “know your people” is useful (Marshall, 1991) and important for Baptist communities. Leaders should pay attention to individuals as Christ did, even when he passed people in the street, or they approached him in busy crowds (Bible citations: Luke 8:40-50; Mark 10:46).

### **5.7. View Church as an Organic “System” with a Family Culture**

Church culture should be considered as a “family”, its organizational body as an organic “system”, not a mechanistic institution (Deming, 1994; Viola, 2008; Warren, 2005). This means enabling belonging, mutual ministry, edification, correction, provision, and being a positive influence and encouragement for the

wider local community (Bible citation: 1 Cor. 12:8). Stevens and Collins (1993) and Pattison (1977) suggest that the management ideas around “systems theory” (see Churchman, 1968; Deming, 1986, 1994; Senge, 1990; Seddon, 2003; Meadows, 2009) aligns with this notion of organic church organization. Pattison (1977) also asserts that interactions between a congregation and its minister can develop and mature over time through the stages of Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing as originally observed in generic teams by Tuckman (1965). This model also reminds us that, even in the most mature congregations, this relational dynamic shifts back to the initial Forming stage as members leave and join the congregation, as can be observed in practice (see Stevens & Collins, 1993).

### 5.8. Assertive Interpersonal Interactions

Assertive verbal and non-verbal behaviors can be learned, particularly how to avoid non-valuing behavior (i.e. aggression and passivity) and how to overcome self-defeating or offensive behavior in oneself or others (Peters, 2011; Smith, 1975; Coppin & Barratt, 2002; McIntosh & Rima, 1997; Coleman, 2010). Church ministers must also retain the “lack of vanity or presumption” that Adair (1989) considers as particularly characterizing Jesus Christ’s approach to leadership. Assertive leadership is based on legitimate and acceptable requests, using rational persuasion and not coercion (Wright, 2003).

### 5.9. Vision-Building for Shared Commitment

Vision-building is a popular approach for many leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Bennis, 1994) but must be a process that is used to engage, inspire, and develop commitment, *NOT* to set personal agendas. For Christian leaders, vision comes from the inspiration of God (Bible citations: Luke 1:22; Luke 24:23; Acts 2:17; Acts 9:10-12; Acts 10: 3-19, 11:5; Acts 16:6-10.) and is collectively discerned by church members. Wright (2003) encourages ministerial leaders to “think aloud when considering vision, mission and strategy”, including sharing personal ideas during conversations with church members, to enable people to understand, and then develop further ideas, so that “dreams and plans become *ours* not *mine*”.

### 5.10. Short-Term Goals and Innovation Cycles

Short-term goals allow space for discernment which may enable a change in direction or to simply keep going. Goals define a course of action and are necessary to create flow (valuable work), if owned by the people doing the work (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). People hold value in stretching yet achievable tasks (de Vries, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Data (e.g. budget, attendees) inform goals, but for church communities God’s guidance is vital (as informed by prayer, sharing of scripture, or through personal testimony). An example in biblical history is how during the Israelites’ 40 years spent in the wilderness after escaping Egypt, the community would set camp and stay in place for anything from just a few hours up to a year until leaders were prompted to move (Bible citation: Num.

9:21-23). For people of faith, having flexibility of action, steered by God's prompting is key.

A focus on short term goals also supports effective innovation. Innovation cycles involve step-by-step experiments, observing what works, why, and deciding what to "scale-up", adapt or stop (Ries, 2011; Seddon, 2003). For Christian believers, this process offers space to seek God's guidance (prayerfully), which also helps avoid the risk of over-committing church resources, or following feelings, fads or popular agendas (Greenleaf, 1998). Jesus told his disciples to be bold, but also to "shake the dust off" and move on if things did not work (Bible citations: Matt. 10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5). The idea of innovation and upscaling complements the idea of "building up" the church (Tidball, 1999; Løvaas et al., 2020), by taking time, involving the team (the members of the church community), and absorbing and assimilating any learning.

## 6. Conclusion: Leadership for Missional Ministers

A Christian minister will face particular and unusual challenges not experienced by secular leaders. Christian faith and life follow the principles and commands from Jesus Christ as communicated through biblical scripture. Those expectations have remained relevant across a changing landscape of history, contexts, and cultures. Leaders in Christian ministry must therefore continue to apply approaches which remain consistent with Christ's requirements as presented in the Bible. When Baptist ministers explore the suitability of leadership approaches, they should be encouraged to examine proven, sound leadership ideas which can be described in ordinary language, not jargon or "leaderbabble" (de Vries, 2001). As a final test, any approach which can be readily modelled with positive outcomes in everyday life, is also likely to be helpful and less likely to contradict biblical principles.

Against those criteria of biblical integrity, clarity and positive application, Christian leaders must dismiss hierarchical power, self-reliance, egotism, aggression and certain strategic management practices; these have no place in church, despite some denominations still clinging to these ideas (Viola, 2008). Ministerial training should instead pay attention to developing a minister's skills in assertiveness, governance, discipline, innovation, and engaging people (Schein, 2004; Wright, 2003), alongside abilities in biblical guidance and modelling Christ in behavior, thought and words (Baptists Together, 2020).

The challenge goes further; Baptist ministers must facilitate the church's development as a shared priesthood, members being responsible to each other and engaging with the wider external community (Matt. 5:13-16). At a fundamental level, this requires a relational approach to leadership (Wright, 2003). Ministers should be servants, operating outside hierarchies and structural constraints; the leader being a shepherd within the flock (Viola, 2008), even if the secular world does not recognize this as "leadership". This review recommends tangible, reliable, and compatible approaches which are relevant in developing relational servant-leadership, to better enable effectiveness in Christian church ministers.

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