

The significance of the senior pastor for change and growth

A literature-based discussion

Jan Inge Jenssen

Hauge School of Management at NLA University College

Arne Mella

The Norwegian School of Leadership and Theology

ABSTRACT

This is a literature-based article on the importance of the pastor for change and growth in the local church. The article discusses five themes derived from a review of the research literature, namely the general leadership literature and the church leadership literature. The contribution of this article is its discussion of the church leadership literature on the role of the pastor, taking into account the general research on the role of a top leader. Six propositions on how the pastor contributes to change and growth in the church are derived:

- 1) The pastor, as the senior leader, is vital for team development, change, and growth.
- 2) The personality traits and gifts of the pastors are important.
- 3) To increase change and growth, the senior pastor must emphasize a change-promoting leadership role and style, moderated by the roles and styles of the leadership team members.
- 4) A change- and task-oriented style must be moderated and reinforced - probably more so than in other organizations - by a transformational and relational leadership style.
- 5) The pastor should build an influential top-leader team to create direction, strategy, and change. Diversity facilitates the necessary discussion within the team. A common goal and appealing vision contribute positively to cooperation within the team.
- 6) Leadership should not only be understood as what the leader or pastor does but also as a complex interaction with other actors and the context. Building trust and good relationships with subordinate leaders and coworkers is thus vital for change and growth.

Finally, a model for understanding the connection between the pastor, change, and growth is outlined.

Keywords: Church leadership, top management, senior pastor, change leadership, church development

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and background

Many churches are no longer growing, and many are stagnating. To reverse this development, change is necessary. There are many reasons for the decline. A pastor is of great importance for the development and growth of a church (Hadaway, 1991; Towns et al., 1998). In general management research, a chief executive (CEO) is essential for direction and results (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Mackey, 2008; Peterson et al., 2003). The research question posed by this article is as follows: *what is the significance and function of the senior pastor in relation to change and growth in churches?* In this discussion, it is necessary to consider the intermediate factors, between the pastor themselves and their results.

It might seem strange to talk about church performance in the terms used in general organizational studies. However, according to the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20), the overall goal of a church is to grow in both numbers and quality (sanctification). In this discussion, increased growth is regarded as improved performance and change as a prerequisite for growth.

In management research, the role of the CEO - in general and in change processes - is much discussed (e.g., Beer & Nohria, 2000; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Mackey, 2008; Peterson et al., 2003). As early as 1938, the importance of the top manager in formulating a collective intention to bind employees together was emphasized (Bernard, 1938). Selznick (1957) emphasizes the significance of the CEO implanting values in the organization (Fernandez & Vecchio, 1997), Schein (1985) points to the importance of the creation of organizational culture, and Tichey and Cohen (1997) argue that the CEO is heavily involved in setting the course of action. The latter point is considered vital for contextual changes (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Thompson, 1967).

Later, the contextual constraints limiting the effects of the CEO were discussed within population ecology (Hannan & Freeman, 1977). In this approach, the impact of the CEO is regarded as partly symbolic and modest (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). A summary of empirical studies taking this approach reveals CEO variance in firm performance of just 6–15 percent (Reger et al. (1997). However, Mackey (2008) argues that these results are based on inadequate analysis techniques and shows that the CEO actually explains 29% of corporate-level performance. According to Oreg and Berson (2019), few studies had examined the conceptual relationship between leadership and change before their own integrative model. Their model does not look at the top leader, but at leadership more generally and its relationship to change. We will draw on their model in this paper.

Quite independently of general leadership literature, the pastor's function is discussed in the literature on church leadership. We will use both of these bodies of literature in this study. In addition, biblical material sets the standards for the church. The academic contribution of this article lies in its discussion of the popular literature on the role of the pastor, primarily taken from the church growth literature, in light of research on the general role of top leaders.

Discussion of the pastor's function cannot be done independent of context (Fernandez & Vecchio, 1997; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977/1993; Thompson & Vecchio, 2009). Most of the studies in this paper are from a free church context (i.e., churches that are not state-governed or funded), but some of the discussions are also relevant to other church settings. The studies have been conducted in various regional and national contexts - relevant factors

to consider when leading organizations (Burak, 2018; Hofstede et al., 2010). What does this mean for this study? Our conclusions are relatively open, with room for adaptation; and they are intended to be tested by further empirical research to assess their context dependency.

Structure and content

Churches, like other organizations, require formal and responsible leadership. Such leadership includes more than one pastor, but in most free churches, the senior pastor is the top executive leader with overall responsibility for the church. In this article, therefore, we choose to focus on the pastor as the main (top) leader. Although the focus is on free churches, the reasoning presented will also be relevant to other churches.

A range of theoretical contributions will be considered in this discussion of the pastor's impact on performance, partly because the pastor has responsible for different tasks at several levels (motivation, structuring, implementation, management, decisions, preaching, etc.). Every element is essential, but "the whole" is crucial. When studying the complex work of a leader, it is vital to take an eclectic approach to theories and perspectives. The common thread in this article is the pastor's function.

The church has both a spiritual–theological and a human–sociological side (Råmunddal, 2011). The spiritual–theological dimension represents the inside or nature of the church (Jenssen, 2018; Råmunddal, 2011). This dimension has an impact on how the church is run. The church leadership should first and foremost support the development of the spiritual–theological side of the church - what some call the *organic element* (Jenssen, 2018). There are both human and spiritual means of making such efforts. In the discussion, we will always include both sides in the reasoning. However, the focus is not only on the spiritual aspects of the pastor's leadership. Rather, we believe that there are positive synergies between spiritual and human factors in leadership (Jenssen, 2018).

In this paper, we will formulate propositions about the pastor's role and significance for change and growth, as discussed in the church growth and leadership literature and in the general management literature. We will first discuss the leader's impact on performance and then look at the intermediate factors between the pastor and their performance, such as their personality traits, leadership style or orientation, transformational leadership, coworker involvement, and leadership team. Finally, the article presents some conclusions, a tentative model, and suggestions for further research.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This is a review article with an executive aim—that is, an article that summarizes and systematizes the literature to facilitate real-world leadership practice. The referenced literature on the management subject has been selected for its relevance to discussions of change and growth in the church. Many search methods were used to explore the databases and locate the relevant literature. All sources are of good research quality (level 1 or 2 in the Norwegian journal classification system).

The literature on this topic in the context of churches is scarce. Hence, the search options are also limited, and the research quality of the empirical literature is varied. Based on a long-standing interest in church leadership, we found some sources relevant to this article's topic that were of acceptable professional quality.

We conducted a systematic review, applying a narrative synthesis approach. We searched for relevant evidence to summarize and with which to build our knowledge (Booth et al., 2016). This approach allowed for both quantitative and qualitative studies in the review. Bias was minimized through the emphasis on an extensive literature search and a transparent presentation of the researchers' decisions, procedures, and conclusions (Bryman, 2008, s. 85). A narrative approach relies on the use of text to summarize and explain findings.

Since we used both qualitative and quantitative studies in the research project, and we did so in different organizational contexts, the aim was not to make final generalized conclusions but to build suppositions for further investigations. The following process was used:

1. We clarified the purpose of the research (see above) to provide a basis for the selection of the literature (Bryman, 2008).
2. We defined the search methods (search words, inclusion/exclusion criteria, choice of databases). We used reference lists and meta-analysis and searched EBSCO-host. In addition, we used relevant search terms to search Amazon.com for books. The search terms included "CEO," "top management," "chief executive," "impact," "change," "growth," and "performance." When relevant literature was discovered, literature lists were derived from it and used as guides for further searches.
3. We read and either included or excluded the literature based on its purpose and quality.
4. We drew key conclusions (Popay et al., 2006).

Through the literature review, we singled out six themes relevant to our research question. This was not a complete list. It was based on the findings from business research, and each of the themes had also to be discussed in the literature on churches to be considered relevant to this context. In the following we discuss each theme and conclude each of these discussions with a proposition. The table below provides an overview of the six themes and the reviewed literature:

Table 1: *Overview of the themes and the literature review*

Themes related to organizational change and growth processes	References from business literature	References from church literature
1) The leader's importance, also for team development	Beer and Nohria (2000); Birkinshaw and Gibson (2004); Boyd (2011); Conger (2000); Consortium (2023); Eva et al. (2021); Francoeur et al. (2021); Guthey et al. (2021); Jenssen and Jørgensen (2004); Kellerman (2012); Kotter (1995); Kotter and Schlesinger (2008); Mackey (2008); Pfeffer (2015); Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018); Veenstra (2020); Wood and Petriglieri (2004)	George and Bird (2017); Hadaway (1991); Ljung (1993); Råmunddal (2011); Volf (2002); Wagner (1976); Wagner (1979, 1984, 1990); Warren (1995)
2) The importance of a leader's personality traits, characteristics, and gifts for change and growth	Bono and Judge (2004); Cannella Jr and Monroe (1997); Church and Waclawski (1998); Colbert et al. (2012); Grønhaug et al. (2001); Howard and Bray (1986); Johnson and Hill (2009); Judge et al. (2002); Kahn and Katz (1978); Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991); Kouzes and Posner (1987); Lord et al. (1986); McClelland and Boyatzis (1982); McCrae and Costa Jr (1997); Monica Shu-Fen (2018); Nadkarni and Herrmann (2010); Østbø and Nordvik (2008); Peterson et al. (2003); Ünsar and Karalar (2013); van Eeden et al. (2008); Wagner and Sternberg (1990)	Clarke (2008); Wagner (1979, 2006, 2014)
3) The importance of leadership roles and style/ behavioral patterns of senior pastors	Arvonen and Ekvall (1999); Conger (2000); del Val (2003); Ekvall and Arvonen (1991); Eva et al. (2021); Greiner (1998); Jenssen and Randøy (2002); Jenssen and Randøy (2006); Kotter and Schlesinger (2008); Mintzberg (1975, 1990, 2009); Oreg and Berson (2019); Phelps et al. (2007); Van de Ven and Pool (1995); Yukl (1999)	Allen (2017); Clarke (2008); Jenssen (2020); Wagner (1984, 2006)
4) The impact on transformational values through relationships	Bass (1985); Bass (1996); (Bass, 1997); Bass and Riggio (2006); Burns (1978); (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001); Keller (1992); (Kotter, 1995); McColl-Kennedy and Anderson (2002); Yukl (2010); (Yukl & Gardner, 2019)	Barna (1992); Hadaway (1991); (Råmunddal, 2018; Wagner, 1979); Wagner (1989)
5) The importance of the top leadership team	Arnulf (2012); Barrick et al. (2007); Colbert et al. (2008); Conger (2000); Day et al. (2014); Eva et al. (2021); Haleblan and Finkelstein (1993); Hambrick and Mason (1984); Hawkings (2018); Jansen et al. (2012); Katzenbach (1997); Kotter (1995); Lubatkin et al. (2006); Mintzberg (1973, 2009); Nickerson (1998); Peterson et al. (2003); Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018); Uzzi (1997); Yammarino et al. (2012)	Gangel (1997); Hartwig et al. (2015); Harvey (2021); Macchia (2013); Smyth (2020); Volf (1998, 2002); Weems Jr. (2010); Williams (2021); Wimberly Jr. (2015)
6) The importance of leadership through subordinates	Appelo (2011); Bennett et al. (2003); Birkinshaw and Gibson (2004); Burke et al. (2007); Fuglestad (2006); Gronn (2002); Hargreaves (2009); Hayward (2018); Hussain et al. (2018); Lewin (1951); Møller and Fuglestad (2006); Ottesen and Møller (2006); Sivesind et al. (2006); Spillane et al. (2004)	Gangel (1997); Hartwig et al. (2015); Harvey (2021); Jenssen (2020); Macchia (2013); Volf (1998, 2002); Weems Jr. (2010); Williams (2021); Wimberly Jr. (2015)

THE IMPORTANCE OF TOP LEADERSHIP

Some theologians argue that a biblical church cannot be structured with greater responsibility and influence given to those at higher organizational levels (Volf, 2002).¹ They argue that this will hinder the development of various gifts and ministries in the church.

There has been little empirical research in this area, but the literature on church growth, indicates that more leadership levels, focused and proactive purpose-driven leaders, with authority, are essential for creating spaces for the development of gifts and to lead churches into change and growth processes (Hadaway, 1991); Wagner (1976); (Wagner, 1979, 1984; Warren, 1995).

In the leadership literature, there is much discussion about whether changes are driven from the bottom or the top of an organization. Such “either–or” questions are often uninteresting, as the answer is usually “both–and” (Beer & Nohria, 2000). Sometimes there are forces at the lower levels of the organization that stimulate change processes (Jenssen & Jørgensen, 2004), and sometimes it is the work of top management. However, Conger (2000) found that change driven by the top leader has the greatest chance of success (see also Kotter, 1995).

Leaders, and especially top managers, are essential in change processes for multifaceted reasons. Changes are often large, interdependent, and of a systemic nature. Overall visions and goals may need to change. This requires a great breadth of perspectives and effort in several departments. By virtue of the leadership function, a top leader often has a greater breadth of perspectives - for example, as they may be working with cases and managers in all departments (Conger, 2000). During their education, experience, and professional careers, leaders are often exposed to processes and training that other employees may lack. In addition, the leader of an organization often has primary responsibility for developing and implementing the organization’s strategy (Conger, 2000).

Furthermore, the influence that comes with the leadership function increases the probability of a breakthrough in change processes. A leader’s impact has clear limits, but it is usually more significant than the influence of a middle manager or employee. The leader’s ability to make an impact is also linked to the formal authority that the position provides. This leadership function provides greater access to resources (money, buildings, materials, etc.) for use when designing rewards and goals and recruiting employees, as well as access to information and the channels needed to disseminate that information. Boyd (2011); Kotter (1995) note that top managers also develop processes for change and ensure that these are implemented.

Working as the leader of an organization is often an obvious function. This may be applicable to pastors, who, among other normal leadership tasks, meet the church members for weekly preaching. Therefore, we assume they cause much of what happens in the organization. Moreover, such leaders often become a symbol of change and model behavior. Their reactions to critical events are seen by managers and employees at lower levels: their rewards are seen, as are the criteria they set when assigning leadership tasks (Conger, 2000). These aspects of leadership may give a pastor a greater likelihood of success than lower-level managers.

¹ In the literature on church leadership, there has been a sharp discussion about whether a hierarchical model versus more participatory models (Baasland, 1993) is appropriate. From an organizational-theoretical point of view, this discussion is somewhat confusing. Every organization, including churches, will have a hierarchy – formal or informal - but the degree of e.g. centralization of authority, the form of the vertical differentiation, and how the organization is coordinated will vary.

This may be why separating the pastoral function (preaching, pastoral care, etc.) from the church leadership is difficult. As Råmunddal (2020) explains, church development requires a close relationship between preaching, pastoral leadership, coworker development, prioritization of financial resources, and so on. A division of the leadership role into leadership and administration may be particularly difficult in situations where there is a great need for change. In such situations, there will be a need for stronger and more centralized leadership, as well as for important theological and spiritual direction (Råmunddal, 2011) that motivate such processes in churches.

At the same time, the boundaries of the authority of pastors may be more limited than those of other top executives. In addition, the board may work closely with the pastor. To give the local church pastor more opportunities to create change, it may be necessary for some churches to permit more room to maneuver (George & Bird, 2017). This does not have to mean an abuse of power, and Wagner (1990) argues that the leaders God uses for church growth are humble servants and influential leaders.

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the collective aspects of leadership. Agile and adaptive leadership form parts of leadership fashion streams such as MBO, TQM, and LEAN. Although the latter have been criticized as not based on solid research (Kellerman, 2012; Pfeffer, 2015; Wood & Petriglieri, 2004), these trends have nonetheless triggered fruitful leadership research (Guthey et al., 2021).

These new trends are responses to the environment becoming more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous and the need for greater responsiveness to change. From the agile perspective, advice includes traditional concepts such as developing, reflecting, learning, inspiring, engaging, unifying, empowering, achieving, and innovating (Consortium, 2023), which contribute to several of the leadership perspectives referred to in this paper. Adaptive leadership is, in many ways, a product of organizational change perspectives and focuses on reacting quickly to opportunities (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

While there has been a shift toward teams and the more collective aspects of leadership (Eva et al., 2021), which we will reflect on later in this paper, it would be too hasty to conclude that the top manager has become less important. Rather, the leadership role may have become more intricate - for example, with an increasing need for the ability to maneuver in situations that demand both adaptability and alignment (ambidexterity; (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004) both simultaneously and in sequence.

The conclusions in the church growth tradition are drawn from studies of various denominations. Even Ljung (1993), who is somewhat critical of a dominant focus on the pastor as a leader, emphasizes that the central role of the pastor must not be underestimated: "*If everyone is a leader, then no one is a leader*" (s. 128).

In many churches, the pastor can be described as follows: he knows the members by name; he knows their family situations and what they do. He is expected to make home visits, provide pastoral care, and distribute flowers. He must perform specific duties, such as preaching, marrying couples, and conducting funerals. Many churches have strong boards, and the church members exert significant influence through the general meetings. The pastor has little influence, even in less practical matters (Ljung, 1993). Others person in the church actually lead the congregation. According to Wagner (1990), this is an important reason why many churches do not grow.

Proposition 1: The pastor, as the main or senior leader in the local church, is of great importance for team development, change, and growth.

PERSONALITY TRAITS, CHARACTERISTICS, GIFTS, AND CHANGE

There are many indications that personality traits are important for how managers perform their work (e.g., Johnson & Hill, 2009; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Based on a review of literature, Grønhaug et al. (2001) distinguish between dynamic characteristics (activity and energy levels, performance motivation, ambition level, and initiative); personality traits (sociability, extroversion, emotional stability, etc.); and cognitive characteristics (intelligence, practical intelligence, cognitive complexity, etc.).

According to Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991), activity and energy levels are essential for good management. Performance motive is about a person's drive, and several studies have shown that this is important for management-oriented attitudes, creating the independence needed to withstand the pressure to make everyone happy (McClelland & Boyatzis, 1982). It is also evident that ambition (Howard & Bray, 1986); initiative (Kouzes & Posner, 1987); and influence management behavior are necessary. Ambition is about perseverance and targeted behavior, while initiative is needed to initiate measures.

The five-factor model for personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1987) has gained widespread acceptance as a method for determining basic personality traits and explaining the behavior of top executives (Cannella Jr & Monroe, 1997; Peterson et al., 2003). The five factors are conscientiousness, emotional stability, sociability, extroversion, and openness to experience (see table below; (Bono & Judge, 2004; McCrae & Costa Jr, 1997; Nadkarni & Herrmann, 2010; Østbø & Nordvik, 2008).

Nadkarni and Herrmann (2010) show that, for leaders, there is a connection between personality, strategic flexibility, and results. Given the relationship between personality and strategic flexibility, it is not unreasonable to assume that a top manager's ability to handle change is affected by their personality in various ways.

Table 2: Overview of the big five personality traits. * For more detailed operationalizations see (McCrae & Costa Jr, 1997; Østbø & Nordvik, 2008). See also (Judge et al., 2002).

Personality traits	Causal relationship	The concepts*
Conscientiousness	Positive	Systematics and order, tidiness, self-discipline, and reliability
Neuroticism	Negative	The ability to adapt to different situations and safely handle stress, emotional stability
Agreeableness	Reversed U-curve	Empathy, kindness, ability to cooperate, caring nature, conflict-avoidant nature, modesty, etc.
Extraversion	Positive	Open to meeting with others, being sociable, and taking initiative in social settings
Openness to experience	Positive	Intellectually curious, open to various stimuli, a creative thinker, imaginative

Given the relationship between personality and strategic flexibility, it is not unreasonable to assume that a top manager's ability to handle change is affected by their personality in various ways. For example, general and practical intelligence, expertise, and the ability to integrate bits of information from many sources (cognitive complexity), are cognitive qualities. General intelligence is about what some call "metacognitive capacity"- namely, the ability to understand how to plan, manage, control, and organize the resources available to solve tasks (Grønhaug

et al., 2001). An ability to handle these cognitive processes is beneficial for leaders (Lord et al., 1986). Professional expertise is an advantage for leaders, partly because it provides a basis for the exercising of authority (Kahn & Katz, 1978). Practical intelligence is about the ability to make use of one's practical experiences. This intelligence does not arrive through books or school, but through one's daily life. In this context, different people have different opportunities to develop leadership qualities through training. There seems to be a connection between practical intelligence and the ability to solve leadership tasks (Wagner & Sternberg, 1990).

In the literature on church leadership, gifts of nature and grace are key concepts, and these gifts seem to share common features with personality traits and characteristics. These gifts are believed to be given to individuals when they are born and/or when they become Christians. In this thinking, special gifts are favorable and may be necessary for a pastor (Clarke, 2008; Wagner, 1979, 2006, 2014). The gifts of nature may include personality characteristics and skills. However, there has been little behavioral research into gifts and their possible relationship to personality, so the proposition below is not based on any such research but rather on theological reasoning (e.g., Clarke, 2008):

Proposition 2: A pastor's personality traits or characteristics, gifts of nature, and grace gifts are important for change and growth in churches.

However, the effects of the top manager's personal traits and characteristics on organizational outcomes are moderated by the organizational situation (e.g., Arnulf, 2012). Because the leadership is always working with organizational change, the personality traits and characteristics believed to influence a pastor's leadership performance (Colbert et al., 2012) may therefore be necessary in most situations. Nonetheless, they will change somewhat, depending on the situation - for example, the amount of change required and the composition of the leadership team.

Personality traits may influence one's propensity for ethical leadership. For example, neuroticism seems to be correlated with ethical leadership, while extraversion seems unrelated; and openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are positively associated with it (Özbağ, 2016). This is an important issue, but it is not a focus of this article.

LEADERSHIP ROLES AND STYLE OR ORIENTATION

Personality traits influence leadership orientation and style (e.g., Church & Waclawski, 1998; Colbert et al., 2012; Garcia, 2013; Monica Shu-Fen, 2018; Tatlah et al., 2012; van Eeden et al., 2008), and this relationship is moderated by situational factors (Ünsar & Karalar, 2013). This relationship sets limits for the repertoire of leadership styles that an individual leader can apply, but a close discussion of this would fall outside the scope of this article.

There is no universally agreed upon description of the pastor's roles or functions. Allen (2017) gives a broad description of various pastoral roles. The following are mentioned: shepherd, preacher, theologian, evangelist, missionary, leader, church historian, father or husband, and man of God. Several other roles are also conceivable. For example, counselor is not included in the list. There may also be overlaps between the roles.

Most of the roles must be taken care of, or at least followed up closely, by the leadership of the church, but the roles can, as we shall see later, be taken care of by more than one person. The spiritual and natural gifts of the pastor and the staff will impact the distribution

of the roles. In a change situation, in which resistance often arises (del Val & Fuentes, 2003; Ford et al., 2008), the challenges associated with the role of a leader usually increase, demanding a greater focus on change. To prevent role overload, it is necessary to carefully plan the use of the leader's time (Mintzberg, 2009).

Mintzberg (1975) conducted an investigation of leadership roles to identify what leaders do. The roles are descriptive and somewhat less concrete than the responsibilities and tasks mentioned above. Nevertheless, the role perspective can be used as a basis for some recommendations and the roles of leadership can be seen as different aspects (faces) of leadership behavior (Mintzberg, 1990). He distinguishes between three main categories and ten leadership roles: (1) interpersonal roles (assembly figure, liaison, and personnel manager), (2) information roles (information collector, information communicator, and spokesperson), and (3) decision-making roles (initiator, crisis solver, resource allocator, and dealer) (Mintzberg, 1975).

The point of highlighting the role approach, which is relatively old, is two-fold. First, it shows that management is complex and cannot be the sole responsibility of an individual. Team development becomes necessary as the need for leadership grows (Eva et al., 2021). This will be discussed further below. In addition, the different roles have different meanings, depending on the situation of the organization. For instance, the role of the initiator is critical in situations in which change is essential. There, the leader must take the initiative and implement new measures.

Leadership orientation is a variant of leadership style. The concepts of *task* and *relationship orientation* were the first to be developed by researchers, with *entrepreneurial orientation* added later (Ekvall & Arvonen, 1991; Yukl, 1999). Yukl (2012) then adjusted the notion of entrepreneurial orientation to become *change orientation* and introduced *external orientation* as the fourth option (see also Yukl & Gardner, 2019). Each of these leadership styles or orientations is important, but the weight given to them depends on the situation, such as whether there is a need for change (Arvonen & Ekvall, 1999).

A *task orientation* entails a focus on short-term planning, as well as distributing tasks to employees, designing performance requirements, directing and coordinating work, controlling the completion of work, and solving the challenges that arise with the task solutions. A *relationship orientation* means providing support to employees, training and mentoring them, recognizing their achievements, letting them choose solutions themselves, keeping them informed about what concerns them, using symbols and rituals to influence them, and recruiting new employees.

A *change orientation* is about showing employees why change is needed, envisioning change, highlighting new and exciting opportunities, encouraging innovation, helping to initiate collective learning, experimenting with new methods, facilitating implementing new ideas, recognizing changes made by employees, and getting employees to see challenges from new perspectives. An *external orientation* means a focus on networking, external monitoring, and representing the organization. Monitoring the environment is usually a prerequisite for changing an organization.

The need for entrepreneurial and centralized leadership is particularly emphasized in the early stages of the life of the organization and in times when change is to be initiated and implemented (Conger, 2000; Greiner, 1998; Janssen, 2020; Janssen & Randøy, 2002; Janssen & Randøy, 2006; Phelps et al., 2007; Van de Ven & Pool, 1995). Typically, counterforces arise when change is initiated, and it is a challenge to create direction in change processes (del Val & Fuentes, 2003; Ford et al., 2008; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). A key point in this article, therefore, is that - if change processes are to be successful - the pastor should have significant

influence (Wagner, 1984, 2006). This might apply to strategic choices or change content and leader behavior and sense-giving (Oreg & Berson, 2019).

A relationship orientation entails the slowest methods because it involves working indirectly to create change. As discussed below, this more time-consuming orientation is vital, especially in churches, even in situations where change is crucial. A task orientation means a focus on the actual work to be performed and can, therefore, often be more quickly applied. When change must happen quickly, a combination of change- and task-oriented styles may be most beneficial.

Biblical material also contains elements similar to the “roles” and “leadership orientations” associated with change. For instance, there are aspects of Paul’s conduct, especially in connection with missionary journeys, that are very reminiscent of the role of the initiator. As described above, Paul also exhibits significant elements of a change-oriented leadership style.

Some consider it important for people with the basic gifts of Ephesians 4:11 - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers - to be leading the church. These five groups can be seen as five role categories. An apostle will, for example, have roles such as those of an initiator, visionary, and apologist. If you look more closely at the texts, however, the content of the various gifts is not entirely unambiguous (Clarke, 2008). Therefore, understanding these gifts as a set of roles that the church should include can be useful. Thus, it is not crucial that the same person plays all of the roles associated with the apostle, but only that all of the roles are fulfilled. For example, the role of the initiator is important for creating change.

In conclusion, the biblical idea of change and growth in the local church (Matthew 28: 18-20) can and must be emphasized when designing pastoral roles and leadership styles. At the same time, when there is a greater need for targeted action on the part of the leader, especially during change processes, it can be tempting to overstep and use illegitimate force. Several researchers have pointed out that such management can have a dark side (e.g., Howell & Avolio, 1992; Simonet et al., 2018; Tangen, 2018; Thoroughgood et al., 2018).

Proposition 3: To increase church change and growth, the senior pastor must emphasize a change-promoting leadership role, a leadership style or orientation such as an initiator role, and a change orientation. The necessity of such an emphasis for the senior pastor is moderated by the leadership style and orientation of the rest of the leadership team.

CHANGE IN VALUES AND BEHAVIOR

Transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Bass, 1996; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1978) has become an important leadership theory. Its aim is to influence employees such that their values and action are in line with the organization’s goals. In transaction management, leadership behavior relates to giving rewards (praise, reward, promotion, etc.) for desired actions and correcting unwanted behavior by imposing sanctions. The essential tools in transformational leadership are idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, and inspiring motivation.

The purpose of idealized influence is to evoke strong emotional reactions and identification with the leader. When the leader acts courageously or is willing to sacrifice, he or she can have a more significant influence. Through intellectual stimulation, the leader makes employees see challenges from new perspectives. This can, among other things, enhance the creativity of the individual and the team of employees (Keller, 1992), thus providing interesting

new solutions to challenges. The manager shows individual consideration by encouraging, supporting, and guiding the employees. Inspirational motivation is about conveying appealing values and an exciting vision, often through meaningful symbols. The individual stimulus transformation that leaders are expected to contribute can increase both individual (McCull-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002) and organizational performance (Yukl, 2010).

In transformation management, practical advice is delivered by formulating a clear and appealing vision and explaining how to achieve that vision, behaving confidently and optimistically, expressing trust in employees, using dramatic and symbolic actions to highlight central values, and leading by being a good example. Both transaction and transformation management are essential tools in the church as well. In this context, we are looking for the effect on change.

Bass (1996; 1997) claims that transformational leadership benefits performance in all situations and cultures and at different organizational levels. Leadership happens within a culture and is heavily impacted by that. The term "culture" may refer to the culture of a country, region, or organizational culture (Boggs & Fields, 2010; Hofstede et al., 2010; Schein, 2010). This does not mean that the effects are equally strong in all situations and all cultures. Notably, the effects are assumed to be higher in changing or unstable environments where the need for change is great and in decentralized and entrepreneurial organizational cultures in which flexibility and innovative behavior are important values (Yukl, 2010). It is also likely that employees' personality traits significantly influence the effects of transformational leadership (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001). Krause (2004) found, however, that middle managers' innovation-related behavior has less of an impact on transformational leadership than previously thought.

Transformational leadership is vital for change, but its impact processes are slower. However, it is necessary to work with employees to enable them to develop values that fit those of the organization, and this is a time-consuming process. At the same time, financial incentives and other transactional tools are more limited in churches than in businesses. The pastor (and other key leaders) should seek to influence the values of their coworkers through transformational leadership, with the aim of stimulating lasting and even profound change. This does not mean that change and task orientation are not essential in churches. However, transformational leadership will moderate the application of these leadership styles in line with the theological-spiritual dimensions of the church.

In church growth thinking, it is emphasized that pastors in growing churches that have come through a period of stagnation are often more visionary and goal-driven than pastors in churches that are neither growing nor stagnating. A strong vision for the future can seize the church and motivate growth (Barna, 1992; Hadaway, 1991). According to leadership theories, for action to be triggered, it is crucial that the church understands the vision and makes it its own. It is, therefore, necessary to design and implement a good communication strategy for the vision. Kotter (1995) states that a failure to communicate the vision is one of eight explanations for the failure of organizational change. In fact, the communication of the vision is the fourth of eight steps in a change process.

Engaged work in the church must spring from a deeper source than involvement in other organizations. In church work, commitment comes first and foremost from the belief that people need salvation and church affiliation. If employees and volunteers feel that by realizing the organization's goals, they can also fulfill their own goals (or their divine callings), as transformation management entails, they will be motivated to make an effort. This takes on a different and deeper meaning in the context of the church's work. If co-workers are in areas in which they can use their callings, gifts, and equipment, a strong driving force is produced (Råmunddal, 2018; Wagner, 1979; Wagner, 1989).

Proposition 4: In the change processes in churches, the pastor's change- and task-oriented leadership style must be moderated and reinforced - probably more so than in public and private organizations - by a transformational and relational leadership style.

LEADERSHIP TEAMS AND COWORKER INVOLVEMENT

Leadership team

In the literature on Christian leadership, scholars have argued that it is necessary to develop and nurture teams for the leadership of churches. For instance, there is a need for multiple gifts in leadership teams (e.g., Gangel, 1997; Harvey, 2021), the development of healthy teams (e.g., Hartwig et al., 2015; Macchia, 2013), the alignment of vision and teams (Weems Jr., 2010), the avoidance and handling of conflicts in teams (e.g., Williams, 2021), and the effects on members' motivation and effectiveness on the church development (e.g., Wimberly Jr., 2015). The research emphasis on team development (Eva et al., 2021) and more collectivistic approaches (see the next section) to leadership (Yammarino et al., 2012) has increased in recent years. Some of this may reflect a flavor of academic naivety, given that there has been little discussion of responsibilities (e.g., how to handle legal issues when it is unclear who is responsible for organizational actions, the need for responsible persons to ensure that the organization is operating within legal boundaries). In addition, it can be difficult to find genuine new practical ways to lead and the efforts made have increased competency and led to new coaching approaches (Day et al., 2014; Eva et al., 2021; Hawkings, 2018). However, a learning point is that it is essential to share leadership responsibility with teams and individuals through delegation.

There is little literature on the use of teams in top-level management (pastoral teams), except when it comes to biblical themes such as eldership (e.g., Smyth, 2020), which may concern the top management team around the pastor and the governance of the church (the pastor's superiors). Underlying all of these discussions is the assumption that teams are vital for the success of the church's work.

In general research, the top management team is considered a vital unit in the development of companies (Haleblian & Finkelstein, 1993). Katzenbach (1997) shows that there is often a lack of cooperation in such teams. Some researchers find that top management teams can work well, even if they do not work closely together (Barrick et al., 2007; Katzenbach, 1997). On the other hand, in an inter-organizational context, behavioral integration among leaders in the top leadership team can reduce conflicts (Jansen et al., 2012), increase trust (Uzzi, 1997), and promote adaptability (Lubatkin et al., 2006), helping the organization to "draw from diverse insights" and "combine the tacit knowledge of senior managers" (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Colbert et al. (2008) argue that common goals in leadership teams impact organizational outcomes. They also note that top managers, through transformational leadership, can help to establish common goals. When co-leaders share influence, their agreement on the importance of goals (i.e., goal congruence) will increase, partly because the main leader is able to convey a convincing and compelling vision for the future. Some research has shown that team members' personality traits - like those of the top leader - can affect the outcomes of the efforts made (e.g., Arnulf, 2012). Although this is essential to consider when developing a model that

includes the effects of the top-management team on organizational outcomes, it would be outside of the scope of the current article.

It is important to acknowledge that managers and management teams can be one-sided in their understanding of their situation and history. In practice, most seek information that confirms their pre-existing views (Nickerson, 1998). Leaders are, therefore, dependent on discussions in the management team and with the organization to reduce the risk of their prejudices determining the chosen direction of change.

Naturally, it is important that the pastor does not do everything. The board, the council of elders, committees, leadership groups, and other volunteers will have different responsibilities in the church. If the work in the church is to yield results, the various groups must be mobilized for action. Different teams must be created, and the pastor - as the leader of the leadership team - must contribute to teaching others to become good team leaders. It is particularly important to train teams in the change processes that will involve developing and implementing various measures. A review of the research into change in companies concludes that it is vital to build a strong management team (e.g., Conger, 2000) or - as Kotter (1995) calls it - a strong *guiding coalition* in the change processes. The leadership function must take responsibility for many different roles, and not everyone can be cared for by one person.

At the same time, it is essential to emphasize that the general manager of a company should not be treated as only one of several management team members. The leader has more responsibilities and greater influence than the other team members (Conger, 2000). The leader's characteristics are essential to the performance of their organization (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Research in the field of strategy also suggests that the leader of a company and members of the top management team have a substantial impact on the company's strategic direction and performance (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Peterson et al., 2003). It is reasonable to assume that this also applies to churches.

Mintzberg (2009) distinguishes between three management levels - action, people, and system - and argues that top management must operate on all three. If the top leader completely withdraws upward or backward to the system level, the church may be in danger of becoming fragmented, as the main leader is vital for the various parts of the church, binding them together and creating direction (e.g., Mintzberg, 1973). The question is how a manager of a larger company should spend his or her time on the various levels. As the organization grows, it becomes necessary to build more robust systems at the overall level to develop and disseminate the vision, goals, and strategy, as well as for the planning and follow-up. In addition, the leader must, to an even greater extent, plan his or her use of time.

Proposition 5: The pastor must build a powerful top leadership team to ensure complementary competencies, direction, strategy, and change. Diversity facilitates the discussion needed within the team. A common goal and a compelling vision contribute positively to cooperation within the team.

Collective aspects of leadership

Leadership style impacts coworkers' engagement (Meskelis & Whittington, 2020). This is due to the leader's impact on his or her team and between leaders and coworkers in general. The need for participation and involvement in change processes has long been discussed by researchers. Lewin (1951) notes the need for a process of unfreezing and refreezing in organizational change. His model has been further developed in various ways - for example, by Hussain et al. (2018) in a recent paper. The agile leadership approach draws the need for involvement further than previous theoretical perspectives and argues for self-organized development

teams and greater adaptiveness in heterogeneous and changing environments (Appelo, 2011; Hayward, 2018). We argue that management requires participation and involvement from co-managers and employees.

The literature on Christian leadership discusses the need for participation in decisions to create commitment, for example - as emphasized by Volf (2002) in his participatory approach. Participation and involvement can contribute to the development of new ideas and highlighting of challenges from different angles. At the same time, participation can slow down and hinder action. It is necessary, therefore, to think carefully about who and how many should participate at different moments of the decision-making processes and about the level of support necessary to implement changes (Jenssen, 2020). This underlies the call from Birkinshaw and Gibson (2004) for both adaptability and alignment (ambidexterity).

There is a general consensus in the research on transformational leadership on the need to demonstrate confidence in employees and allow them to use their skills (Bass & Riggio, 2006). It is often difficult to transfer tasks to others, especially when one is better suited to performing those tasks. However, if a leader chooses not to transfer important tasks to others, they themselves will quickly become the bottleneck that hinders development and growth. If subordinates are to participate in decision-making, they must receive good information and communication must be open—which inevitably means that conflicts will arise. The team leader thus has primary responsibility for allowing this to happen.

As discussed, the senior pastor is a key contributor to the church's performance. However, it is evident that both subordinate leaders and employees also play a significant role. Therefore, one should not focus solely on the pastor when discussing church leadership. If the pastor alone (as perhaps the only employee) is expected to ensure the desired performance of the church, they are likely to fail. Therefore, the most important contribution of the church growth literature is its highlighting of the need to mobilize everyone in the congregation, with their breadth of gifts and talents (e.g., Hartwig et al., 2015; Macchia, 2013). This then enables the pastor to lead others and to utilize their strengths.

It is, therefore, also helpful to talk about leadership from a collective or distributed perspective. The focus is then on leadership as an *activity* or *practice* that “emerges through interaction with other people and the environment” (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 12). Many, especially in Scandinavian educational research, argue that this is a more fruitful approach to leadership, rather than focusing on the main leader's roles or characteristics (Møller & Fuglestad, 2006; Sivesind et al., 2006). However, the literature review presented here shows that a top manager is essential for an organization. At the same time distributed leadership are important and may be viewed as a complementary perspective.

The literature review revealed three main features of distributed management (Bennett et al., 2003). First, leadership is integral to a group of people who are interacting. Second, leadership is understood to be more open and less limited. Third, researchers claim that various forms of expertise are distributed among several people, not a few (Bennett et al., 2003, p. 6). There is thus a collective focus on the organization. Hargreaves (2009) suggests that leadership is “a process and a system,” not “a set of personal, trainable, and generic competencies and capacities that individuals possess.”

Gronn (2002), having considered empirical studies from various organizations, emphasizes *interaction* as the central aspect of leadership. Typically, the management tasks in an organization are disseminated between several people. Gronn (2002) describes holistic management practices that consist of numerous collaboration patterns: spontaneous collaboration, intuitive collaborative relationships (over time), and institutionalized practice or structure. This concept can be easily transferred to the context of the church as an organization. Spillane et

al. (2004) identify the most important functions of a leader as the development of a vision, a culture of collaboration, and employees' competence. This harmonizes well with what we have previously said about the main leader's various roles and leadership styles.

A weakness of the distributed-management perspective is that it permits everything and nothing to be understood as management (Ottesen & Møller, 2006). When we understand leadership as an activity, it becomes to explain how leadership contributes to development. On the other hand, a distributed perspective can bring out the complexity of leadership and collaboration, thus contributing to a broader analysis of what influences change and growth. Cooperation and division of responsibilities among several people in an organization is crucial. If not, the expectations of the leader can as Fuglestad (2006) points out, be endless and unrealistic of what an individual leader can accomplish.

A related and partly overlapping perspective is relational leadership. Ottesen and Møller (2006) emphasize that it is important to explore how power and trust are distributed among those in the organization. The top leader and other players depend on trust and good relationships to create growth and change. There has been much research on trust, and it is beyond the scope of this article to give a comprehensive review of this concept. However, we lean toward the definition given in the review by Burke et al. (2007). The central point here is that, although personal qualities are essential, they develop in relationships. We, therefore, return to collaboration as the key to change work.

Proposition 6: Leadership should not be understood as solely what the leader or pastor does but as a complex interaction with other actors and the context. Building trust and good relationships with subordinate leaders and coworkers then becomes vital for organizational change and growth.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Summary

Studies in different types of organizations have shown that a good leader is crucial for good performance, facilitating change and ensuring that the organization is moving in the desired direction. The focus of the church growth tradition on the pastor's function in growth processes indicates that the same applies in churches.

The senior pastor has an essential function in team development, delegation, change, and growth processes, as he or she has the best overview of what is happening and access to more of the resources necessary for change and growth initiatives than the department leaders. As the main leader, the pastor has opportunities to initiate change processes due to his or her formal position and visibility. If the pastor is not permitted to exercise the necessary influence, changes are less likely to take place in the church.

Therefore, the pastor's personality and leadership style are vital to facilitate the change processes in the church. There are several personality characteristics that are relevant here. For example, high activity and energy levels, performance motivation, and initiative will all contribute to change. Emotional stability and an outgoing and open attitude toward learning from experience can also be important. Furthermore, a pleasant and sociable manner can contribute to change, though this can also hinder change if the caring and conflict-avoidant aspects become too strong. An excessive need for control can also adversely affect change. However, the ability to plan, manage, control, and organize resources will positively affect change.

We further emphasize that a change- and task-oriented leadership style is vital in the church. The purpose of change processes is to promote the growth of the spiritual–theological dimension. Change must promote both quantitative growth and the growth of spiritual qualities. This requires that changes also occur in the people involved in building the church. Thus, a pure change and task approach cannot be used. The transforming element must be central to all change. Although this can delay changes somewhat, it can also enhance the depth and duration of the change.

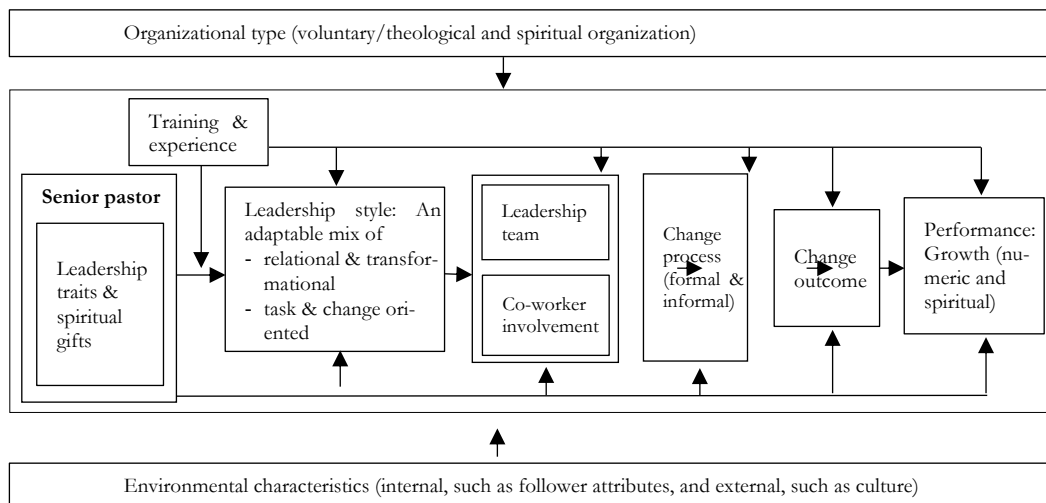
An important question to ask is whether the pastor alone can fulfill all functions, and the answer to this is no. The church, as the body of Christ, and its people, with their different gifts as members of the body, are central elements of a church (Küng, 1968; Råmunddal, 2011), and it is, therefore, necessary to welcome - and to stimulate the development and practice of - these different gifts.

We therefore advocate for collective leadership approaches. Leadership should be understood as a complex interaction between the main leader, other actors, and the context in which one finds oneself. Trust and good relationships are the keys to success. This requires the building of good leadership teams, with complementary abilities and gifts, in which leaders can complement each other. In our view, this also best fulfills the biblical leadership roles described in the New Testament.

Causal relationships

We will in this section present a model based on the causal relationships revealed in the discussions and propositions. The senior pastor is important for change and growth in the church, but the article does not propose a coherent theory of this relationship. The pastor's performance is determined by their personal characteristics, traits, spiritual gifts, leadership style, top-management team, and coworker involvement. In addition, the context and situation of the church are argued to influence the relationship between the pastor and the performance of the church. As discussed, change happens through a process that may be more or less formal. Such a process will necessarily reflect leadership traits, characteristics, gifts, and style, as well as the involvement of the teams and co-workers, as visualized in the model below.

Figure 1: A tentative model of the relationships between the senior pastor and performance



Further research

To develop an integrated model for church leadership, more research is needed. Some potential research questions relate to issues discussed in the general leadership research, such as how and to what extent leadership style is governed by personality traits and what situational factors influence leadership styles. It is also important to consider these questions in the context of churches to shed light on possible differences between these and other types of organizations. In addition, essential questions that are unique to the church context should also be investigated. Examples of such questions include the following:

- How do personality traits and spiritual gifts relate to one another?
- To what extent can an emphasis on change and task orientation vs. transformational or relational orientation in change and growth processes be applied in churches?
- How does leadership style affect coworker engagement in churches?
- How should the spiritual–theological context of churches influence leadership style?
- How can (or should) a senior pastor design and develop a leadership team, and in what ways is such a process dependent on situational factors?
- What is the relationship between change and growth in churches?

The reasoning applied in this article is partly taken from the management literature and the literature on church growth. The conclusions drawn from the first category of literature are derived from studies of companies and public enterprises. The context of the second group of sources is the church, but systematic studies are relatively limited, and most were conducted in other countries. However, this does not mean that the church growth literature cannot be employed in the way that we have done here. First, there have been systematic studies in this tradition, and second, these have recorded some useful practical observations.

Nevertheless, there is a lack of studies on senior pastors' impact on performance, including the change and growth of churches and how the pastor involves other leaders and coworkers. It would therefore be of great interest to conduct new studies in a church context. Several issues are of interest. What roles do pastors have in different denominations? What function does the board or management council have? How widespread is unhealthy management, and how is it handled? What is the function of pastors in churches that succeed or fail in change processes?

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Jan Inge Jøsssen is Dr. Oecon from the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration. He is a professor and dean at Hauge School of Management, NLA University College, and Professor II at the Norwegian School of Leadership and Theology (HLT). His research areas are entrepreneurship, innovation, change management, and church leadership. Jøsssen has written several books and articles in these areas. His doctoral thesis was about how social networks contribute to the success of business entrepreneurs and church planters. Jøsssen is the Chairman of Oasenkirka. janinge.josssen@nla.no

Arne Mella is principal of the Norwegian School of Leadership and Theology (HLT). His field of expertise is religion and religion didactics, organisation, and leadership. He holds a Cand. Philol. degree with major in English and minor in German from the University of Oslo (UiO), and a minor in Christianity from The Norwegian school of Theology. He also holds a master's degree in education management from UiO. He is a pastor at Pinsekirken in Sandvika. arne.mella@hlt.no