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This book is dedicated to my wife, Marthinet.

Religious Studies domain editorial board at AOSIS

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Research Justification

The aim of this book is to develop an appropriate leadership model for missional churches. This implies a positioning of this book within the broader theology of mission and a consensus on the theology of the *Missio Dei*, originating at the 1952 conference of the International Missionary Council in Willingen, Germany. In this approach to the theology of mission, mission is understood as the work of the Trinitarian God. The church is privileged to participate in God's mission. It is against this background that the growing consensus on missional ecclesiology challenges leadership models developed for a different time and a different kind of church (with less or no emphasis on the missional character of the church). The aim is to reflect theologically on the role of leadership in the missional church. What kind of ideas about power, authority and leadership are appropriate for a missional church? New missional challenges demand new ideas about missional leadership. A literature study research methodology was used in this book. The point of departure is that church governance and organisation, and the way leadership functions, must reflect ecclesiology. Church organisation and leadership reflects a theological position – there is a strong relation between ecclesiology and church organisation. The nature of the church provides the framework to understand the character of the church. What the church *is* determines what the *church does*. The church *organises* what it does and agrees on rules that regulate ministries and organisation. Issues such as the way the church *organises* and *governs* what it does, and thus church leadership, need to be answered against this background and understanding. Church polity and organisation, as well as leadership, must reflect the identity, calling, life and order of the church. This book, therefore, addresses life in the Trinity, participation in the *Missio Dei* and contours of the missional church as the point of entry to develop leadership insights. The book contributes towards the development of an appropriate model of leadership for missional churches. Although recent developments in the theology of mission comprehensively addressed the area of missional ecclesiology, there is a gap in the development of a leadership model based on the concept of authority in the missional church. This research represents an inclusive, congregational and missional understanding of and approach to leadership. In this research, the primary focus is on the question, what kind of leadership is appropriate in a missional church? In this process, a number of sub-questions need to be answered, namely, (1) what is the relationship between church leadership and ecclesiology?, (2) what is missional ecclesiology?, (3) what is missional church?, (4) what are the contours of, and especially the ecumenical consensus on, missional ecclesiology? and (5) what kind of leadership serves a missional church? The target audience is fellow academics – both nationally and internationally – and congregational practitioners who are interested in an academic exposition of leadership for the missional church. The author first developed his understanding of missional leadership in the first book in Afrikaans on leadership for the missional church, titled *Nuwe leiers vir nuwe werklikhede* (2013). This research builds on that publication, albeit from a more academical than a praxis-orientated approach. The concepts developed in *Nuwe leiers vir nuwe werklikhede* have been properly referenced and considerably expanded and explained in a manner more appropriate for research targeted at an academic audience. The author, Cornelius Johannes Petrus Niemandt, declares that the content represents original research. Where the research includes previous research already published by the author, it has been indicated.

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Abbreviations, Figures and Tables Appearing in the Text and Notes

List of Abbreviations

DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
GOCN	Gospel in Our Cultural Network
NGK	Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk
REC	Reformed Ecumenical Council
TC	The Church: Towards a Common Vision
TGIF	Twitter, Google, iPhone and Ambiguous
VUCA	Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCRC	World Communion of Reformed Churches

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Biographical Note

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He has served in numerous leadership capacities:

- two terms as Moderator of the General (National) Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk [NGK])
- patron of the South African Church Leaders Indaba (the broadest body of Christian Church leaders in South Africa)

- member of the National Religious Leaders Forum
- National Advisory Council of Cinnamon Network (international charity in South Africa)
- two terms as Moderator of the Highveld Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church
- terms as chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the pension fund for pastors of the NGK (*Predikante Pensioenfonds*)
- manager of various South African Junior Chess teams, and Chairperson of Chess South Africa.

As a student, he served as the Chairperson of the Student's Council at the University of Pretoria.

Acknowledgements

Soli Deo Gloria!

Introduction

■ Background

There seems to be a perpetual interest in leadership studies. Although people are highly sceptical of leadership, many still believe that the solution to the world's challenges and problems lies with leaders and new ideas about what leaders should do and how they can mobilise 'others' to solve the great challenges of our time. Notwithstanding the complexity of our times, many are still convinced that leadership or a new take on leadership or a new kind of leader will solve the problems. Boers (2015:loc. 259) talks about 'omnipresent leadership' and says that people 'talk perpetually and perplexingly about leadership'.

This is equally true in the reflection on spiritual leadership and leadership in the Christian church. The abundant literature on leadership in business and public life is mirrored by the Christian church. People equally talk perpetually and perplexingly about leadership and propose new solutions. New ideas in theology challenge old concepts of leadership. A very relevant example is the growing interest in missional ecclesiology that raises equally pressing questions about leadership. Can we imagine a missional

church without the accompanying re-imagination of church leadership? What kind of leadership can and will serve the life-giving mission of the church?

These questions are asked knowing very well that some leadership experts are reluctant to talk about leadership at all. Leadership, power and authority are changing so deeply and so dramatically that some think we are witnessing the end of leadership. The change in perceptions and insight in leadership, and the role of leadership in society is cataclysmic. There is a reversal in the understanding of leadership – and the social contract has changed (Barentsen, Van der Heuvel & Lin 2017:3). Old models of leadership reached their sell-by date and scholars discuss the end of leadership, the demise of old powers and the collapse of hierarchies (Kellerman 2012).

This is exacerbated by the complexity of the current contexts in which leadership operates. Futurist Leonard Sweet uses the terminology of a Google-world replacing the Gutenberg-world. The Gutenberg-world is associated with the discovery of the printing press, the predisposition towards printed texts and a propositional approach to life and truth.[1] Sweet (2011:loc. 1278) explains, 'in Gutenberg Christianity, the text that backs up belief (the Bible) tends to receive as much emphasis (if not more) as the daily life of faith'. It is deeply embedded in the enlightenment and individualism of modernism. Newbigin (1989:90) describes enlightenment as a summons to the autonomous human reason to trust its own powers and to dare to question the accepted traditions. Enlightenment works with abstraction, a theology focussed on propositions. Helland and Hjalmarson (2011) warn:

> Living faith in a Person can become an intellectual system of beliefs, in which management replaces mystery, strategic planning replaces prayer, and the individual priesthood of the believer replaces the priesthood of the believing community. (loc. 396–398)

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1. Wheatley (2013:2) also argues: 'Gutenberg printing press, because it put information into the hands of everyday people, is credited with the rise of individualism, literacy, complex language, private contemplation, the literary tradition, and the advent of Protestantism'.

The Google-world rings in significant changes. According to Sweet (2012a), Google culture is built on Twitter, Google, iPhone and Facebook (TGIF). This emerging culture is predisposed towards image, metaphor and paradox, 'in the image-obsessed Google-world, narrative is the verbal image that holds its own against the visual onslaught' (Sweet 2012a:15–16). The Google-world is much more relational, open and chaotic. In the Google-world, says Sweet (2012a:196), 'you don't standardize, you customize'. The Gutenberg revolution empowered the church by placing Scripture into the hands of the people of God. The Google revolution 'is democratizing religion by taking it out of the hands of the gatekeepers and enabling more open-source, self-organizing connections with God' (Sweet 2012a:110).

We live in a super-diverse and super-mobile world which is Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) (Barentsen & Kok 2017:7–10). The term VUCA refers to (The Waving Cat 2015:n.p.):

- Volatility. The nature and dynamics of change, and the nature and speed of change forces and change catalysts.
- Uncertainty. The lack of predictability, the prospects for surprise, and the need for a sense of awareness and understanding.
- Complexity. The multiplex of forces, the confounding of issues, the lack of clear cause-and-effect chains and general confusion surrounding organisations.
- Ambiguity. The haziness of reality, the potential for misreads, and the mixed meanings of conditions; cause-and-effect confusion.

The church is per se a complex phenomenon and finds itself in a complex world. Friedman (2016:26–27) coined the concept of the 'age of accelerations' to describe the rapid acceleration in globalisation where the flow of information and knowledge leads to a hyper-connected world, where the acceleration in climate change leads to biodiversity loss and the restructuring of mother nature, and the acceleration in computing power and smart technology leads to seamless complexity. These accelerations combine to form the 'Great Acceleration', transforming almost

every single aspect of modern life. This is a time where institutions that survived for ages are under pressure, and where even resilient institutions such as churches and universities face unprecedented challenges (Niemandt 2019:152). Scharmer (2009:loc. 71) says that we are witnessing the implosion and end of well-known social structures and a significant social breakdown.

The ecumenical meeting organised by the Lausanne Movement in Cape Town in 2010 (Lausanne III 2011) observed:

> Almost everything about the way we live, think and relate to one another is changing at an accelerating pace. For good or ill, we feel the impact of globalization, the digital revolution, and the changing balance of economic and political power in the world. Some of the things we face cause us grief and anxiety – global poverty, war, disease, the ecological crisis and climate change. But one great change in our world is a cause for rejoicing and that is the growth of the global church of Christ. (n.p.)

Leadership and ideas on leadership are challenged by a changing new world. Reflection on Christian leadership is also challenged by new insights about the way in which leadership functioned in biblical times. Scholars show that the Bible is by and large very negative about leaders; the major part of the Old Testament is a critique of leadership – be it the leadership of the pharaohs in Egypt, the leadership of the kings of Israel or the leadership of the superpowers of those days. The New Testament also vocalises a sharp critique of Jewish spiritual leaders, and political leadership as well. Boers (2015:loc. 836–837) reminds us that the Bible does not use the terminology or ideas of leadership as we use that term today. The Bible is actually quite negative about leaders, 'much – actually most – of what the Bible says about leaders is negative' (Boers 2015:loc. 856–857).

Yet, notwithstanding – or perhaps because of these changes – ideas about leadership, power and authority leadership shows a remarkable tenacity and change in shape, resurfacing in new forms and seeming to perpetually reinvent itself. This is enhanced by a new appropriation of indigenous leadership and the impact of local leadership on the church and communities. The comprehensive study by Priest and Barine (2017), entitled *African Christian*

Leadership: Realities, Opportunities, and Impact, serves as an example.

It is against this background that the growing maturity of missional ecclesiology challenges leadership models developed for a different time and a different kind of church (with less or no emphasis on the missional character of the church). We need another approach to reflect on the role of leadership in the missional church. What kinds of ideas about power, authority and leadership are appropriate for a missional church? This need for a different approach is emphasised by the demise of Christendom in the Western world, the explosion of Christian faith in other areas and the growing challenge for churches to reclaim their missional calling. Guder (2015:149) states that 'this process means that their inherited forms of leadership are also subject to review and change'. New missional challenges demand new ideas about missional leadership.

The starting point of this research is the contours of a missional ecclesiology that has developed since the term 'missional church' came into broad use after the publication of the influential *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* in 1998 (Guder 1998) and the research done by the Gospel in Our Culture Network (GOCN). According to Niemandt (2012a:n.p.), it has a 'particular focus on the impact of and renewed interest in missional ecclesiology that can be identified in important ecumenical events [since] 2010' (Edinburgh 2010; WCRC 2010b; Lausanne III 2011; WCC 2013; WCC 2018). These ecumenical meetings formulated important insights in missional ecclesiology and laid the basis for creative developments in the formation of a new missional ecclesiology.

■ A surge of interest in missiology and missional ecclesiology

There is a significant resurgence in missiology – the systematic study of all aspects of mission (Walls 2002). Connor (2011:loc. 125) says that missional theology includes fundamental theological convictions regarding the missionary nature and initiative of God.

Skreslet (2012:loc. 4426) concludes his comprehensive overview of missiology with the remark that bright prospects lie ahead for those who might want to study Christian mission in all its aspects. Within the broad field of missiology, there is also a growing interest in and focus on the local church and its mission. 'Studies in missional ecclesiology emerged as one of the significant trends in mission studies' (Niemandt 2012a:1). Goheen mentions that the term 'missional' has become pervasive in North America, and the widespread adoption of the term is an indication that 'something important is being recovered from obscurity' (Goheen 2016:ix). For Bosch (1991), the priority was to ground his final paradigm in ecclesiology because of his understanding that God's mission has been entrusted to the gathered community. According to Niemandt (2012a):

> Ecclesiology is a theological discipline that seeks to understand and define the church, and missional ecclesiology does this from a missional point of view where the church is understood as a community of witness, called into being and equipped by God, and sent into the world to testify to and participate in Christ's work. It is the discussion of what the church is called to be and to do – its nature, its purpose, its hopes, its structure and practices. (p. 1)

According to Niemandt (2012a:2), this renewed surge in academic research in missional ecclesiology is the result of a number of factors.

Firstly, recent developments in the area of missional theology, especially under the influence of the GOCN, and a missional Renaissance (McNeal 2009), led to an interest in missional ecclesiology. Skreslet (2012:loc. 1691) says that because every discussion of salvation sooner or later leads to the topic of ecclesiology, '[…] many theologians have found it difficult to understand the nature of the church fully without also considering its relationship to mission'. The term 'missional church' gained prominence in the work of the GOCN and with books such as *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* edited by Guder (1998) and *Church Next* by Gibbs (2000). The works of Lesslie Newbigin, and the influential

Transforming Mission by David Bosch (1991) played an important role in laying the groundwork for this new interest in mission. To use the words of Mancini (2008):

> The idea of the missional church has single-handedly captured the imagination of church leaders of all backgrounds and denominations. Take your pick: from the boomer power pastors of suburbia to the 'preaching punks of "emergia" and the collared intellectuals of "liturgia", everyone wants to be missional'. (p. 33)

Secondly, the burgeoning ecclesiology of the Emerging Church Movement (Niemandt 2012a):

> [*T*]hese churches being a response to changing culture in especially the traditional northern Christian countries and Christians becoming differently religious (Jones 2008:2, 2011:125), as well as the multitude of responses to emerging churches, [*also created continuing interest in missional ecclesiology*] (see Anderson 2007; Gibbs & Bolger 2005; Jones 2008, 2011; Mclaren 2000, 2001). (p. 2)

Sharpe (2018:1) described these churches as 'exciting and sometimes controversial movement-and-conversation about Christian reformation on the part of a collection of emerging and missional Christian leaders'. He argued that these churches represent expressions of the community who are seeking to reform or innovate their values, language, forms, practices and sometimes even their theology or doctrine to more missionally inculturate the gospel within postmodern Western culture. The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC) acknowledged in its report 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision' (TC) that in the secularising global north, new forms of contextual mission, such as 'new monasticism', 'emerging church' and 'fresh expressions', redefined and revitalised churches (WCC 2013:66).

Thirdly, mainline churches in decline are challenged to re-imagine old ecclesiologies (Van Gelder 2007a:16). Sharpe (2018:1) states:

> The reforming work of Emerging Churches and related Emerging Missional expressions has typically been catalysed by their disillusionment with the traditional western church's values, forms, language, and practices that EC voices often perceive as being

overly institutional, commercialized, denominationally divided, attractional, instead of missional, and culturally irrelevant for the larger postmodern western culture. (p. 1)

Fourthly (Niemandt 2012a):

[*A*]dd to this the explosion of new churches in the global Christian world. This changing face of Christianity and the fact that Christianity experiences a profound shift in its ethnic and linguistic composition (Johnson & Ross 2009:8), raises the issue of ecclesiology. (p. 1)

The WCC (2013:3) acknowledged that the diversity in Christian churches, and the 'abnormal situation of ecclesial division', necessitates agreement on ecclesiology '[…] as the most elemental theological objective in the quest for Christian unity'. New leadership studies on some of these churches assist with the development of new perspectives (see Priest & Barine 2017).

Fifthly, major ecumenical events since 2010 generated interest in missional ecclesiology. Kärkkäinen (2002:loc. 34) indicated the role of the ecumenical movement as a catalyst in the rapidly growing interest in ecclesiology. At least five important ecumenical events define the early part of this decade, and all paid considerable attention to ecclesiological matters:

- The Centennial World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, celebrating Edinburgh 1910 from 02 to 06 June 2010 – (Niemandt 2012a:3; Edinburgh 2010).
- The Uniting General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in Grand Rapids from 18 to 26 June 2010 (Niemandt 2012a:3).
- The Third Lausanne Congress (Lausanne III) on World Evangelization from 16 to 25 October 2010 – Cape Town 2010 (Niemandt 2012a:3).
- The 10th Assembly of the WCC from 30 October to 08 November 2013 in Busan, Republic of Korea (Keum 2013b).
- The World Council of Churches' Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania, from 08 to 13 March 2018 (WCC 2018).

Missiology and ecclesiology have been reconnected, and ideas about the *Missio Dei* and kingdom of God are explicitly brought into the discourse on the life of the church and congregational theology.

■ Leadership that supports missional churches

It is clear that interest in missional ecclesiology gained impetus with the popularisation of the concept of a missional church. In the literature, conferences and ecclesial meetings, the term 'missional church' is used to describe various aspects related to and included in missional ecclesiology. Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011) say that the concept now appears increasingly in book titles, blogs and denominational and judicatory literature, and on the lips of church leaders:

> This word, for most everyone using it, represents a changed relationship between the church and its local context, one that calls for a renewed understanding of the church's identity in God. 'Missional' evokes a powerful new imagination for reflecting on the church's nature and purpose in a complex 21st-century world. (p. 1)

Guder (2015:loc. 116) says the phrase 'missional church' became a theological commonplace. Attention to missional theology requires reflection on the nature of the church, what the church does, and how authority is organised. Guder (2016:36–37) includes a reflection on the practice of ordered leadership as one of the challenges in current conversations and reflection on mission studies.

This research acknowledges the interest in missional ecclesiology and focusses on appropriate leadership in and for missional churches.

■ Research problem(s)

This research endeavours to describe missional leadership. It looks into the challenges created by the new emphasis on missional ecclesiology, and possible ways to understand leadership and ways in which it should function within the missional church.

■ Research question(s)

In this research, the primary focus is on the question, 'what kind of leadership is appropriate in a missional church?'

In this process, a number of questions need to be answered:

- What is the relationship between church leadership and ecclesiology?
- What is missional ecclesiology?
- What is a missional church?
- What are the contours of, and especially the ecumenical consensus on, missional ecclesiology?
- What kind of leadership serves a missional church?

Leadership in the organisation, life and essence of the missional church

■ Nature of the church, church organisation and leadership

In this chapter, the following questions will be answered:

• What is the relationship between church leadership and ecclesiology?
• What is missional ecclesiology?
• What is a missional church?
• What are the contours of, and the ecumenical consensus on, missional ecclesiology?

The point of departure of this study is that church governance and organisation, as well as the way leadership functions, must reflect ecclesiology. Church organisation and leadership reflect a

theological position – there is a strong relationship between ecclesiology and church organisation (Niemandt 2015a). This relationship is open-ended because of the contextual nature of the church.

The point of departure of this research is to start with the character of the church. What the church *is* determines what the church *does.* It is only when there is clarity on the nature and character of the church that one can attend to the purpose of the church, and the direction and scope of its ministries. The church *organises* what it does and agrees on the rules that regulate ministries and organisation (Van Gelder 2007a:8). Church polity, organisational matters and *leadership* reflect the identity, calling, life and order of the church. Ecclesiology is the architecture of the life of the church (Dingemans 1987:9).

Figure 2.1 expresses the flow of the argument – it will attend to the nature and identity of the church (who is the church?), the life of the church (what the church does?), authority of the church (how does the church organise itself?) and leadership in the church (Jørgensen 2015:158; see also Niemandt 2016b:3).
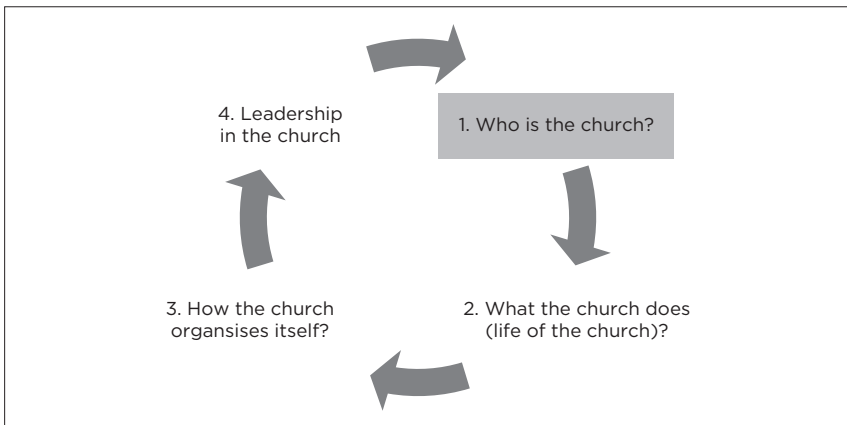
FIGURE 2.1: From identity to leadership.

■ Missional church – Who is the church?

Peterson (2013:13) says that ecclesiologies emerge to address concrete problems faced by the church. Ecclesiology answers the question 'who is the church?'.

What are missional ecclesiology and missional church? Missional ecclesiology is a specific focus within missiology and studies the doctrine or understanding of the church from a missiological perspective. It endeavours to reflect on and make sense of what is happening in Christian churches. Kärkkäinen (2002:loc. 1680) describes this approach as "Ecclesiology as mission" and states that this approach is based on the idea that the essential nature of the church is missionary, recognising the important role of Bosch and Newbigin. The church is linked to and cannot be understood outside its mission. Mission generates the church. There is no church without mission and no mission without the church (Kärkkäinen 2002:loc. 1786). It is difficult to understand the nature of the church without considering its relationship with mission (Skreslet 2012:loc. 1692). Guder (2015:170) argues in the same vein, 'missional ecclesiology is, I suggest, the necessary way to do ecclesiology, the only way to avoid separating the church's being from its act'.

According to Niemandt (2015a):

> Church governance and polity must reflect ecclesiology. Koffeman (2012:11–13) made a sound case for the relationship between church polity and theology. Church polity serves the church and the theology of a specific church. He argues that church polity is based on the theological vision of a church in a specific community and at a specific time. Church polity reflects a theological position on ecclesiology. This is, however, an open-ended relationship because the church is always contextual and must be [*the*] church of Jesus Christ in changing landscapes and contexts. The nature of the church provides the framework to understand the character of the church. What the church is determines what the church does. (p. 2)

Niemandt (2015a) makes a case that:

> [*T*]he purpose of the church and the direction and scope of its ministries are determined by the nature and character of the church. The church organises what it does and agrees on [*ways to structure*] ministries and [*regulate*] organisation. [*Church*] polity and organisation, as well as leadership, must reflect the identity, calling, life and order of the church. (p. 2)

It follows that issues related to ecclesiology, such as the role of leadership in the church, must be placed in the (Niemandt 2015a):

> [*C*]ontext of the missional church. The church is missional. The church is in a permanent state of mission. Mission is at the heart of what it means to be church (Dingemans 1987:41). Bevans and Schroeder (2011:13–16) say that God has a mission, and His mission has a church. Mission precedes the church and calls the church into being to serve God's purposes in the world. The church participates in the *Missio Dei,* and is a church which always goes forth with missionary joy – the church is a community of missionary disciples (Francis 2013:20–21). (n.p.)

Dreyer (2014) says:

> Missional ministry emphasises a living relationship with God, real faith, a focus on the kingdom of God, a relevant ministry, discernment through the Holy Spirit, a systematic approach to congregational development, a focus on people and relationships, and discipleship. (p. 42)

Guder (2015:122), who coined the term 'missional church' with others in the GOCN, describes the missional church as fundamentally and comprehensively defined by its calling and sending, its purpose to serve God's healing purposes for all the world as God's witnessing people to all the world.

The focus must first of all be on what the church *is*, and only then on what the church *does*. The formulation of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC (2013) is very helpful in this regard:

> The Church, as the body of Christ, acts by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue his life-giving mission in prophetic and compassionate ministry and so participates in God's work of healing a broken world. Communion, whose source is the very life of the Holy Trinity, is both the gift by which the Church lives and, at the same time, the gift that God calls the Church to offer to a wounded and divided humanity in hope of reconciliation and healing. (p. 8)

Leadership must be conducive towards the transformation of the church into missional life. In other words, ecclesiology determines leadership. What kind of ecclesiology (what the church *is*) (Niemandt 2015a):

> [*M*]ight assist the church in these times of changing landscapes and the dominant liminality in society? If the church *does* what it *is* and then *organises* what it *does*, [*this is*] clearly a challenge of design or architecture. (n.p.)

The point of departure is that this question can only be answered by stating that leadership must express and serve the missional nature of the church.

According to Niemandt (2015a):

> Koffeman states that the current context and changing landscapes must challenge churches of the Reformation to acknowledge that the marks of the church (*notae ecclesiae*) –and specifically the 'pure preaching of the gospel' – are not so much about the confessions of faith as they are about the missional nature of the church (see Niemandt 2015a:2). He argues: 'The way in which the church pays attention to dialogue with the culture determines the quality of the church and congregations' (Koffeman 2012:191). This true nature of the church must be reflected in the way leadership operates, and leaders must lead the way in giving congregations permission to be truly missional and equipping them to participate in God's mission. The same intention is clear in *Evangelii Gaudium* (Francis 2013:25) where Pope Francis exhorts the church that the missionary impulse must transform everything so that the church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for this missional goal. (p. 2)

To summarise, missional ecclesiology presents an appropriate basis to study leadership in the church, and leadership must serve a missional ecclesiology (Niemandt 2015a:2). Leadership must assist the church to stay true to its missionary nature and to participate in God's mission.

■ The contours of a missional church

In this section, the contours of a missional church are described in terms of current research on the subject, emphasising insights

gained from the study of documents and decisions of ecumenical events since 2010. Kärkkäinen (2002:loc. 34) emphasised the importance of the ecumenical movement in the growing ecclesiological interest, 'no other movement in the history of the Christian church, [...] has shaped the thinking and practice of Christendom as much as the modern movement for Christian unity'.

■ Who is the church – Participation in the life of the Trinity

The first contour does not start with the church, but with God. The 'missional discourse shifted the agency of mission from the church to God' (Niemandt 2012a:2; Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011:4). *Being*, and not *doing*, determines the church's nature, life and mission. 'Mission is an extension and amplification of God's very being' (Niemandt 2012a:2). This is closely related to a particular understanding of and relationship between ideas on the Trinity and ecclesiology. This is a rather late development, perhaps because of the dominant Christological understanding of the church, but gained momentum under the influence of Barth.[2] He called the dogma of the Trinity a dogma of the church (Barth 1955:431). The mission of God is the same as the mission of the church. Newbigin (1989:118) said, 'the mission of the church is to be understood, and only be rightly understood, in terms of the Trinitarian model'. Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the unifying love which binds together the Holy Trinity that overflows to all humanity and creation (WCC 2013:52). This divine love is found in the reciprocal interdependence and self-dedication of the Trinitarian members to each other, and the active relations of love throughout eternity (Franke 2016:92). 'God's love', says Conradie (2015:104), 'is epitomised in the well-being of the whole household of God'.

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2. See Guder (2015) and Flett (2010) for a detailed discussion of the influence of Barth on the development of the idea of missional church.

'Missional theology builds on the understanding that God is Trinity and missional' (Niemandt 2012a:2) and is characterised by love. The Trinitarian God is a God of boundless loving and endless life. Mission is participation in the boundless love and endless life of the Triune God. As much as Conradie's summary of the activity of the Triune God in this reality applies to environmental praxis, ethos and spirituality, it also applies to leadership praxis, ethos and spirituality (Conradie 2015):

> The Christian confession is that the world is the triune God's creation, that God looks at the world with compassion and mercy – so much so that God regards it as worth dying for – and that the Spirit renews the whole of God's creation from the destructive impact of sin so that it can flourish yet again. (p. 175)

Starting the reflection on missional church with the Trinity is done in the sense that it does not constitute a point of departure for theological reflection, but in the sense, as Conradie (2015:8182) explains, of a doxological conclusion of the Christian confession in terms of which everything else is revisited.

According to Niemandt (2012a):

> Since the missionary conference in Willingen (1952), Trinitarian reflections are seen as being foundational for a proper understanding of, and action in mission. The Trinity is the determining reality of the church (Volf 1998:195), therefore we must start with the Trinity in order to understand mission. (p. 2)

Recent discussion on the Trinity focussed on both the work of the three persons in the Trinity – the economic Trinity – as well as the interrelatedness of the three persons [*perichoresis*] and thus the relational Trinity.

The economic Trinity focusses on the sending work of God (see also Van Gelder 2007b:29) (Niemandt 2015a):

> The life of the Trinity is a missional life, and the communion in the Trinity is a communion that flows outward. This provides the [*frame*] for Christian mission as the proclamation of the kingdom of the Father, to share the love of Jesus Christ with all and to be witnesses of the powerful work of the Spirit. (p. 4)

'It is to be caught up within the dynamic sending and being sent that God the Holy Trinity has done and continues to do' (Wright 2010:211).

The idea of the relational Trinity focusses on the interrelatedness of the three persons in the Godhead (Van Gelder 2007b:29). It is communion with the Holy Trinity (WCC 2013:43). Peterson (2013:6) explains, 'ecclesial communion is modelled on the idea of the communion of persons within the Trinity and is experienced horizontally as well as vertically'. In the words of Moltmann (2010:26):

> [*T*]he community of the church is, like the Christian faith itself, a Trinitarian experience of God. The reciprocal interpenetration of the ways of activity and the living spaces of the three divine persons [*constitutes*] the church's unity in its fullness. (p. 2)

The church can exist because of the loving inner relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, finds its origin in the love flowing from the Trinity and models its existence on the inner relationships in the Trinity. The church is created by the Spirit as a social community that is missionary by its very nature. The idea of the relational Trinity reminds the church that we indwell with each other and dwell together in the flow of love, mutuality, intimacy and submission. 'There is inclusion, unity, and cohesion', says Branson (2007:125), 'but there is also differentiation, identity, and plurality'.

Van Gelder (2007b:30) argues that both the economic and relational approaches to the Trinity enhance and deepen the understanding of ecclesiology and missiology, 'this relationship provides the framework for understanding the nature, ministry, and organisation of missional congregations' (Van Gelder 2007b:30). The two perspectives remind us that the sending, communal God works in and through the community. God is the primary agent of mission, and the church secondary (Elton 2007:147).

■ Who is the church – Participation in the *Missio Dei*

God is a sending and missional God. The term *Missio Dei* has been used to describe the understanding that (NGK 2013b):

> [*T*]he very life of God is a process of being sent [...]: the Father loved the world (creation) so much that He sent His only begotten Son to bring new life and hope; the Son [...] sent the Holy Spirit to accompany and empower the church; and the Father, Son and Holy Spirit sent (and are still sending) the church into the world. (p. 4)

The church and the church's mission are understood as being from the very being of God Himself (NGK 2013a:200). The *Missio Dei* defines the essence and substance of the church (Niemandt 2015a):

> The *Missio Dei* is at the core of being church. The church focuses on the world and is directed towards the world because the church does not exist for the sake of its members or itself. (p. 4)

The gospel is God's narrative, God's movement towards all of creation to redeem and restore all of it. Bosch refers to God's loving movement towards his creation (Bosch 1991:390–391). God does not love us because we are good; God loves us because God is good. The gospel is, first of all, God's story, God's mission to redeem his creation and to bring life abundant. This mission includes not only all of humankind, but also all of creation. Flett (2010:166) has a striking description, that 'the Christian community is a missionary community because God in himself overcomes the gap between the divine and the human precisely in his being as Father, Son, and Spirit'. It is not only about the church participating in God's mission, but first and foremost a case of God who participates in the world (Roxburgh 2015:43).

According to Niemandt (2012a):

> This kind of theology of mission finds its basis in the creation (Wright 2010:40–48). The logic of withdrawal or self-limitation, withdrawing to send, creating to redeem, is the heart of a theology of mission

(Fensham 2010:127). Of course it is important to remember that the story of God's sending reaches its climax in the story of Jesus Christ, the one [*which*] God sent into the world so that the world should be saved through him. (p. 2)

Conner (2011) regards this as the heart of missional theology:

Missionary participation is the form of human activity that corresponds to Christ's completion of his act, and it is the concrete form of human and divine fellowship, that is, union with Christ. (loc. 394)

Connor notes that it is important to understand that the concept of *Missio Dei* underscores the importance of respecting the freedom and culturally distinctive responses of others and challenges notions of evangelism that are built upon coercive methods or theories of consumerism. In his reflection on the work of Guder, he states that *Missio Dei* theology accents the importance of recognising that mission takes place in space and time, which is, for the church, shaped by the reign of God (Connor 2012:loc 331).

According to Skreslet (2012:loc. 791), the language of *Missio Dei* gave theologians a way to connect churches and their missionary programmes to the entire history of divine revelation attested in the Bible. Mission is seen not as something begun by any human organisation, but as an eternal reality rooted in God's sending of the Son and the procession of the Spirit from the Godhead. Individual disciples and churches could participate in God's mission, but they were not to presume pride of authorship or claim a right to initiate something that belonged to God.

Missio Dei language invites the church to understand itself as a sent community, dispatched by the Triune God for witness in the world. This became apparent in the ecumenical discussion in the 20th century, where the inclusion of the church to participate in the divine mission received attention (Edinburgh 2010; see Balia & Kim 2010:23). 'It reframed mission from being church-centric to becoming theocentric' (Niemandt 2012a:2). It defined the essence and substance of the church and placed (Niemandt 2015a):

[*T*]he *Missio Dei* at the core of being church. The church focuses on the world and is directed towards the world, because the church does not exist for the sake of its members or itself. (p. 4)

Furthermore, according to Niemandt (2012a):

> This theological focus on the mission of God, God as the agent of mission and the church's participation in the *Missio Dei*, is a common theme in recent ecumenical events. This is, for example, echoed in the Edinburgh 2010 Common Call, where the church is described as a sign and symbol of the reign of God, called '…to witness to Christ today by sharing in God's mission of love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit' (Edinburgh 2010). The report [*from*] group [*one*] at Edinburgh – *Foundations for mission* – states: 'The central foundation for mission is the nature of the Triune God, and how God works in the world' (Kim & Anderson 2011:119). (p. 2)

In the study process, the discussion of the theological foundations for mission has a section on *Trinitarian Missio Dei* and states 'Christ's sending out the apostles to proclaim his gospel is rooted in his being sent by God the Father in the Holy Spirit' (Balia & Kim 2010:23).

Lausanne III does not have an extensive discussion of the Trinitarian *Missio Dei*, as found in many of the other ecumenical documents. The Cape Town Commitment states that the mission of God flows from the love of God, 'world evangelization is the outflow of God's love to us and through us' (Lausanne III 2011:5). The mission of the 'church on earth is to serve the mission of God' (Lausanne III 2011:45). In a section called *We Love the Mission of God*, the commitment says that the 'whole Bible reveals the mission of God to bring all things in heaven and earth into unity under Christ, reconciling them through the blood of his cross' (Lausanne III 2011:18). The people of God are called to participate in God's mission with the statement, 'our mission is wholly derived from God's mission, addresses the whole of God's creation, and is grounded at its centre in the redeeming victory of the cross' (Lausanne III 2011:19).

According to Niemandt (2012a):

> The WCRC concludes with the remark that the WCRC is sent into the world by God to love and serve the Lord, '… called to communion and committed to justice' (World Communion of Reformed Churches [WCRC] 2010a). A Trinitarian approach is explicitly stated in the report of the section on *Spiritual and Worship renewal*: 'Blessed are the people of God who are deeply

aware that they are both called by and address the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit...' (WCRC 2010b:141) The section report on *Mission* (WCRC 2010b:163–164) defines the theological basis of mission in terms of God's mission – God's mission is God's purpose in Christ to renew the whole of creation. It is a dynamic process whereby God's people are called to participate in God's mission. (p. 2)

In terms of 'understanding this approach in dialogue with a growing ecumenical consensus, it must be noted that there is significant convergence' (Niemandt 2015a:4) between these ideas and the latest mission affirmation of the WCC, as stated in the policy document *Together towards life. Mission and Evangelism in Changing Contexts*. The Trinitarian foundation is stated in the very first words of *Together towards life*, 'We believe in the Triune God who is the creator, redeemer and sustainer of all life' (WCC 2013:51), followed by, 'mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation'. Mission is the overflow of the infinite love of the Triune God (WCC 2013:52). *Together towards life* also says (WCC 2013):

God's mission points to the belief in God as One who acts in history and in creation, in concrete realities of time and contexts, who seeks the fullness of life for the whole earth through justice, peace and reconciliation. (p. 60)

'God is a missionary God who sent the Son to the world and calls all God's people and empowers them to participate in God's mission' (Niemandt 2015a:5).

The report of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC on the church – TC – must be noted (WCC 2013:3–50); it states that the 'church is not merely the sum of individual believers among themselves'. The report acknowledges that the church is fundamentally a communion in the Triune God and a communion whose members participate in the life and mission of God, 'who, as Trinity, is the source and focus of all communions' (WCC 2013:18). 'The Christian community finds its origin in the mission of God for the saving transformation of the world. The church is

essentially missionary' (WCC 2013:6). 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision' (WCC 2013) states:

> The Church, as the body of Christ, acts by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue his life-giving mission in prophetic and compassionate ministry and so participates in God's work of healing a broken world. (p. 8)

In summary, it is clear that the ecumenical consensus acknowledges the Trinitarian foundation of mission, as well as the theological concept of the *Missio Dei.* The church is a community of God's people modelled on Trinitarian relationships, and is called to participate in the mission of the Triune God – the mission of the church on earth is to serve the mission of God.

The *Missio Dei* can be expressed in the following way.

The Father sent:

- **The Son** – The idea of being 'sent by the Father' is one of the most important aspects of Jesus's self-understanding. He is deeply aware of being sent by the Father (Jn 20:21).
- **The Holy Spirit** – The Old Testament relates how God sent his Spirit. The New Testament is filled with the promises of and eventual outpouring of the Spirit.

The Son sent:

- **The Holy Spirit** – With a clear missional mandate and role to reveal God's plan (Jn 15:26; 16:7–15; 20:22–23).
- **The disciples** – Especially explained in the Great Mandate captured in Matthew 28:18–20. When we read in Luke 10 about the sending of the 72 (70) disciples, it is clear that the sending has been described in such a way that the similarities between the new Jesus movement and Israel are apparent – the sending of the 72 disciples is a continuation of God's redemptive work.

The Spirit sent:

- **The apostles** – The book of Acts can be described as the acts of the Holy Spirit, unpacking in detail how the Spirit empowered and sent the apostles and the first church.

The God of the Bible is a sending God. The *Missio Dei* reminds us that God is a fountain of love. Christian communities can take

heart knowing that the Triune God is actively involved in God's creation, that God's mission is in the process of being accomplished and that his followers are privileged to participate in God's work in bringing life to all of creation.

■ Who is the church – Joining in with the Spirit

According to Niemandt (2012a):

> [*R*]eaffirmation of the importance of the Holy Spirit for mission theology in the ecumenical events is an important element in the emerging missional ecclesiology. It results from the concept of *Missio Dei,* which uses a Trinitarian understanding of the divine reality. [...] Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission. The Holy Spirit is the 'agent' of Trinitarian mission and the era of the Spirit is the era of the church (Bosch 1991:517). Mission is joining in with the Spirit or, in the words of Archbishop Rowan Williams '...finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in' (Kim 2009:1). (p. 3)

'The church finds its identity in the activity of the Holy Spirit' (Peterson 2013:6).

And so (Niemandt 2012a):

> The Spirit is transforming God's creation so that God's new dispensation and kingdom can continue to breakthrough. The missional church is about congregations in this transformational field of power created by the Spirit. The church is a community created by the Spirit and derives its unique identity from this very fact, or as Volf (1998:130) puts it '...the character of the presence of the Spirit... [*Give*] to an ecclesiology its specific configuration'. The church is the result of God's action through his Spirit and is thus dependent on the Spirit for its very existence. It is critical to see God through the Spirit as the acting subject at work in the lived lives of congregations and the church (Keifert 2009:11). Studying missional churches presupposes an expectation that the unbound nature and unpredictability of the Spirit's presence and activity associated with the Spirit, [*sic*] will cut across human expectations and never cease to surprise students of ecclesiology. Flett (2010:239) states that the Spirit is the power of the transition, mediation, communication and history which [*take*] place first in the life of God Himself and then consequently in our life, in the relationship of Jesus with us. (pp. 2–3)

Skreslet (2012:loc. 1760) noted the important role of the rise in Pentecostalism in the interest in pneumatology, 'the explosive growth of Pentecostalism in the twentieth century has raised the profile of pneumatology within mission, not only with respect to mission theology but throughout the field'.

According to Cox (2006:97):

[*E*]cumenical events since 2010 reflect this focus on the Spirit as an agent of God's mission and the growing realisation that we are living in the new age of the Spirit. (p. 3)

It certainly also reflects the growing influence of the Pentecostal movement. Edinburgh (2010) states that (in Niemandt 2012a):

'Knowing the Holy Spirit who blows over the world at will, reconnecting creation and bringing authentic life, we are called to become communities'[…] (followed by a description of aspects of this community life). (p. 3)

The Common Call (Edinburgh 2010) also recognises 'that the Holy Spirit equips the church for mission by the gifts of the Spirit' (Niemandt 2012a:3). Edinburg 2010 noted the extraordinary rise in Pentecostalism in the 20th century (Balia & Kim 2010):

[*W*]ith its Christo-centric orientation and its Spirit practice, an engagement with primal religions, and a desire to inculturate Christianity by including the realm of the spirits. These experiences have influenced missiology, encouraging reflection upon the inseparable relationship between Christ and the Spirit [*that has been*] expressed in [*many*] different ways. (p. 24)

The study process, departing from the relational and communal Trinity, recognised the mutuality and reciprocity between Christ and Spirit and the Holy Spirit as 'the principal agent of mission' (Balia & Kim 2010:24). The authors link Christology and pneumatology so as to avoid (Wild-wood & Rajkumar 2013):

[*E*]xclusive Christo-centrism in our understanding of the person and work of Christ, […] neither neglecting the creative activity of the Spirit in creation, mission and redemption, nor emphasising a false autonomy of the Spirit that displaces Christology and the Trinity. (p. 274)

Lausanne has (Lausanne III 2011:10 as cited in Niemandt 2012a):

> [*A*] clear missional understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is described as the missionary Spirit sent by the missionary Father and the missionary Son, breathing life and power into God's missionary Church. Without the Spirit, no mission is possible. (p. 3)

The work of the Spirit in mission is described as follows (Lausanne III 2011):

> The Spirit gives us power for mission and for the great variety of works of service. The Spirit enables us to proclaim and demonstrate the gospel, to discern the truth, to pray effectively and to prevail over the forces of darkness. The Spirit inspires and accompanies our worship. The Spirit strengthens and comforts disciples who are persecuted or on trial for their witness to Christ. (p. 10)

One of the significant characteristics of the WCC in 2013, and especially *Together towards life*, is (Niemandt 2015a):

> [*T*]he emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit within the *missio Trinitatis.* The main thrust of the WCC mission affirmation is indeed on the work of the Holy Spirit. The essence of mission is a life in the Holy Spirit (WCC 2013:51). (p. 4)

The above-mentioned 'essence of mission' is discussed under the following headings (Niemandt 2015a):

- Spirit of Mission: Breath of Life
- Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins
- Spirit of Community: Church on the Move
- Spirit of Pentecost: Good News for All. (p. 4)

Together towards life concludes the discussion of the Spirit in mission with the remark 'that by the Spirit we [participate] in the mission of love that is at the heart of the life of the Trinity' (Ham 2017:n.p.). The Spirit is also the Spirit of Community, indwelling the church and empowering and enabling its members to participate in the realisation of God's mission (WCC 2013:63).

In the report of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC (2013), TC, it states:

> Christ prayed to the Father to send the Spirit on his disciples to guide them into all truth (John 15:26, 16:13), and it is the Spirit who not only

bestows faith and other charisms upon individual believers but also equips the Church with its essential gifts, qualities and order. The Holy Spirit nourishes and enlivens the body of Christ through the living voice of the preached Gospel, through sacramental communion, especially in the Eucharist, and through ministries of service. (p. 14)

The *Arusha Call to Discipleship* (WCC 2018:n.p.) acknowledges that the Holy Spirit is continuing the Spirit's work, and calls 'Christian communities to respond with personal and communal conversion, and a transforming discipleship'. The call states, 'We are called to joyfully engage in the ways of the Holy Spirit, who empowers people from the margins with agency, in the search for justice and dignity (Ac 1:8; 4:31)' (WCC 2018:n.p.).

The Holy Spirit is a transformative Spirit and 'enlivens and equips the church to play its role in proclaiming and bringing about that general transformation for which all creation groans' (WCC 2013:16). *The Church* (WCC 2013:14) explains, 'it is the Spirit who not only bestows faith and other charisms upon individual believers but also equips the Church with its essential gifts, qualities and order'.

In summary, one can say that the role of the Holy Spirit is clearly recognised in current and ecumenical discourses, especially in terms of a missional ecclesiology. 'If Christ institutes the church, it is the Holy Spirit that constitutes her' (Balia & Kim 2010:25).

◼ Who is the church – Relational approach

Missional ecclesiology is formed and shaped by a Trinitarian approach. This emphasises a relational approach because mission is a 'relational commitment: the engendering of a new family of faith, to be a blessing for all' (Balia & Kim 2010:21). 'God created humans as relational beings because God exists as a relational being' (Breedt & Niemandt 2013:2). Orthodox theology and missiology are especially relevant in this approach. Rommen (2016:70) explains that the three persons of the Trinity are of one essence and that they share unmediated participation in every

aspect of divine being. 'So saying that the Son and Spirit are of the same essence or substance as the Father', says Rommen (2016:70), 'implies that divine substance possesses a relational character'. God's existence as uncreated divinity can only be understood in terms of the Father–Son–Spirit relationship – for God to be, God must be in relationship. The ontological essence of God can be understood as communion.

'As we are made in the image of God, God's desire for us is to enjoy the kind of community and relationship that [...]' (Breedt & Niemandt 2013:2) 'he experiences within Himself (Father, Son and Spirit)' (Saccone 2009:14). The argument is that 'mission, beginning in the heart of the Triune God, emphasises the relational nature of mission' (Niemandt 2012a:4). Haight (2014:loc. 5595) argues that the formula of the Trinity is the shorthand symbol that encodes the story of the Christian community. Mission is expressed in relationships. Communion explains divine life. The life of the church reflects the relationality of the triune communion. A relational community modelled on the Trinity implies a community of love, as the inner community between Father, Son and Spirit is always a community of love. God is a fountain of love, or, as Bevans and Schroeder explain, mission is God's love hitting the cosmic fan. 'This ultimate expression of relationality [*koinonia*] and love is transmitted to the whole world not as dogmas or ethical commands, but as a communion of love' (Niemandt 2012a:5). Breedt and Niemandt (2013:2) argue that '[i]f God engages the world in a loving and caring relationship through the Son, then that is the only acceptable way the church should engage the world'.

Sweet (2009:99 as cited in Niemandt 2012a) stresses the importance of:

Christianity [*getting*] rid of its relational impotence: 'We must resign from the proposition business and rehire into the people business'. One of the unique contributions of Christianity is the understanding of truth as a person, not a principle. Christianity has a deep relational component, appreciating a covenant-making God [*that*] wants a

relationship with us. Conversion is more than a change in direction; it is a change in connection (Sweet 2009:128). (p. 4)

This relational understanding of the church is affirmed in ecumenical documents.

According to Niemandt (2012a):

Edinburgh 2010 describes the language of mission as a relational language (Kim & Anderson 2011:125). This inner communion of the Holy Trinity is the ultimate source of the unity of the church and the aim of God's mission: to invite every human being to experience fellowship with God and with one another according to the inner unity of the One God in three Persons in the eschatological hope of the restoration of the whole created world. The aim of God's mission is uniting all things in God as [a] new creation so that God may be all in all (Balia & Kim 2010:208). (p. 5)

This sets the scene for the Common Call, where Edinburgh (2010) states:

We are challenged to welcome one another in our diversity, affirm our membership through baptism in the One Body of Christ, and recognise our need for mutuality, partnership, collaboration and networking in mission, so that the world might believe. (n.p.)

Niemandt (2012a) identified a similar understanding:

[/]n the WCRC's (2010) message: 'We heard and were touched by how the overflowing communal nature of God draws us into communion with God, with one another and with all creation'. The section report on *Mission* (WCRC 2010b:164) refers to *communal mission*, because God is a communal God. The missional nature of this communion is recognised when the WCRC receives this communion for the sake of the world's transformation.

Lausanne III does not have such a strong emphasis on the relational. It describes the church as a community of grace, obedience and love in the communion of the Holy Spirit, in which the glorious attributes of God and gracious characteristics of Christ are reflected and God's multi-coloured wisdom is displayed (Lausanne III 2011:18). (p. 5)

Jesus' command that his disciples should love one and his prayer for unity are both missional so 'that the world may know you are my disciples', and that 'the world may know that you [the Father] sent me' (Lausanne III 2011:17; see Niemandt 2012a:5).

The concept of *koinonia* plays an important role in the proceedings and documents of the WCC and is seen as central to the ecumenical quest (WCC 2013:13). The church is not seen as 'merely the sum of individual believers among themselves' (WCC 2013:18). 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision' (WCC 2013:18) makes an important observation that the church is fundamentally a communion in the Triune God and, at the same time, a communion whose members partake together in the life and mission of God, who, as Trinity, is the source and focus of all communions. In *Together towards life* (WCC 2013:63), the Spirit is called the *Spirit of Community*, and the mission affirmation recognises the important role of the Spirit in creating community and a communion that opens the hearts and lives of the people of God to live in the movement of love overflowing from the Trinity. The WCC (2013:64) says the 'church is the coming together of the faithful and their going forth in peace'.

Niemandt (2012a) describes *koinonia* as:

> [*A*]n integrating concept in terms of the identity of the church. For Brouwer (2009:70), the relational focus on koinonia is the most important entry point in the formulation of ecclesiology. The church and all its functions (proclamation, service and celebration) are the result of its relational nature. The church is a community that participates in something bigger than its components and the relations between its members (Brouwer 2009:11) – the church participates in a relational reality. (p. 5)

Newbigin (1989:91 as cited in Stewart 2013:133) reminds us that the Bible sees human life in terms of relationships, stating that there is 'no private salvation [and] no salvation which does not involve us with one another'. The kingdom of God is all about relations.

Niemandt (2012a) highlights how:

> An investigation of the emerging contours of a missional ecclesiology in the ecumenical movements has shown a deep appreciation for the koinonial nature of the church. Mission proceeding from the Trinitarian God emphasises the relational nature of mission. (p. 5)

In a case study on leadership in African churches, Ngaruiya (2017) concluded:

> Human connectedness is critical in communities because it is a means by which people encounter and transmit ideas and engage in actions that transform their communities. It is through such connectedness that leaders exert influence. In this study all leaders who were identified as most effective were those who worked within their community. (loc. 1049–1051)

■ Who is the church – Incarnational, contextual and inculturated[3]

The next area that needs investigation is the relationship between church and the world. Niemandt (2014) tells how:

> On a visit to South Africa in May 2013, […] Leonard Sweet, [a] well-known theologian and author from the USA, made the point that people are rediscovering their neighbourhoods. Food is turning towards 'locavore' (local foods) and the world towards a celebration of particularity (Sweet 2010:192). Paradoxically, the world is also going 'glocal' – signifying the dynamic interrelatedness of the global and local (See also Van Engen 2006:157). Sweet said that the church must love its local postal code enough to reflect it in the life and theology of the church. To illustrate his remark, he referred to the resurgence of interest in artisanal cheeses. In reply, a theological student tweeted on Twitter 'Did Leonard Sweet make a point for artisanal cheeses or artisanal Jesus?' (p. 38)

Contextualisation is about the 'artisanal Jesus'. 'It raises the issue of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, as well as the importance of contextualisation and inculturation' (Niemandt 2014:38).

Reflection on the relationship between church and the world is deeply influenced by the understanding of mission as life in the Trinity, and this also impacts the ecclesiology on mission.

Niemandt (2012a) argues that:

> A social Trinitarian understanding as a ground for a theology of participation rather than an understanding of God [as] a single

3. Most of this material comes from Niemandt (2014).

acting Subject (Moltmann 1981:139), [*sic*] helps to bring clarity in the understanding of the interrelatedness of God, church, and world (see Roxburgh 2011:55). In Moltmann's (2010:163) words: 'The Trinity is our social programme'. This approach leads to the understanding of the church as constituted by both its participation in the life of God and its participation in the world. Such a missional-incarnational ecclesiology more often than not leads to being church in the world – the world becomes the larger horizon of God's activity (Van Gelder 2007a:18). Guder (2000:81) describes the gospel as fundamentally missionary in nature, universal in scope and translatable into a particular context. This translatability of the gospel is understood as an incarnational process (Reppenhagen 2010:169). [*Just as*] the gospel is inherently translatable into every context, the church is inherently translatable. The church does not pass through time and context in hermetically (and hermeneutically) sealed containers but rather like yeast that takes [*a*] new form and changes every culture (Sweet 2009:178). (p. 4)

According to Kim (2009:42 as cited in Niemandt 2012a):

The gospel is never encountered, and the Holy Spirit is never at work in human lives, except within a particular cultural setting, so the Spirit can only be discerned in and through human culture. (p. 4)

In every new situation (Niemandt 2012a:4), 'our faith seeks to comprehend what the living God requires from us. The missional church is an incarnational movement sent to engage its context'. Newbigin (1989) argued the need for contextualisation as follows:

If the gospel is to be understood, if it is to be received as something which communicates truth about the real human situation, if it is, as we say, to 'make sense', it has to be communicated in the language of those to whom it is addressed and has to be clothed in symbols which are meaningful to them. (p. 152)

The need for contextualisation has profound implications for the church. Congregations must translate the gospel as well as their own position in the world and organisational realities into every cultural context (Van Gelder 2007b:34).

Skreslet (2012:loc. 1963) discusses the relationship between gospel and culture within the framework of the incarnation and states that the doctrine of the incarnation provided a basis for much of the theological scholarship on the gospel and culture.

The incarnation is one of the core ideas of the Christian faith. The 'incarnation of Jesus Christ explains God's mission and the way He chooses to interact with His world in a very unique way' (NGK 2013b:7). It explains God's solidarity with creation. The incarnation of Jesus Christ reminds us that God came to creation in Jesus Christ, and that he participated in the economic realities, political history, religious differences and social structures of his time. Wainwright (1997:10) says that Jesus came into the 'thick texture of his human life'. 'Christ becoming human helps the church to understand and strive to live an incarnational lifestyle' (NGK 2013b:7). In this sense, 'incarnation is [to] be with people, whoever and wherever they may be' (NGK 2013b:7). Mission is participating in the work of the Trinity by joining in the work of the Spirit. Incarnation reminds us that God also joins us where we are in the ordinary embodied human life (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2018:38). God enters and engages local culture. This means 'context and culture have to be taken seriously, though it may never overpower the church' (NGK 2013b:7).

According to Niemandt (2012a):

> Sweet (2009:35) describes the church's most basic characteristics as its *operating system*, and this is *missional, relational* and *incarnational*. Being incarnational is an essential component of the missional paradigm. (p. 4)

The incarnation challenges the church to be 'world affirming in the same way that God has been' (Skreslet 2012:loc. 1988). Furthermore (Niemandt 2012a):

> Incarnational entails listening to people and entering their culture. It is to be with people where they are [*while*] going and catching up with the Spirit. According to Sweet, the church as body of Christ '… is less an aggregate of persons than an aggregate of cultures; the body of Christ is an [*arc*] of cultural organisms, each one contributing something unique and indispensable to the body' (Sweet 2009:165). (p. 4)

Moynagh and Harrold (2012:loc. 1002) describe the important role of Paul in formulating missional strategies and say Paul adopted an 'incarnational' strategy based on being attentive to context, loving and serving, building community, allowing

individuals to come to faith at different paces and founding, in the midst of life. His churches were culture-specific with indigenous forms of leadership.

The missional church is incarnational. 'In following Jesus, the church "imitates" the incarnation of Jesus' (Breedt & Niemandt 2013:3). As Wirzba (2011:163 as cited in Niemandt 2014:41) says, '[b]y being the incarnation of God the Father, Jesus is showing humanity how to receive and love everything in this world with a divine point of view'. Guder (2015:117) also argues that incarnation shows the church how to carry forward Christ's mission by the way he conducted his ministry. The missionary message of the Christian church incarnated itself in the life and world of those who had embraced it (Bosch 1991:421).

Incarnational entails listening to people and entering their culture. It is to be with people where they are while going and catching up with the Spirit. This incarnational approach focusses on presence and proximity (both God's presence and proximity, and the importance to be present and involved). This is the context for missional leadership. The church must seek to discern what the Spirit of God is doing in relation to the dynamic changes that are taking place within a particular context (Niemandt 2010b:2). Precisely because the gospel takes root in different contexts through engagement with specific cultural, political and religious realities, discernment brings an awareness of the cultural and symbolic lifeworlds of different realities (WCC 2013:72). The incarnation is thus a key paradigm for contextualising the church (Niemandt 2014:41).

Hirsch (2006:133–134; see also Niemandt 2013a:28–29) describes four important elements of a missional-incarnational lifestyle. He (Hirsch 2006) describes the incarnation of Jesus Christ in the following dimensions:

• Presence – in Jesus Christ the eternal God lives in his creation.
• Proximity – in Jesus Christ God came so near that he became accessible to us. He destroyed the division between himself and his creation – now his children are described as temples of the Holy Spirit.

- Powerlessness – Jesus Christ's incarnation means that he came to live amongst us as the lowest of the low. He upset all forms of power in order to show that vulnerable service has the power to change history and the whole world.
- Proclamation – Jesus Christ's incarnation is the gospel, through which he announces that God's new disposition has begun. It is for this reason that he calls upon people to repent and believe. (pp. 133–134)

Guder (2015:76) argues that 'God's incarnational action in history provides the church the content of its witness and defines how it is to be carried out'. In terms of the contextualisation of the church, this implies the following (Hirsch 2006; see also Niemandt 2013a:28–29):

- Presence – to become part of the fabric of a community and to engage in the humanity of it all.
- Proximity – assumes not only presence but also genuine availability – spontaneity as well as regularity in the communities the church inhabits.
- Powerlessness – servanthood and humility in the relationship with the world. It is a kenotic lifestyle where baptism and the Lord's Supper remind us that Christian life is shaped by the identification with the death of Christ (Volf 1998:24, 25). At the heart of incarnation is 'suffering alongside' (Sweet 2009:51).
- Proclamation – an incarnational approach requires that we will be willing to share the gospel story with those within our world. (pp. 133–134)

A missional-incarnational ecclesiology decentres the church from a self-centred life and makes it sensitive towards outsiders and strangers (Kok & Niemandt 2009):

> Ecclesiologically, we have to be incarnational instead of attractional: Jesus's incarnational ethos results in the bringing of the presence of God into marginalised places or spaces where such presence is usually believed not to be found. (p. 6)

The church gets to know God in the earthly stories narrated in the Bible, and in the common-sense wisdom shared with everyday people. The Father sent the Son into the everyday reality of life in what is now known as Palestine. The Father and Son sent the Spirit to guide his church in the realities of everyday life and to

proclaim the gospel among everyday communities. Incarnation means following Christ in the rhythms of everyday life in a way that takes physical, material and organisational form that is culturally indigenous (Niemandt 2013a:27). The incarnation of Jesus Christ is important because 'by being the incarnation of God the Father, Jesus is showing humanity how to receive and love everything in this world with a divine point of view' (Wirzba 2011:163). We can state that this is God's expectation from his church, and that the church can follow Jesus's example through his incarnation to accomplish this expectation.

Incarnation also lets the spotlight fall on the idea of vulnerability or *kenosis.* The default position of humans is self-preservation and self-fulfilment – and *kenosis* deconstructs this position. *Kenosis* can be described as an underlying cosmic principle. Conradie (2015) explains:

> [*A*] kenotic moral to the story of the universe. If we are made from the ashes of dead stars, we also need to acknowledge that the 'death' of stars was required for life to emerge on planet Earth. This kenotic principle is replicated in the evolution of species where geological changes that cause the extinction of some species creates [*sic*] an ecological niche for others to flourish. (p. 310)

Kenosis, as Philippians 2:5–11 pictures it, equals self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice is an essential part of the being of God. Orthodox theology, with its particular emphasis on a tri-hypostatic God, explains that a tri-hypostatic union is sustained by a self-giving and kenotic love and communion: the kenotic communion is the mode of God's existence (Rommen 2016:70).

Kenosis starts with the creation act of self-giving. Moynagh and Harrold (2012) explain:

> God puts some of himself into creation, just as we might say of musicians, 'They put themselves into that piece'. They left traces of themselves in the music they played. Likewise, God leaves traces of himself in creation, not least in humanity. (loc. 3641)

This continues in the Father sending the Son, and (NGK 2013b):

> [*T*]hrough this act sacrificing his Son for the sake of his love for the world. The Son is obedient to the Father's mission, sacrificing His life

in order to bring about reconciliation and healing. The cross serves as our reminder that the world needs salvation. The Holy Spirit shows, communicates and concretises the sacrifice of the Father and the Son. (p. 8)

The 'concept of the incarnation reminds us of the self-giving of the Triune God' (Niemandt 2014:40). Volf (2006:4 as cited in Niemandt 2014) says that:

[T]he nature of God fundamentally determines the character of the Christian life. If self-giving typifies the life of the Trinity, it is not surprising that self-giving is at the heart of the divine missions to the world. (p. 41)

Theologically speaking, the act of *kenosis* describes the renunciation of power and privilege – with the 'self-emptying of God' being expressed in both the incarnation and crucifixion (see, for example, Philippians 2:1–11) (Rollins 2011:168). Newbigin reminds us that Jesus acted as servant, but always retained the sovereignty in his own hands. He remained master in serving – 'The servant who washes the feet of his disciples is their master and lord, and it is in serving that he exercises his lordship' (Newbigin 1989:236). Hendriks (2017:loc. 3674–3676), in the study on African leadership, notes that it is a type of downward mobility and empowerment, of putting the other before self. These are signs of leadership integrity.

In the Common Call, Edinburgh (2010) reports:

Hearing the call of Jesus to make disciples of all people – poor, wealthy, marginalised, ignored, powerful, living with disability, young, and old – we are called as communities of faith to mission from everywhere to everywhere. (p. 2)

The report on *Foundations for Mission* reiterates the importance of building mission on how God works in the world (Kim & Anderson 2011:119). Human experience and context, and thus an incarnational or contextual approach to mission, constitute a foundation for mission (Balia & Kim 2010):

[M]ission has the twin-obligations of being informed by experience (both past and present) and seeking to impact human experience (spiritual, physical, psychological, social, cultural, political, economic) in creative fidelity to the gospel of Christ. (p. 12)

The Cape Town Commitment echoes this approach (Lausanne III 2011):

> We must love all that God has chosen to bless, which includes all cultures. We long to see the gospel embodied and embedded in all cultures, redeeming them from within so that they may display the glory of God and the radiant fullness of Christ. We look forward to the wealth, glory and splendour of all cultures being brought into the city of God – redeemed and purged of all sin, enriching the new creation. (p. 14)

The Cape Town Commitment explains the importance of various aspects of the context in a section called *Bearing witness to the truth of Christ in a pluralistic, globalized world*, where contextualisation in issues, such as pluralism, workplace, globalised media and emerging technologies, is discussed (Lausanne III 2011:20–24).

The WCRC understands mission as the crossing of all borders that separate people from God, one another and creation. It is only by crossing borders that reconciliation through Christ becomes a reality (WCRC 2010b:164).

The WCC (2013:51) describes Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God's love for the world. In mission, the concept of incarnation is as important as the cross and resurrection of Christ (WCC 2013):

> In incarnation God does not remain remote and abstract in the world. He/she becomes tangible and visible in Jesus, made up of flesh and blood, rooted in and related to the heat and dust, the rough and tumble of the earth. (p. 136)

Mission 'calls for an understanding of the complexities of power dynamics, global systems and structures, and local contextual realities' (WCC 2013:59). In this same vein, the WCC says that 'the context of missional activity influences its scope and character. Therefore the social location of all engaged in mission work must be [considered]' (WCC 2013:57,59). This also applies to evangelisation, and 'respect for people and their cultural and symbolic lifeworlds are necessary if the gospel is to take root in different [contexts]' (WCC 2013:72).

Ecumenical history shows a clear understanding of the relevance and importance of a missional church that appreciates contextualisation and shapes itself in relation to the culture and context. Skreslet's (2012:loc. 2041) remark that contextualisation indicates a shift in emphasis from the centre to the periphery and from the missionary to the local church affirms the importance of inculturation.

■ Ecclesiology follows mission

According to Niemandt (2012a; see also Fensham 2010:131; Volf 1998:129):

> God's mission is directly related to the world and the church is an instrument privileged to participate in God's mission of redemption and the recreation of humanity and the cosmos. We must conceive an ecclesiology in the light of the social perichoretic character of God the Trinity – the church in the likeness of God. (p. 3).

The missionary God has a missionary church.

'The *Missio Dei* institutes the *missiones ecclesiae*' (Bosch 1991:370, 391). 'Mission does not belong to the church, it is not something people do – it is a characteristic of the Triune God' (Niemandt 2012a:3). The church is not so much the agent of the mission as the locus of the mission (Newbigin 1989:129). According to Niemandt (2012a):

> The very character of the Trinitarian God serves as identity-[*markers*] for the church, or as Wright (2006:66) puts it: 'The church's mission flows from the identity of God and his Christ'. The church does not only correspond to the unity of the Triune God, it also finds its living space in the Triune God (Moltmann 2010:26, 162). The church has come into being as a result of mission and mission characterises the whole of Christian existence. Its missional existence is visible in the fact that it is an apostolic community in active movement towards the world. The new kingdom inaugurated by Jesus Christ, the reconciling work of the living God in Christ, gives birth, through the Holy Spirit, to the missional church. The church is mission and participates in God's mission because it cannot do otherwise. This is the very reason why the church exists. [...]

> The church is mission (Hauerwas 2010:62). In a missional ecclesiology, says Hooker (2008:1, 2), the church is not a building or an institution but a community of witnesses, called into being and equipped by God, and sent into the world to testify and participate in Christ's work. (p. 3)

Christians are witnesses (not judges) who are called to offer a public account of their testimony (Conradie 2015:95).

As mentioned by Niemandt (2012a):

> The Edinburgh study process says that the church has not always existed, but has come into being – theologically as well as empirically – as a result of mission. It is therefore impossible to separate church from mission in terms of its origin and in terms of its goal (Balia & Kim 2010:210). The history of the church is the story of the church in mission. The goal of the church is to fulfil God's missionary purpose and to be God's missionary church. Mission is central to the identity of the church because the community of believers exists as a sign of God's mission. The church is the primary locus of Christian participation in God's mission (Thompson 2011:275).
>
> According to the Cape Town Commitment (Lausanne III 2011:19) the Church exists to worship and glorify God for all eternity and to participate in the transforming mission of God within history. (p. 3)

The preamble to the Cape Town Commitment (Lausanne III 2011) says:

> The Church's mission goes on. The mission of God continues to the ends of the earth and to the end of the world.
>
> [...] [*T*]he Church's participation in God's mission continues, in joyful urgency, and with fresh and exciting opportunities in every generation including our own. (p. 5)

The WCC (2013), in TC, states from the outset that:

> [*T*]he Christian understanding of the church and its mission is rooted in the vision of God's great design (or 'economy') for all creation: The 'kingdom' which was both promised by and manifested in Jesus Christ. (p. 8)

The church, 'as a reflection of the communion of the Triune God, is meant to serve' God's mission (WCC 2013:18–19). In *Together towards life* (WCC 2013:63), the WCC says, 'the life of the church arises from the love of the Triune God'.

In terms of the relationship between ecclesiology and mission, mission can be described as the life of the church. The church is also central to mission. Some call this a Copernican revolution in the understanding of the mission of the church (Ott 2016:xiv). According to Niemandt (2012a):

> The church is God's people erecting signs of God's new dispensation, or modelling now what the world is called to be ultimately. The church is those people of God, called, gathered and equipped by the Spirit and [*send*] to participate in God's mission by bringing the gospel of God's love and new life. (p. 3)

Wild-Wood and Rajkumar (2013:251–252 as cited in Niemandt 2014), 'in their exploration of foundations for mission in the light of Edinburgh 2010 and Cape Town 2010, in the Regnum Edinburg Centenary Series' (*Foundations of mission*), say:

> From understanding mission in relation to the *doing* of the church. Mission can now be understood in relation to the *being* and *becoming* of the church, for an incarnational mission. Of course mission as being related to the being and becoming of the people of God is a salient biblical feature, but the institutionalisation of this biblical precedence in recent ecclesial practice opens space in thinking of mission in terms of ecclesial form. Such an ecclesia shaped by and responding to context transcends popular configuration of mission in the language of the imperative – what we ought to do – and frees us to re-configure mission in the language of the indicative – of who we are and to become. (p. 49)

The flow of the argument was that ecclesiology follows mission (Niemandt 2012a):

> [*T*]he church *does* what it *is* and then *organises* what it *does*. The shift towards a Spirit theology (as argued in the previous paragraph), has engendered a missiological understanding of the Christian community (church) and its internal work (liturgy) and has far-reaching ecclesiological consequences (Balia & Kim 2010:25, 202). (p. 3)

'The nature of the church provides the framework to understand the character of the church' (Niemandt 2015a:2). Guder (2015:14) argues that, 'the formation of the church for mission should be the motivating force that shapes and energizes our theological labors in all their diversity and distinctiveness'.

According to Niemandt (2015a):

> What the church *is* determines what the church *does.* The purpose of the church and the direction and scope of its ministries are determined by the nature and character of the church. (p. 2)

'The church *organises* what it does, agrees on rules that regulate ministries and organisation' (Niemandt 2015a:2), and recognises leaders that lead the organisation of the church (Van Gelder 2007a:18). Issues such as the way the church *organises* and *governs* what it does, and thus leadership, need to be answered against this background and understanding.

What the church does?

■ Introduction

This chapter addresses what the church does. The life and activities of the church (see Figure 3.1) are determined by the character of the church – what the church is, as explained in the previous chapter. In the broadest sense, the life of the church is determined by the very nature of the church, and that is to participate in God's mission. The WCC (2013) published the work of the Faith and Order Commission on *The Church.* The description of the work of the church is quite compelling (WCC 2013):

> The Church, as the body of Christ, acts by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue his life-giving mission in prophetic and compassionate ministry and so participates in God's work of healing a broken world. Communion, whose source is the very life of the Holy Trinity, is both the gift by which the Church lives and, at the same time, the gift that God calls the Church to offer to a wounded and divided humanity in hope of reconciliation and healing. (p. 8)

This document, as well as the World Council of Churches' *Together towards life*, describes the work of the church as participation
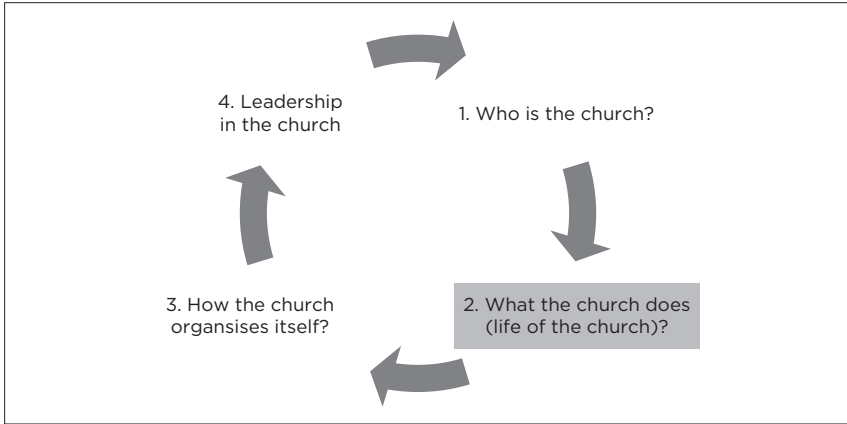
FIGURE 3.1: The life of the church.

in the Spirit's life-giving mission. This includes prophetic and compassionate ministry and the healing of a broken world. It also includes the proclamation of the gospel and announcing God's kingdom. The WCC (2013:8) says in *The Church* that the church was to be a community of witness, proclaiming the kingdom of God, and inviting people from all nations to saving faith by proclaiming in word and deed the good news of salvation in Christ. The Church celebrates the sacraments and forms Christian communities.

Newbigin (1995:48) reminds us that the main focus of what the church does is to be God's gift of peace. The church is God's movement launched into the life of the world to be God's gift of peace in all it does. The church does much more than proclaiming the kingdom. The church bears the kingdom in its own life. The church is a sign and foretaste of God's kingdom. Newbigin (1995:52) mentions the surprising fact that Jesus did not embody his teaching about the kingdom in written form, which would have ensured an infallible record of precisely what the church must do, but rather formed a church. He called a living community of men and women who would be the witnesses of what he was and did. The kingdom reality was to be continued in history in

the form of a community of disciples, not a book. The church must proclaim the good news and simultaneously be the good news.

The work of the church is to *be* disciples and to *form* disciples who can participate in the transformative work of God's Spirit. Discipleship is by its very nature transformative. The *Arusha Call to Discipleship* states that 'discipleship is both a gift and a calling to be active collaborators with God for the transforming of the world' (WCC 2018:n.p.). To follow Jesus is to follow a call to a new and transformed life. It is closely bound with the transformative work of the Holy Spirit who brings about spiritual growth and the conversion of lives. Guder (2015:36) says the life of a disciple 'emulates the sending and coming of Jesus himself, who comes in love, comes to embrace, to touch, but always to heal and to transform'. The life of a disciple in mission is one of continuous conversion and transformation. Missional formation always entails a process of continuing conversion (Guder 2015:110).

Bosch's (1991) call for mission to be transformative – *Transforming Mission* – is echoed in the life of disciples and leaders. It includes a commitment to transform the world by prophetic witness for justice, taking care of creation and solidarity with the marginalised. The gospel is transformative, and the reception and the living out of the gospel transform both individual and community lives. Pillay (2017:1, 11) concludes that the transforming dimension was always an essential aspect of mission, and that the world is not so much interested in what the church believes currently, 'but in what the church is doing to transform society and the world so that justice and peace may prevail'. What does the church do? The Christian church is called to be an agent for the transformation and change of the world to be a better place, a place where life can flourish. The church is called to be faithfully present to be a sign and foretaste of the kingdom of God. The church is involved in the restoration of the household of God, but in the sense of a dynamic restoration with new innovations. Hence, there is the formulation of missional

leadership as 'the transformation of people and institutions to participate, through meaningful relations and in the power of the Spirit, in God's mission' (Niemandt 2016b:86).

■ A community of disciples

I find Newbigin's (1989:158) description of contextually relevant communities as a compelling summary of a community of disciples giving expression to what the church *does.* He describes life in such a community as a community that lives by biblical narrative. They remember, rehearse and live by the story which the Bible tells, especially the New Testament. They are encouraged and guided by the continual reading of and reflection on the Bible. They continuously celebrate the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. They treasure their history and maintain its continuity with the early church, those to whom Jesus said, 'as the Father sent me, so I send you', through a ministry in which the personal call of Jesus, 'Follow me', is extended to everyone crossing their way. Following Jesus is not a question of abstract moral or political principles, but a life transformed by the personal (relational) encounters in which men and women who have themselves been called call others to follow.

He (Newbigin 1989) formulated six characteristics of the congregation, which serve as a summary of what the church does:

- It is a community of praise and thanksgiving.
- The church is a community of truth.
- It is a community that does not live for itself but is deeply involved in the concerns of its neighbourhood. Newbigin called the congregation God's embassy in a specific place.
- The congregation is a community where men and women are prepared for and sustained in the exercise of the priesthood in the world. The congregation has to be a place where its members are trained, supported and nourished in the exercise of their parts of the priestly ministry in the world. Newbigin reminds us that a congregation values the fact that God gives

different gifts to different members of the body, and calls them to different kinds of service.
- The congregation must itself be a new social order. It must be a foretaste of the kingdom of God.
- The congregation is a community of hope. (pp. 238–244)

■ Transformative discipleship

The transformational nature of the gospel is at the heart of New Testament proclamation. One of the important facets of what the missional church does is the idea that the church participates in the Triune God's transformation of creation. This can be labelled as transformative discipleship. Conradie argues that all creatures participate in God's household and enjoy the many blessings that follow from that, but '[b]ecoming part of this household cannot but be a transformative experience' (Conradie 2015:232).

The inherent translatability of the gospel, as well as the inherent translatability of the church and congregations in every cultural context, has been explained. This implies a transformational dynamic – the gospel as a missionary activity, initiated by God and embodied and located in time and place, igniting new dreams about future possibilities.

The *Arusha Call to Discipleship* (WCC 2018) summarises transformative discipleship, and thus what the church *does*:

- We are called by our baptism to transforming discipleship – a Christ-connected way of life in a world where many face despair, rejection, loneliness, and worthlessness.
- We are called to worship the one Triune God – the God of justice, love, and grace – at a time when many worship the false god of the market system (Lk 16:13).
- We are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ – the fullness of life, the repentance and forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life – in word and deed, in a violent world where many are sacrificed to the idols of death (Jr 32:35) and where many have not yet heard the gospel.

- We are called to joyfully engage in the ways of the Holy Spirit, who empowers people from the margins with agency, in the search for justice and dignity (Ac 1:8; 4:31).
- We are called to discern the word of God in a world that communicates many contradictory, false, and confusing messages.
- We are called to care for God's creation, and to be in solidarity with nations severely affected by climate change in the face of a ruthless human-centred exploitation of the environment for consumerism and greed.
- We are called as disciples to belong together in just and inclusive communities, in our quest for unity and on our ecumenical journey, in a world that is based upon marginalisation and exclusion.
- We are called to be faithful witnesses of God's transforming love in dialogue with people of other faiths in a world where the politicisation of religious identities often causes conflict.
- We are called to be formed as servant leaders who demonstrate the way of Christ in a world that privileges power, wealth, and the culture of money (Lk 22:25–27).
- We are called to break down walls and seek justice with people who are dispossessed and displaced from their lands – including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers – and to resist new frontiers and borders that separate and kill (Is 58:6–8).
- We are called to follow the way of the cross, which challenges elitism, privilege, personal and structural power (Lk 9:23).
- We are called to live in the light of the resurrection, which offers hope-filled possibilities for transformation. (n.p.)

The church came into being through the life-giving work of the Spirit constituting and extending the mission of the Triune God, and mission characterises the whole of the church's existence. The church exists because of mission, and the church *is* mission. The church announces the kingdom and promotes in its own life the presence of the kingdom. Conradie (2015:231) explains this as the mission of the church, preparing the house for God's homecoming. This is a transformative mission that brings life in fullness. It is to teach the world a new way to be human.

The brief answer to the question 'what does the church do?' is transforming mission.

■ Faithfully present

The missional church is faithfully present. Sparks, Souren and Friesen (2014) addressed the idea of faithful presence as part and parcel of what the church does. For them, it is of the utmost importance to understand that the church begins in place. The church in particular places a dominant idea in the New Testament (Sparks et al. 2014:37). They have a new and re-interpreted appreciation for the idea of the church as a parish. This means that ecclesial life is located within the mutual concerns of the neighbourhood. This also includes a re-appropriation of the importance of the 'commons'. Brewin (2012) makes a passionate plea for the restoration of the commons. He states that the commons is the true substance of humanity. According to (Brewin 2012), commons is:

> [T]he physical, ethical, spiritual and sociological gravity that draws us away from individualism and selfishness, from the endless pursuit of profits and the tireless denigration of the marginalised into community and mutual dependency [...]. (loc. 2570)

The church must be a key place where such a commons functions, a 'community where gifts can be exchanged' and where relationships can flourish (Brewin 2013:loc. 1863).

To be faithfully present and to appreciate the commons is an incarnational approach that takes bodies, location and community seriously, following the clue of Christ's incarnation and God's presence in our reality. Faithful presence is to be faithful to the incarnation (Niemandt 2018:100). It is transformative discipleship, but linked to a particular time and space, 'faithful presence invites you to act on the belief that God is giving you what you need to be formed as disciples within your location' (Sparks et al. 2014:48). The concept of faithful presence anchors the church in a specific place. It is a grounded faith (Niemandt 2018:98). Fitch (2016:12) also regards the idea of faithful presence to be of vital

importance for the missional church and describes it as the heart of what it means to be the people of God. Faithful presence appreciates God's presence in the world and the fact that God calls his people to be faithfully present to make himself concrete and real in the world. Fitch links faithful presence to all the major missiological themes in missional ecclesiology. He (Fitch 2016) explains:

> In this space the Father (reigning), the Son (being sent), and the Spirit (making the Son's presence real) work together. A people become present to God's presence in the world (*Missio Dei*) and make space for Christ's presence to become real among them (incarnation). (p. 34)

This is God's plan (mission). God is present in the world through a people and continuously extends an invitation to the world to join in. When the church is faithfully present, transformation happens and God's kingdom becomes visible, 'it's how God has chosen to change the world' (Fitch 2016:10). This is faith that is serious about location and space. Faithful presence is to participate in God's life-giving mission with a deep awareness that God transforms life where his people are faithfully present.

■ The church shapes desires and transforms participants through liturgy and habits

Faithful presence is closely linked to a spirituality that appreciates the formational role of disciplines and habits. Practising these habits invites the people of God to be faithfully present. It is the task of the church to shape desires and form disciples through liturgy and habits. The community of disciples are people on the way towards a common hope (future) and shaped and encouraged by communal practices. Fitch (2016:37) underscores the importance of disciplines and argues that disciplines and liturgy gather people together into a circle of submission to God's presence and reign.

The discussion of what the church does and how church life is organised to facilitate transformation and faithful presence is profoundly influenced by the insights of Smith (2016). The church is a community of disciples, brought together and sent by the Spirit, to participate in the Triune God's mission of bringing about flourishing life. For Smith (2016:loc. 101–102), discipleship is to be very intentional about what you love and how you 'curate your heart'. He reminds us that every approach to the life of the church, to discipleship and Christian spirituality assumes an implicit model of what human beings are. Discipleship, and thus being faithfully present as church, 'is more a matter of hungering and thirsting than of knowing and believing' (Smith 2016:102–103).

This formulation flows from Smith's warning against the reductionism of Descartes and modernism that reduced humankind to mere intellectual, or thinking, animals and neglected the rest of human experience. He is highly critical of an intellectualist model of the human person that reduces man to mere intellect (echoing the critique of the GOCN). We are not only and fundamentally thinking things. We are also not only and fundamentally believing things. Although the posture of believing is broader, and more fundamental than mere 'thinking', it still does not represent an adequate description of the fullness of being human. For Smith, we are defined not by what we know, or even what we believe, but by what we desire, 'our wants and longings and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behaviour flow' (Smith 2016:loc. 99–100). We are, in short, what we love. Smith follows Augustine in his holistic approach to being human and expands on his ideas by emphasising our relationship, especially with the Triune God. Human nature is dynamic and is to be on the move, pursuing something – to be teleological creatures (Smith 2016:loc. 201). He argues that the '*heart* is the existential chamber of our love, and it is our loves that orient us toward some ultimate end or *telos*' (Smith 2016:loc. 211–214)*.* He states, 'it is my desires that define me. In short, you are what you love' (Smith 2016:loc. 211–214).

Humans are teleological in nature, on a quest towards the destination of our dreams. We desire the good life – flourishing life – where true happiness is to be found. We long for something, and the question is the content of the longing. As Smith (2016:loc. 278) summarises, 'you are what you love because you live toward what you want'. Branson (2007:112) says congregations are people on the way, sharing a common memory, a common hope and a present life of committed practices.

The significance of these insights for the life of the church and discipleship is to recognise 'that such love is a kind of [subconscious] desire that operates without our thinking about it' (Smith 2016:loc. 305–306). What we love, our longings and desires, is shaped by imitation and practices. We must calibrate our hearts. 'Love is a habit, our hearts are calibrated' by following examples and repeating certain practices, and therefore we must index our hearts to a certain end (Smith 2016:loc. 305–306). This happens in liturgy and worship. Love acquires direction and orientation through practices and rituals – liturgies. To worship is human, 'to be human is to be a liturgical animal, a creature whose loves are shaped by our worship' (Smith 2016:loc. 434). When we worship and immerse ourselves in liturgies, we are in the process of indexing ourselves to the kingdom of God. Smith (2016) explains:

> This is why worship is the heart of discipleship […] The orientation of the heart happens from the bottom up, through the formation of our habits of desire. Learning to love (God) takes practice. (loc. 463–466)

In terms of this discussion on what the church does, Smith's insight provides a fresh perspective. He argues that 'the church is the place where God invites us to renew our loves, reorient our desires, and retrain our appetites' (Smith 2016:loc. 1047–1048). Christian worship forms and feeds 'our appetites' and prepares us to be sent into God's creation to serve his purposes. One can add that worship is the core of being faithfully present. Smith (2016) describes worship as the heart of discipleship:

> Yes, Christian formation is a life-encompassing, Monday through Saturday, week in and week out project; but it radiates from, and is nourished by, the worship life of the congregation gathered around Word and Table. (loc. 1107–1108)

He links this to a life in the Trinity when he describes Christian worship as 'nothing less than an invitation to participate in the life of the Triune God' (Smith 2016:loc. 1131). Smith states that the Triune God is both the audience and the agent of worship, that 'worship is to and for God, and God is active in worship in the Word and the sacraments' (Smith 2016:loc. 1139–1140). Harrison (2017:392) also argues that missional worship focusses our attention on God's activity, our discernment of that activity and participation in it. He says that in doing so, worship vitalises our discernment and our ability to participate in God's mission in daily life. The worship event is the primary *locus* of transformation because of the Spirit's unique transformative presence in worship. We must remember God is in worship and that the event is a place of gracious, divine initiative. Worship is the centre of discipleship and community, an eloquent symbol of being faithfully present. We should approach these events with reconceived expectations because in worship we will be met and remade by a living, active Lord.

The church shapes desire and transforms participants through liturgy and habits, to be faithfully present as a community of transformed and transforming disciples.

How the church organises itself?

■ Introduction

The church is mission and exists because of the *Missio Dei.* The church exists for mission, and the life of the church is participating in God's mission. Worship is the centre of church life, and the community of disciples are formed to pursue God's preferred future in all the places and spaces where the people of God find themselves. This is done as a community of faithfully present disciples. The next question is how the church organises itself, and what is its mission? There must be some kind of structure, mobilisation of resources and alignment of activities to open up the embodiment and expression of the church in time and space. It has been argued that (Niemandt 2015a):

> [*W*]hat the church *is* determines what the church *does.* The purpose of the church and the direction and scope of its ministries [*(what is does)*] are determined by the nature and character of the church. (p. 2)

The church then 'organises what it does', agrees on ways to structure ministries and execute its work, and calls leaders that assist and serve in the organisation of the church (Niemandt 2015a:2). The question of how the church organises itself, and eventually leadership, needs to be answered against this background. How is the church portrayed if mission is the organising principle?

■ Authority, power and leadership in the missional church

The very concept of organisation and structure, and the church as a social construction necessitates reflection on the way authority and power relate to leadership as an expression of the way in which the church is organised.

■ Authority as a feature of group relationships

Authority is socially constructed. When we are received into the Christian community, whether by baptism as infants or by conversion as adults, we enter into a tradition that claims authority (Newbigin 1989:59). Fitch (2016:152) also acknowledges that no group of people can exist for long without authority functioning well in leadership.

Barentsen (2017) defines authority as follows:

> Authority, as a form of social practice, is constructed through group interaction, and serves to guide and protect the community, promising a vision of group identity that maintains its vitality and relevance in its changing social context. (p. 25)

The church, as a community of witnesses or disciples, is formed in terms of human interactions bound together by various constructions of authority.

■ Authority safeguards freedom of the group to structure and protects values

Authority is necessary to enable and structure group relationships. It gains legitimacy when people identify with the inherent values and beliefs operational in the particular construct. Barentsen (2017:25) argues that authority safeguards the freedom of the group to promote interaction and flourishing. It structures and protects shared values and beliefs. According to Barentsen, it 'is a form of social practice that binds a community together, that functions to help organizations know their identity' (Barentsen 2017:25).

■ Values of a missional church

The interaction between authority, power and values necessitates a brief discussion of the values of a missional church. Values function differently from the drawing of strict borders. The authority of values attracts and draws into the narrative, whereas borders delimit and ensure enclosures. Values are similar to a fountain or waterhole in the Kruger National Park. The waterhole is a natural centre where animals come and go, and creates its own micro-environment. The presence of the waterhole determines the environment and even the kind of fauna and flora found in the area. This serves as a metaphor for values. Values do not give a precise definition of the way authority operates in the missional church, but it provides direction, context and an environment for a church. The church is a value-driven community, and values determine the structures, polity and character of the church. They also shape the church as a missionary community. In this sense, values are more valuable than definitions, strategic plans and vision statements in describing a missional church (Niemandt 2013a:29–33).

Given that authority protects a shared group, an overview of values associated with the missional church discourse gives a perspective on the role of authority. Gibbs (2005:39) described the church as a value-based community of disciples. The Archbishops' Council of Church of England followed this approach in a report published as *Mission-shaped Church* (The Archbishops' Council 2004). In the publication, the council proposes five values for a 'missionary church'. According to The Archbishops' Council (2004):

> These are intended to offer a framework that can be applied to an existing local church or to any strategy to develop, grow or plant a church or a fresh expression of church. (p. 81)

In *Mission-shaped Church* (The Archbishops' Council 2004), the following values of a missional church are described (the report uses the word 'missionary'):

- [*A missionary church is*] focussed on God the Trinity. Such a church worships and serves a missionary God, and understands itself to share in the divine mission.
- A missionary church is incarnational. It seeks to shape itself in relation to the culture in which it is located or to which it is called.
- A missionary church is transformational. A missionary church exists for the transformation of the community that it serves, through the power of the gospel and the Holy Spirit. It is not self-serving, self-seeking or self-focused.
- A missionary church makes disciples. It is active in calling people to faith in Jesus Christ, and it is equally committed to the development of a consistent Christian lifestyle appropriate to, but not withdrawn from, the culture or cultures in which it operates.
- A missionary church is relational. In a missionary church, a community of faith is being formed. It is characterised by welcome and hospitality. (pp. 81–83)

The General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) followed a similar approach. A new policy document called *Raamwerkdokument oor die missionale aard en roeping van*

die NG Kerk [Framework document on the missional nature and calling of the DRC] was presented in 2013 and accepted by the synod. The goal of the report was stated to be the creation of a new missional language that may ignite new imagination for the DRC (NGK 2013a:200). The formulation of the acceptance of the policy document is quite interesting (NGK 2013c):

> The General Synod received the policy document as a document that expresses the discernment processes over the last ten years in the Dutch Reformed Church. These processes paid attention to the essence and nature of the church and its witness in the world. The General Synod accepted the document as part of a conversation that assists the denomination to create new (missional) language, facilitating new conversations and imaginative new possibilities for the future of the church. (p. 8)[4]

The report of the DRC (NGK 2013a) shares the above-mentioned values (The Archbishops' Council 2004), but added the following:

- The church's primary focus is on the world, not on the church and the survival of the church.
- The church practises a *kenotic* existence, a self-emptying life. Although this may demand much, it is understood as a solemn duty and privilege.
- A missional church accepts responsibility towards the whole of God's creation. (p. 203)

Authority and values interact to create a social community. The values not only legitimate authority but also guide the way in which the community live together.

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4. *Die Algemene Sinode ontvang hierdie beleidsdokument as 'n dokument wat uitdrukking gee aan die geloofsonderskeidende prosesse wat die afgelope dekade aandag aan die wese en aard van die kerk en haar getuienis in die wêreld gegee het. Die Algemene Sinode aanvaar dit as deel van 'n gesprek wat ons help om saam nuwe taal te skep, wat ons lei om nuwe gesprekke te voer en so nuwe, verbeeldingryke moontlikhede vir die toekoms van die NG Kerk te ontdek.*

■ A theology of authority

It is significant that Newbigin (1995:12) introduces his reflection on the Trinitarian nature of mission in *The Open Secret*, with a discourse on authority. He refers to the remark about Jesus in Matthew 7:29 and the observation that Jesus spoke 'as one who had authority'. He argues that Jesus is the supreme authority, and this has a considerable impact on the understanding of mission, and eventually leadership in mission. Jesus' authority is not a derived one – it is the authority of Godself present in the midst of human history. Authority comes from God (see also Van Kooten & Barrett 2004:140). The confession that Jesus is Lord implies a claim regarding the public life of humankind and the whole created world, because the church is a movement 'launched into the public life of mankind' (Newbigin 1995:16). Mission is thus defined by the authority of Jesus, and Newbigin (1995:17) states that Christian mission is to act out this authoritative confession that Jesus is Lord of all in the whole life of the whole world. The church is founded on the authority of Jesus and launched into the world to bring God's peace and life for all of creation. The community of faithful disciples exists because Jesus governs the world through his presence. There will be guidance and order in this space (Fitch 2016:140). Rommen (2016:87), in his Orthodox reflection on the missional church, also underscores the importance of ecclesial authority and legitimacy in the mission of the church. The authority, mandate and legitimacy of every person who participates in God's mission must be clear.[5]

In the church, authority is understood as a divine construction of social reality. Barentsen (2017:26) emphasises that God created humankind as relational beings to function within one or more communities held together by authority. Humankind has the capacity to relate to each other and to function within community. Authority is found within this social reality. It is a gift to the

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5. Rommen (2016:87), not surprisingly, places this authority in apostolic succession – the 'material succession of the legitimate practitioners of the church'.

community in caring for each other as well as a created reality. Authority relates to the relationships between humankind as well as how humans relate to creation. Barentsen (2017:27) concludes that authority is an indispensable and beneficial ingredient of all human relationships and life in community. Authority may be regarded as a divinely intended characteristic of human relationships. It is also part and parcel of the way God intended to care for creation. Wright (2010) describes humankind as 'kings of creation' and interprets Genesis 1:26–28 as humankind made in God's image, with the intention of exercising dominion within creation:

> It is not that having dominion is what constitutes the image of God, but rather that exercising dominion is what being made in God's image enables and entitles us to do. (loc. 691–693)

This is a delegated form of God's own kingly authority over the whole of his creation. Humankind must take care of creation, but in a way modelled on God's benevolent kingship – by taking care of it and in serving creation. Wright concludes, 'ruling the earth is for its benefit, not our own' (Wright 2010:loc. 731–732).

Missional ecclesiology underscores the importance of the Trinity, and the church has been described as a life in the Trinity. Specific reference has been made to a social Trinitarian understanding 'to bring clarity in the understanding of the interrelatedness of God, church, and world' (Niemandt 2012a:4; see also Roxburgh 2011:55). Volf (1998:129) developed his ecclesiology in the light of the social perichoretic character of God the Trinity and argued that the church and relationships within the church must be 'in the likeness of God'. This relational understanding of the Trinity, and its implications for the social reality of the church, can be viewed as a model of distributed authority and network leadership (Barentsen 2017:27). This kind of symmetrical relationships may be a more appropriate model to reflect the relationships within the Trinity.

Authority finds expression in ministry in the church. The WCC (2013:15) emphasises the importance and vital place of ministry

in the church. It states that 'the Church has never been without persons holding specific authority and responsibility', noting that 'Jesus chose and sent the disciples to be witnesses of the kingdom' (WCC 2013:15). Christ extended his authority to the church, and the WCC (2013) reiterates that:

[*A*] ministry of word, sacrament and oversight given by Christ to the Church to be carried out by some of its members for the good of all. This triple function of the ministry equips the Church for its mission in the world. (p. 15)

Authority in the church is thus understood as an extension of the authority of Christ and a gift of the Holy Spirit. This means that all authority comes from the head of the church and as a gift facilitated by the Holy Spirit. Leadership requires a posture of submission to the one king. This will place leadership in the correct context and liberate the context by opening space for Christ's presence and power in all places where the church is faithfully present (see also Fitch 2016:159).

The WCC (2013:32) refers to the word *exousia* and indicates the following field of meanings:

• power
• delegated authority
• moral authority
• influence
• literally 'from out of one's being'.

Jesus Christ exercised authority in multiple ways:

• in teaching
• in performing miracles and exorcisms
• in the forgiveness of sins
• in showing the disciples the ways of salvation
• in serving others.

The overarching theme in Jesus' application of authority was the way in which he served others in the exercise of authority.

Authority and power are also closely associated with the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises the presence of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by his power. Guder (2015:103) says, '[t]he authority

of the Bible is not a claim set over us as a threat, but the real power of God's Spirit in our midst'. If mission is discerning where the Spirit is working, Keifert's (2017:191) understanding of leadership and authority explains an important facet –for him, leaders are those persons and relationships of persons perceived to have the authority to convene, gather and cultivate a climate of discernment. This link between authority and discernment is a valuable enrichment of the understanding of missional ministry.

Authority does not exist or function for the sake of power for the agents of authority. Authority must be understood in terms of service and the beneficial application of power. Leaders receive authority as a gift, and exercise the gift through worship, submission, trust and dependence on the Lord.

Guder's (2015) comprehensive explanation links authority to flourishing life:

> To do that, we return to the original meaning of the term in Latin, *augere* and *auctor*, and *auctoritas*. This word family has to do with those actions or functions that bring about increase, encourage flourishing, instigate growth. Our word 'augment' is derived from these roots. Thus, authority is that function, that instance, that agency which brings about increase, movement, flourishing, and growth. (p. 101)

If we ask of the church, as Guder (2015:41) has done, 'What was and is the church that Jesus intended?', we should also ask, 'what was and is the authority that Jesus intended?' The kind of authority Jesus intended is one that allows life to flourish, that serves and seeks the benefit of the 'other'.

■ Power

It must be stated that the concept of power is ambiguous. Power functions in various ways and 'can be understood in positive and negative ways' (Niemandt 2011:1). In the broadest sense, 'power refers to the capacity and ability to shape the lives of people and communities' (Niemandt 2011:2). 'Christian mission has always been associated with the promise of the risen Christ that his followers would receive power when the Holy Spirit' (Balia & Kim 2010:87)

came to them, but then clearly a transformative power 'that positively shapes the life of people and communities' (Niemandt 2011:2). Power is a gift to the church, granted by the Holy Spirit who uses frail human efforts to evoke faith and enable obedience and draw together one missional community after another (Guder 2015:146). The idea that power resides in God, and not in human leaders, liberates leaders to proclaim and live out God's good news. Leadership is not to be involved in continuous power struggles, but to enjoy God's liberating power through the Spirit.

However, there is something of a paradox in the power granted to the church. It is a combination of tender compassion and awesome sovereignty (Newbigin 1989:237). Power must always be understood in terms of Christ's example – God's power to save is manifested in weakness, vulnerability and foolishness. 'The core of God's mission is the cross. When mission encounters power, we can only offer vulnerability' (Niemandt 2011:6).

■ The organisation and structure of power and authority

I argued that authority finds expression in ministry in the church, and in most Christian churches ministry is structured in a formal process. Most of the offices mentioned in the Old Testament faded away with the dawn of the New Testament era (Boers 2015:loc. 2450). Van Kooten and Barrett (2004:142) argue that Christ intended for authority to reside in a number of persons taking responsibility to continue his ministry. The New Testament mentions several possible offices, including apostles, prophets, overseers or bishops, teachers, elders, deacons, widows, virgins, exhorters, miracle workers and healers. An overview of church history shows a predisposition for the threefold pattern of *episkopos–presbyteros–diakonos* (WCC 2013:31). Christian leadership finds expression and is related to the understanding of these particular ministries.

The WCC (2013:30) reminds us that the New Testament does not prescribe a single pattern of ministry. This is, in part, a

contextual issue determined by contextual needs, but profoundly influenced by churches seeking to follow the will of God from Scripture in structuring and organising ministry.

■ Checks and balances: Prophet, priest and king

It is a fact of life that human beings misuse power and apply authority for self-protection and, in selfishness, even in social constructions such as the church. Although the church received the gift of power from the Holy Spirit, history unfortunately also tells stories of violence in mission and the corruption of power. The very church 'energised by the missionary power of the Spirit, somehow lost the plot and the promise of the fruits of the Spirit', and applied power in a destructive way (Niemandt 2011:2). The mere fact of divine calling together of the church and revealing God's intention for the church does not, by itself, guarantee that power and authority will be used to bring flourishing, life and growth.

This underscores the importance of checks and balances in the way in which authority and power are exercised. Barentsen (2017:28) suggests that wise leadership builds various checks and balances into the exercise of authority. He refers to the biblical focus on the authority of the king, prophet and priest as an example. These three expressions of authority function somewhat independently and in parallel to offer mutual correction and balance. Boers (2015:loc. 2468–2469) also refers to the correctional role of prophets in particular and concludes that a primary prophetic purpose is to puncture leadership fallibilities, 'kings were always counterbalanced by prophets [...]' (Boers 2015:loc. 2473). Westphal (2018:7) says that prophets must counterbalance and correct the voice of the king-leader. This is important because of the traditional role of king-leaders in society, namely, to protect the status quo. Prophets are found directly or indirectly confronting the king-leaders in specific contexts.

Emerging leadership theory recognises the important role of prophets. Blair et al. (2012:131) appreciate the fact that not much

has been said about prophets in leadership literature, but argue that, once identified, the presence of prophetic leadership in practice becomes apparent. Blair et al. (2012) identified the following four primary functions of prophets as leaders:

1. Critiquing – This functions as a countercultural consciousness that challenges the status quo, and the claims of those in power who maintain that status quo. Critiquing clears the way for the new future to emerge.
2. Energising – This relates to the prophetic imagination, which captures the minds and hearts of the organisation or community with fresh vision, stirring up desire and determination to implement change.
3. Translating – This describes the function of prophetic leadership that utilises the unique positioning of the prophet at the boundary, where the prophet assists those on each side of the boundary to understand each other.
4. Reconciling – This relates to building bridges of connection at the boundaries between those who were once separated by the boundaries. (pp. 133–135)

Blair et al. (2012:135) refer to Nelson Mandela as an example of prophetic leadership.

■ Mentoring

Research in leadership development in certain African countries has underscored the importance of mentoring and thus the transfer of authority. Gitau (2017:loc. 1561–1566) mentions the importance of mentoring, defined as the 'close walk between a trainee protégé and an experienced leader'. It is important that emerging leaders should be allowed the opportunity to lead and to solve real-world problems. Effective mentorship also includes a web of relationships and formation in practical lifeworlds. Gitau found that mentoring has been associated with a range of positive results for protégés, including attitudinal, health-related, relational and career outcomes, and concludes, 'it has been a significant factor in shaping African

leaders of influence' (Gitau 2017:loc. 1557). Missional leaders are facilitators of ministries and mentors to disciples. In research into leadership in Africa, Ngaruiya (2017) concluded:

> Most of the leaders we interviewed emphasized the importance of mentorship, indicating that they were a product of personal mentorship and now mentor others. Mentoring appears strategic in developing new leaders in Africa, not only because it creates a system of accountability, but also because it provides a platform for leadership succession. (loc. 1098–1100)

■ Conclusion

Authority and power functioned as gifts of the Spirit to support and energise the mission of the church. Authority found expression in various, contextually determined expressions of ministry, including measures to counterbalance and check power. Fitch (2016:159) says that it is stunning to realise that the authority and power of the risen king come to reside among men and women in the gifts of his people. Authority and power, as confirmed by the gifts to the church, must be applied in ways that are beneficial to the mission of the church to serve a flourishing life. The example of Christ, espoused by the author of Philippians (2:6–11), in the *Carmen Christi*, reminds the church that all authority and power must be used to serve the interest of others and God's kingdom. Keifert (2017:192) calls leaders who exercise authority to discern God's preferred future 'servants and slaves' to the community's discernment.

In terms of the attention to authority and power, it is clear that authority and power serve liturgy and worship and facilitate habits and Christian practices in the Christian community. Those with authority must hold the people of God accountable to the vocation to which God had called them. Those with authority and power should participate in the discernment of God's future, the ultimate desire. Smith (2016) explains:

> And if you are someone responsible for leading the people of God in worship, the implications are further ramped up: every pastor is a

curate and every elder a curator, responsible for the care of souls and responsible to curate hearts by planning and leading worship that undertakes this formative task. (loc. 1304–1307)

The church is mission and organises all of its activities around the process of participating in God's mission, the source and base of authority and power in the church. This organisation is, as in the case of the life of the church, contextual and therefore provisional. Van Gelder (2007b:42) reminds us that congregations are able to relate to any culture and context, but always reflect the realities of context. The organisation of the church is always adaptive and flexible. There can be no standardised polity.

Missional leadership

■ Introduction

Authority and power imply a structure and leadership that facilitate that authority and power. God's mission, and thus his presence in all places, can and does use the structure of organised, gifted leadership.

The approach followed in this research is to discuss missional leadership from the perspective of insights in the missional church. Firstly, the discussion addressed the question, 'who is the church?', and the identity of the church as a life in the Trinity. Secondly, it discussed the life and mission of the church – what the church does and how the church organises what it does. This created context and background for the focus of this research – leadership in the missional church. This is of more than just structural or organisational importance. Many of the books published on church leadership have started with a different point of departure. Some have addressed church growth and effective organisation to facilitate church growth (see Hendriks 1992; Hybels 2002). Others have tried to describe various leadership examples in the Bible

(Moses, David, the apostles, Paul) as normative for the church. Any discussion on leadership in the church must take the warning of Jan van der Watt, eminent New Testament scholar, to heart.[6] He cautions against the practice to deduce all kinds of leaderships styles and lessons directly from the Bible and biblical characters. The Bible is not a handbook on leadership, not even for the church. The incarnation of Christ, and the way in which Jesus Christ embraced his context, serves as a much clearer example of the way in which power and authority operate. Boers (2015:loc. 628–629, 954–955) also cautions that the agenda of the church is different from the leadership agenda of 'the world', and he shares his discomfort in deriving effective leadership 'principles' from biblical accounts and narratives, as the Bible dwells more on leadership failures than on successes. The use of well-known biblical characters to develop wide-ranging leadership theories is fraught with danger and gives only partial pictures. Some of the noteworthy innovators and trailblazers are frequently glaring failures (Boers 2015:loc. 969–970). Boers (2015:loc. 1226–1227) is of the opinion that it is impossible to derive a single, coherent attitude towards leadership in the Bible.

When the understanding of leadership is based on the church's life in the Trinity, and the calling of the community of faithful disciples who follow Jesus in the transformation of people and all creation, and when power and authority are understood as empowerment to serve and participate in God's mission, the understanding of leadership follows a different route.

The emphasis is on followship (more about this is given later) and an organic approach that respects the church as the body of Christ, and thus as a living, relational organism with vibrant networks connecting participants to each other and the context.

Gibbs (2005:27) provided a broad definition of leadership as a 'relationship in which one person seeks to influence the thoughts, behaviours, beliefs or values of another person'.

6. Interview with Prof. Jan van der Watt on 24 January 2012 in Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

Leadership is about processes and influence. It gives direction and coherence to a group of people or an organisation. Ungerer, Herholdt and Le Roux (2013:1) say leadership is where one or a few individuals steer the behaviour of many. According to Keifert (2017:191), leaders are those persons and relationships of persons perceived to have the authority to convene, gather and cultivate a climate of discernment. Its purpose is to assist people in changing – it facilitates transformation. This means that people are assisted and encouraged to move from one place to another – to a new place or situation or conviction. Gibbs (2005:38) describes this as beyond preserving the inherited institution. To summarise, for Keifert (2017:190), churches change because God has a preferred and promised future for them, 'when the local church ceases to seek God's preferred and promised future, it is neither faithful, effective, or, often, even viable'.

Two ideas feature in many discussions on leadership – the idea of change, movement or transformation and the idea of change through relationships – and this warrants deeper reflection.

■ Missional leadership as participating in God's mission to transform life to fullness

■ Discerning to participate in God's mission

Missional leadership is deeply embedded in the understanding of the missional church. Missional leadership is also of profound importance for a worthy life of missional communities (Guder 2015:143–144). Leadership plays this role in the deployment and enactment of a missional strategy to form communities of witnesses whose calling is, according to Guder (2015:144), to 'continue the apostolic witness that brought them into existence, and who do so by, [walking] together worthy of the calling to which they have been called'. The New Testament informs us that authority functioned in the communities of witnesses (congregations) and that they had leaders. These leaders (and the

authority and power to serve) were gifts of the Holy Spirit. They had the authority to lead in discernment. Van Kooten and Barrett (2004) affirm:

> The Holy Spirit gives the missional church a community of persons who, in a variety of ways and with a diversity of functional roles and titles, together practices missional authority that cultivates within the community the discernment of missional vocation and is intentional about the practices that embed that vocation in the community's life. (p. 139)

Leaders must help congregations become what they are called to be (Newbigin 1989:245), and thus to discern God's preferred future. This is the interpretive function of missional leaders. Smith (2016:210) argues that the church is shaped by its *telos*, its future. This forms the ultimate desire – what we love. 'It is a picture of flourishing that we imagine in a visceral, often-unarticulated way' (Smith 2016:252).

Yes, all followers of Christ are disciples, serving his kingdom. The concept of the priesthood of all believers explains this fundamental conviction about the Christian church. But the importance of leaders within this community of disciples must be recognised because the priesthood of all believers still needs leaders, or 'a ministerial priesthood, which serves, nourishes, sustains, and guides this priestly work' (Newbigin 1989:n.p.). There is no conflict between the participation of all believers and the concept of leaders who lead in discernment and who equip, organise and send out the whole community of believers.

Being a member of the community of witnesses is to be a disciple – a follower of Jesus. There is an intimate relationship between missional leadership and discipleship. The WCC Mission Conference in 2018 had as theme *Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship*. The *Conference Report* of the WCC/ CWME Conference (WCC 2018:n.p.) linked leadership and discipleship and concluded that 'discipleship models leadership'. Leadership serves discipleship and ordering of peoples' lives in the Christian community.

Pope Francis also made a strong case that discipleship can be nothing else but missionary. In EG (2013:24), Pope Francis called the church to 'go forth as a community of missionary disciples'. It is clear that all Christians are called to be missionary disciples because missionary discipleship was a consequence of baptism. Newbigin (1989:249) also positions his understanding of missional leadership within the idea of a sent community. For him, the task of leaders is to lead the congregation as a whole in a mission to the community as a whole. Leaders equip the whole congregation to understand and fulfil their various roles in the mission through their faithfulness in their daily work.

The core function of missional leaders is to discern what the Spirit is up to and then to lead the congregation in joining in God's mission.

■ Leading transformation

Life requires change. Equilibrium is death. Leaders must lead in change or transformation and provide space for the exploration of new possibilities. Mission is also transformative in its nature and intention. Mission, in this context, leads to the transformation of individuals, congregations, the church, society at large and even all of God's creation to flourish and experience life in fullness. Mission is to be faithfully present in all the communities and places where the Spirit sent God's people, and it is to teach the world a new way to be human.

My proposition is to define missional leadership as 'the transformation of people and institutions to participate, through meaningful relations and in the power of the Spirit, in God's mission' (Niemandt 2016b:86).

This definition recognises the important role of leaders to, first of all, participate in God's mission. Leadership is determined by God's mission, and the authority and power originate in the calling and equipping of and by the Holy Spirit. Leadership is all about participation. This underscores the idea that leadership is never in isolation or an individualistic endeavour,

or a kind of superhero saving the world. It is always in relation – with the Triune God and the community of disciples. The focus is on the community, but recognises individual gifts and respects the unique story of each and every member within the larger shared story of the congregation, church and all of God's people. The main focus of leaders is to facilitate transformation, to participate in the life-giving change brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit in the church, in communities and in all of creation. The transformational goal is the flourishing of people, institutions (organised social life), the church and all of creation. Transformation happens where God's community of disciples is faithfully present. The WCC (2013:73) described 'mission –as a common witness to Christ – is an invitation to the feast in the kingdom of God' (Lk 14:15); 'the purpose of God's mission is fullness of life (Jn 10:10) and this is the criterion for discernment in mission'. Missional leadership is to participate in God's life-bringing mission – being together towards life in fullness. The call of Jesus to repent is a call to transformation and celebration.

According to Niemandt (2015b):

> Missional leadership is transformative leadership. It ignites and drives change; starting with the inner transformation of the leader, leading to the transformation of the church as well as the context wherein the church finds itself. (p. 3)

Leaders recognise the importance of transformation through the formation of habits and practices, as well as in worship. Smith (2016) showed that a holistic approach to anthropology entails recognising that we are formed by our desires, by what we love. Love is a habit, and our hearts are calibrated by following examples and repeating certain practices; therefore, we must index our hearts to a certain end. This end – *telos* – is God's preferred future. This is the dream that encourages the church in liturgy and worship, and in formation, to curate hearts. This transforms the church to be faithfully present, and by being faithfully present to be a transformative presence.

■ Leadership as transformation in an ever-changing world of discontinuous change

The context for missional leadership impacts the understanding and praxis of leadership. Leadership models and structures change according to changing circumstances and emerging worldviews. Leaders enable, sustain and nourish the community of disciples in an ever-changing world. 'Everything, including the laws of nature', says Conradie (2015:118), 'is subject to change'. The insights of contemporary sciences help us to understand that the cosmos is inherently temporal.

An important concept to assist in the contextualisation of leadership and 'reading the signs of the times' is to make a distinction between continuous change and discontinuous change (see Branson 2007:119; Niemandt 2013a:64–69). If missional leadership brings about transformation or change in an ever-changing world, the difference between continuous change and discontinuous change must be kept in mind. This is part and parcel of interpretive leadership. This is especially important because change is understood as the very character of nature (Haight 2014:loc. 695).

■ Continuous change (technical change)

Continuous change is the kind of change where the old systems, structures and way of doing things are still recognisable after the change process. The change is a process of gradual innovation – the improvements are brought about step by step to facilitate the process of change. There is continuity with the previous process. This kind of change is predictable and can be planned and controlled. The solution is already within the repertoire of the congregation or organisation, is not trivial and is important for the maintenance of the system, even if it demands relative major inputs. Experience and current knowledge suffice to manage continuous change.

■ Discontinuous change (adaptive change)

Adaptive or discontinuous change is quite different – it is disruptive and unforeseen. It is outside the current repertoire of skills, and the organisation is faced with change or decline. It questions the sense of competence. Adaptive change is a deep change in the complete system of the organisation. It requires courage and usually involves a change in the values and attitudes of the organisation. It effects the whole system. It is very similar to the remark by Taleb (2007:10) that 'history does not crawl, it jumps' and is determined by 'black swans'. The discovery of black swans is a typical disruptive and adaptive situation. It challenges the current and conventional wisdom, and leaders struggle to cope with the impact of these 'black swan' events. The solutions are outside the current repertoire of the leadership, and the organisation faces a situation of adapt or die. The solutions are thus critical for the future of the system. In many cases, it demands the sacrifice of control (see Figure 5.1).

A VUCA world demands hyper-innovation at hyper-speed. Adaptive change is the new norm. According to Roxburgh (2011:56), 'we need new habits, attitudes, and actions around our relationship and [engagements] with the gospel and our cultures'. Branson (2007:124) argues that adaptive change reminds leaders that they must bring others into an indefinable and unpredictable future. This is a very demanding enterprise, as the leaders' and followers' identity and agency will change amid

Discontinuous change		
It does not help to work harder	It demands new skills and capacities	Things will not return to 'normal' after a while
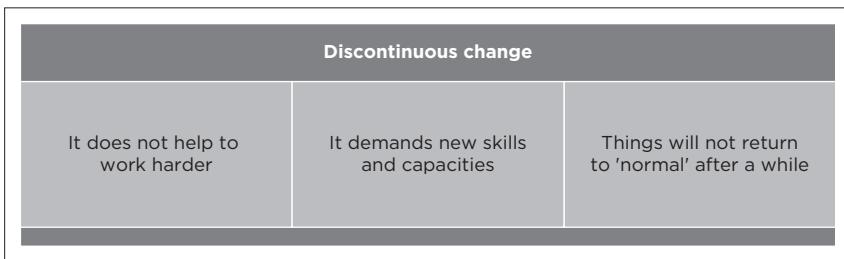
FIGURE 5.1: Impact of discontinuous change.

the movements. This is, I think, what Mclaren (2007:23) intended when he titled his book *Everything Must Change*; 'if Jesus' message of the kingdom of God is true, then everything must change. Everything must change'.

Missional transformation represents adaptive change. This necessitates an approach that attempts to find answers through discovery *via* discerning reflection, experimentation and practice. It demands a change of heart from leaders. If you want to manage change, you must change.

That is why missional leadership is deeply embedded in new missional spirituality. It is the ability to discern the work of the Spirit in the winds of change blowing through our world. The WCC (2013:58) called on churches to accept that mission provokes in us a renewed awareness that the 'Holy Spirit meets us and challenges us at all levels of life, and brings newness and change to the places and times of our personal and collective journeys'. Adaptive change implies discarding the museum curator mentality of gatekeepers and embracing the posture of traders so that missional leaders can assist the 'church and theology to artfully cross borders and navigate the storms of change' (Niemandt 2017:6).

■ Changing leadership paradigms

Bosch (1991:183–190) used paradigm theory in his description of changes and transformation in mission. Although Kuhn intended his theory for natural sciences (see Bosch 1991:351), Bosch (1991:368–510) applied this to theology and postulated 'emerging ecumenical missionary paradigms'. Avery (2004) also postulated four changing paradigms in leadership that inform the understanding of leadership theory and its impact on Christian leadership:

1. classical leadership
2. transactional leadership
3. visionary leadership
4. organic leadership.

A brief overview of Avery's paradigms shows the transformation in leadership paradigms and serves as a background to the following discussion on patterns of missional leadership.

■ Classical leadership

The *classical* approach dominated from antiquity up to late in the 20th century. Classical leadership revolves around a powerful leader and followers with little power, beyond the power to withdraw their support or labour. It implies a Newtonian, mechanistic worldview with predictable outcomes. It is at home in a Gutenberg-world. Leaders function in hierarchies and execute authority and power through punishment and reward. Leaders impact events by setting goals and controlling the execution of the goals and monitoring of the outcomes (Avery 2004:51). Classical leadership seems to be successful in stable societies and systems with little change. Keywords are 'management', 'control' and 'stability'. Leaders take all the responsibility and followers are relatively passive. The Fourth Industrial Revolution will render many of the classical leadership functions redundant as robots and computers execute many of the controlling and monitoring functions. This model does not lend itself for complex systems as it demands routine and predictability (see Avery 2004:62).

■ Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership also operates in systems with low complexity, and leaders still need a strong power base to punish and reward. Leaders, however, tend to be more sensitive towards the participants in the system and negotiate with followers. Competencies such as negotiation skills, consensus formulation and listening seem to be more appropriate. Leaders create an environment of participation and co-responsibility, but they still use reward and coercion. Leader responsibility and accountability for outcomes are high. The problem is that it is still focussed on the short-term goal and tends to be less successful in the implementation of long-term strategies. Change is mostly

focussed on the improvement of current processes (see the 'Continuous change' section above) and less on vision and values (see Avery 2004:62–63).

■ Visionary leadership

Interest in visionary leadership increased from the 1980s, and even denominations and churches brought into the idea of clear vision statements and a charismatic visionary leader able to mobilise followers on a journey towards a hopeful future. Leaders receive a vision, convey it to the organisation and act as vision caster. Many books by leaders such as Bill Hybels and Rick Warren (in the domain of churches) showed the difference between management and leadership and the importance of vision. According to Avery (2004:51), visionary leadership can operate in a 'New Science' view of management where a leader steers the general course but is willing to change as necessary and cope with complexities in the system. This paradigm copes well with a changing environment and expects more of participants in terms of initiative and co-responsibility. Challenges arise because of the strong demand for unity and focus on a single vision, and this approach does not cope with the demands of a VUCA or hyper-diverse world. Visionary leaders employ a vision that appeals to followers and followers are expected to play a bigger role in the execution of the vision to create the preferred future. The power of visionary leaders comes from position, reference power, personal charisma, the vision itself and followers' emotional attachments. Responsibility and accountability for outcomes still reside with the leader (see Avery 2004:51, 63).

■ Organic leadership

Organic leadership is based on new insights, which Avery (2004:52) calls 'New science', and takes into account issues such as chaos theory, unpredictability, uncertainty, self-organising systems and complexity. In contrast to other paradigms, organic leadership does not expect as much from the leader at the top. It recognises the complexity of systems and the fact that it is not easy or even possible to control

participants in such a system. Things are so complex that nobody is in control! Wheatley and Frieze (2011:n.p.) caution that 'the only predictable consequence of leaders attempts to wrest control of a complex, even chaotic situation, is that they create more chaos'. The advice is to let go of control and share information. All participants must take responsibility for the system and for finding answers. The relationships between the members of the organisation give rise to leadership. Such an organic paradigm demands patience, understanding and forgiveness. The distinction between leaders and followers blurs and the organisation depends heavily on shared values arising from intensive interaction between participants rather than on a single vision. There is much ambiguity and uncertainty in such a system. This paradigm underscores the importance of good communication. Organic leadership is based on a process of mutual sense-making. Followers are encouraged to be self-leading and self-organising, and extensive information must be available to all participants. Responsibility and accountability are shared, and individuals and teams commit towards the completion of goals. Avery concludes that the fact that many organisations are facing dynamic, complex environments makes organic leadership inevitable (Avery 2004:63–64). According to Niemandt (2012b):

> The networks in organic leadership bypass the central management and can be described as a series of dynamic hubs and nodes rather than static boxes. No single person is likely to dominate, influence [*or*] even unite networked organisational members. (p. 7)

Figure 5.2 explains the difference between classical leadership and organic leadership.

Scharmer's (2009:loc. 603–604) definition of leadership fits the organic paradigm, '[a]ll people effect change, regardless of their formal positions or titles. Leadership in this century means shifting the structure of collective attention – our listening – at all levels'.

It is clear that organic leadership is better suited to lead transformation in an ever-changing world of discontinuous change and that it is much more appropriate for a leadership model that values teamwork, participation and relationships.

Traditional organigram (left) and networked organisation (right)
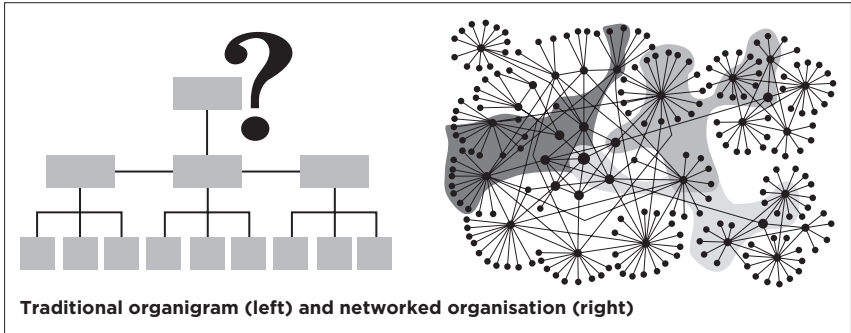
Source: Avery (2004:27)

FIGURE 5.2: Classical leadership versus organic leadership.

TABLE 5.1: Classic leadership compared to missional followship.

Classic leadership	Missional followship
Control, management and hierarchy	Empowerment, participation and flat structures
Control and performance	Creative freedom
Titles, rank and promotion	First names, friendship and serving the interest of all
Flourish in a consumer culture	Flourish in a relational culture and within social networks
Leadership is to get others to do the job	Cooperation and participation
Influence because of position in the hierarchy	Influence because of passion and creativity
A function in a well-defined system	Identity and a story within a system of multiple stories
Decision-making 'do what I tell you to do'	Consensus and cooperation – 'let's do it together'
Mechanical	Organic
Concentrated leadership at the top	Dispersed leadership throughout the organisation
Communication of order and controlling mechanisms	Relational and creative communication

■ Organic and missional leadership

It is apparent that many of the ideas on missional leadership and organic leadership interact with and support each other. Table 5.1 illustrates the paradigm shift from classic church leadership to organic missional followship.

This summary shows that missional leadership represents a more organic approach. Leaders encourage and ignite, they show the way and sanction actions, they discern and clarify and explain God's preferred future, and the network of activities and relationships that constitutes the community.

■ Missional leadership as relational leadership

The focus on an organic paradigm cleared the way to understand missional leadership in terms of a relational imperative. The point of departure is the emphasis on the missional church as a relational community. This relationality originates in the participation of the community in the life of the Trinity. The church is a communion of loving relationships. This determines the nature of leadership in the missional church. The WCC (Keum 2013a:21) argues in *Together towards life* that communion 'with the Triune God opens our hearts and lives to our brothers and sisters in the same movement of sharing God's love'. Flourishing life, including (Niemandt 2015c):

> [L]ife as health and healing, is found in community when all the parts of our individual and corporate lives, including those of the marginalised, are brought together in love in such a way that wholeness and the interest of our shared participation may be evident. (p. 345)

Breedt and Niemandt (2013:4) argue that 'if leadership is about anything, it is about relationships'. Leaders facilitate relational networks within the complex relationships within the congregations as well as in relation to the context. Branson (2007:121) explains that relational leaders form new connections across old boundaries and create new contexts for dialogue and reconciliation. It is about cooperation and participation. He says that relational leaders 'nourish the social imagery about who is with whom, who has a voice, and how personal and corporate character is formed' (Branson 2007:122). Saccone (2009:15, 20) developed a perspective on leadership that focuses on the idea that effective leadership has to do with the ability of the leader to create positive relationships within an organisation, stating

that 'leaders create relational health and wellbeing around them because their influence has the best result wherever healthy relationships exist'. It is the relationships that exist between the members of an organisation that bears leadership. The thesis of this research is that 'missional leadership is [about] the transformation of people and institutions to participate, through meaningful relations and in the power of the Spirit, in God's mission' (Niemandt 2016b:1) to bring flourishing life. The idea of participation links with meaningful relations, and meaningful relations are necessary to be able to participate in the life of the community of disciples. The importance of participation and relationship will be explored in more detail in Chapter 10.

Missional leadership: Missional spirituality

◾ Introduction

Spirituality is at the centre of Christian faith and discipleship. Ross and Ma (2013:225) argue that spirituality is the primary mode and beating heart of Christian mission. Authentic discipleship flows from spirituality. Authentic, faithful presence with God in the world flows seamlessly from and is nurtured by spiritual practices. Bevans and Schroeder (2011:22) also understand spirituality as synonymous with missional dialogue and as the norm and necessary manner of every form of Christian mission. This will impact the understanding of missional leadership, as all of missional leadership (followership) revolve around spirituality. The Edinburgh 2010 (Edinburgh 2010) *Common Call* links the call to mission with spirituality when it declares:

> [*W*]e believe we are called by God to follow this way joyfully, inspired, anointed, sent and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and nurtured by Christian disciplines in community. (p. 2)

Spirituality refers to the deepest values and meaning attached to life itself. It can also refer to the ideals that assist people in achieving their full potential (Sheldrake 2007:2). Principe (1983:139) defines this broad approach to spirituality by stating that spirituality 'points to those aspects of a person living a faith or commitment that concern his or her striving to attain the highest ideal or goal'. This is echoed by Peterson (2005:29), who says 'living, living fully and well, is at the heart of all serious spirituality'. Scharmer refers to the idea of 'presencing' – to be fully present. This is an approach to leadership that focuses less on results and productivity and more on the inner processes present in the leader. Leadership requires deep personal awareness and transformation, or what we call spirituality.

Others argue that spirituality is all about human focus on and interaction with the transcendent or ultimate reality (Haight 2014:loc. 470–471; Howard 2008:16). Spirituality is the way persons and groups live their lives in the face of what they consider to be the ultimate reality.

Christian spirituality gives a very specific character to the broad discussion on spirituality. Christian spirituality is life in the Trinity, or as Principe (1983:135) defines it: 'life in the Spirit as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ and daughters and sons of the Father'. He makes it even more focussed in stating that 'For a Christian, this [spirituality] would mean an ever more intense union with the Father through Christ by living in the Spirit' (Principe 1983:139). The experience of the mystery of God's love, mercy, generates enthusiasm for mission – if God's love does not motivate us, nothing will motivate us. Christian spirituality is to be a disciple of Jesus – to follow Jesus, 'Christian spirituality consists of following Jesus. Christians are those who have shaped their lives after the pattern of Jesus in their belief in God and God's rule' (Haight 2014:loc. 502–503).

The spirituality of followers of Jesus is missional, because the disciple and the church (communion of disciples) have been called

and sent.[7] Christian spirituality is missional spirituality. Mission takes effect in human life through openness to the work of the Spirit. Missional spirituality has an intentionality – it is a spiritual formation that is not focussed on the believer alone, but to be 'conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others' (Helland & Hjalmarson 2011:loc. 239). Guder (2016:30) reminds us that as much as the church is not an end in itself, spirituality is not an end in itself. Spirituality serves the apostolicity and mission of the church. It must encourage and equip the church deeper and deeper into the service of God's reconciling ministry. Mpinga (2014:197 as cited in Niemandt 2019:n.p.) 'describes missional spirituality as the Christian way of living derived from the encounter with God in Christ, the fellowship with him, and his mission in the world'.

Doornenbal (2012:212, see also Helland & Hjalmarson 2011:loc. 239) argues that 'missional spirituality is a spirituality that forms and feeds mission'. Matthey (2010) also defines a more focussed description of missional spirituality as follows:

[A] way of life, a relational attitude nourished by a theological worldview in a frame-shaped by the famous triangle of faith, hope and love in 1 Corinthians 13. (p. 251)

Spirituality and mission are twins – with spirituality as the firstborn. Missional church without life-giving and inspiring spirituality is impossible (Pretorius & Niemandt 2018:2). Discipleship means following Jesus, and thus following Jesus as being called and sent. Missional spirituality is an incarnational spirituality, a spirituality of the everyday. To be a Christian is to be a disciple, and that implies participation in the mission of the church. This mission and the spiritual disciplines associated with it are carried out in the human body and in real places. In a certain sense, there is no difference between missional spirituality and 'normal' spirituality.

This is not an individualistic spirituality, but a communal spirituality. Individual disciples belong to churches, and churches represent and reflect the 'corporate spirituality of their members

7. Colzani (2017:124) noted that missional spirituality has not been studied in much depth, and that the importance of such a spirituality is being rediscovered.

bonded together in a community organized by institutional structures' (Haight 2014:loc. 5184–5186). Asamoah-Gyadu (2013:20) insists that to experience Christ is to belong to him as a disciple and to belong to Christ is to share his love in communion with others. This happens in real-life locations.

A missional church is characterised by a missional spirituality. This is, however, less an issue to be investigated as a theological discipline and more about a spiritual experience representing life according to the Spirit (Colzani 2017:125). A missional spirituality sensitises participants in God's mission to the work of the Spirit. This is more than a transcendent experience of the Spirit, but rather a deep conviction that the Spirit is preceding God's church and is already working in each and every place where his people can be sent. The Spirit is also present as a life-giving presence in congregations, empowering the church to be able to participate in God's mission. Missional spirituality is to discern the shape of gospel life – the Holy Spirit's presence and initiatives in a given place (Branson 2007:114).

Following Christ as a disciple is much more than a once-and-for-all decision. It is a life-long commitment to spiritual transformation by the Spirit of mission, and this is in communion with other followers. Missional leadership requires a life of prayer, discernment and contemplation, and liturgical participation. Spirituality makes the church sensitive for a life in the Trinity and reminds us that we are participating in God's mission, not our own. Haight argues that this is especially the case with Calvin's spirituality, because of his sensitivity to align the will of the Christian with the will of God. He concludes that Calvin's spirituality is a spirituality of participation in God's cause in the world and concretely in each society (Haight 2014:loc. 2609–2610).

Newbigin (1989:252) argued that missional leadership is built on the discipleship (spirituality) of the leader. He referred to a 'life of prayer and daily consecration which remains hidden from the world but which is the place where the essential battles are either won or lost'. Keifert makes a strong case for missional

leadership as a deeply spiritual process. He states that it depends disproportionately on their own private and communal spiritual practices (Keifert 2017):

> Without such personal and communal spiritual practices, it is nearly impossible for them to empty themselves of a need to find solutions or attempt to get people on board with their desired solutions. (p. 192)

Missional leadership is to be a disciple and to follow Jesus. It is deeply embedded in authentic discipleship and missional spirituality. Boers (2015:loc. 4377–4378) underscored the importance of spiritual leadership and argues that the spiritual growth of leaders must be a Christian priority. The church in mission can only be sustained by spiritualities deeply rooted in the Trinity (Niemandt 2015a:7). Missional spirituality begins with listening to and reflecting deeply on what the Spirit is saying and doing. Only then does the listening and discerning of the Spirit become a clear and specific path.

■ Transformative spirituality

As much as a missional existence is transformative to its core, and as much as mission is transforming mission, missional leadership is transformational. It is the transformation of people, organisations, the church, neighbourhoods and all of God's creation through participation in the Triune God's mission. Sheldrake (2007) emphasises the transformational nature of Christian spirituality and argues:

> [*T*]he scriptural foundations of Christian spirituality suggest a way of transformation towards fullness of life in God and at the same time a way of mission through following the way of Jesus and by means of the power of God's indwelling Spirit. Transformation and mission are therefore key ideas for understanding Christian spirituality. (p. 33)

The kind of spirituality associated with missional leadership is a transformative spirituality (WCC 2013:57, as cited in Niemandt 2014):

> [*T*]hat gives meaning to our lives and stimulates, motivates and gives dynamism to life's journey. Missional spirituality is a spiritual

awareness of God's presence and of life in the Trinity. It is imperative in the journey of transformation and being transformed. Missional spirituality is a transformative spirituality, and the journey is one of transformation and being transformed. (p. 50)

The missional journey starts with personal transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit. It starts with inner change, as much as a larva changes into a butterfly. It happens because of God's love and the presence of the Holy Spirit, with no coercion. It is life in the Trinity that leads to real spiritual transformation. Without this inner transformation that is cultivated by the Spirit of God, leaders are nothing more than mere political or community activists engaged in societal service. It may be executed in good faith, but if it is not anchored in Christ's love, it is not missional transformation.

Missional spirituality rings in change. It is acutely aware that the Spirit can change totally cheerless situations into life-giving joy. The Spirit brings change, and stagnation is most probably an indication of spiritual death or at least the absence of missional spirituality.

The importance of adaptive change in missional leadership has been explained. It is difficult to imagine missional leaders navigating the complexities of adaptive change without being embedded in a transformational spirituality that connects them to the source of all real life-giving transformation – the Holy Spirit.

Research carried out in South Africa in congregations where the transformation from maintenance to 'missional' happened provides an interesting insight into the praxis of missional transformation (see Cordier & Niemandt 2015a:8). It confirms the importance of missional spirituality. The role of leadership changed to 'spiritual directing', 'empowering', 'mentoring' and 'coaching'. The research concluded that '[t]he role of the minister as professional pastor or professional technician or professional manager is replaced by a focus on spiritual leadership and spiritual formation' (Cordier & Niemandt 2015a:8).

■ A spirituality for the road

According to Niemandt (2014), a spirituality for the road is:

> [*A*] spirituality of the everyday, as all spirituality is missional spirituality. Kim (2009:256) describes it as a spirituality that is orientated to the world. It connects the human spirit in mission with the Spirit of God sent [*into*] the world. (p. 50)

This is perhaps why Bosch titled his book *A Spirituality of the Road*. Missional congregations are nourished by the spirituality of pilgrims on the road (Niemandt 2013a:175–176). Spirituality should not be separated from lived experience. The church is not the only place for ministry – faith is lived in all areas of life. Vanhoozer (2007:34) explains that the church has 'porous boundaries' and is never isolated from its surrounding culture. Sweet (2010:103) affirms that the doctrine of the incarnation, which has been showed to play an important role in the understanding of the missional church, requires a high doctrine of the everyday and ordinary. Missional spirituality is a physical spirituality, touching hearts and bodies and all of life. It is embodied, incarnational and localised. Missional spirituality serves a faithful presence. We need habits and practices that involve all of our existence and the full scope of our Christian journey in the realities of our real places and the world. To be thoroughly contextualised, spirituality must resonate with the ordinary rhythms of life, friendships and community. A disembodied faith plays havoc with the world. An embodied faith serves life and a flourishing world by engaging the rhythms of everyday life (Smith 2014:loc. 191–192).

According to Niemandt (2014):

> Missional spirituality is a spirituality for the road, one that you can carry with you into the rough and tumble of everyday life (Helland & Hjalmarson 2011:loc. 53). Missional spirituality shifts the focus from the missionary task to the ethos and ethics of mission, to the way in which mission is carried out, to the praxis and process of mission. (p. 50)

Balia and Kim (2010) wrote, in terms of the Edinburgh 2010 studies, that Christian spirituality is a gift and a task:

> It requires communion with God (contemplation) as well as action in the world (praxis). When these two elements are separated, both the life and the mission of the church are deeply affected. Contemplation without action is an escape from concrete reality; action without contemplation is activism lacking a transcendent meaning. (p. 241)

This results in a spirituality that is context-sensitive and diverse because it is a holistic spiritual life lived in community. If Christian spirituality is a spirituality of the road, one must remember that disciples are never alone *en route.* The journey is always accompanied by the Triune God.

■ Incarnational spirituality

Frost (2014:12) used the idea of 'excarnation' to explain the faith that only lives in the minds of people and never touches base. Excarnational faith is described in propositions and formulated in statements of faith, but seldom grounded in the everyday of the journey. Frost (2014) says excarnation:

> [/]nfluenced the church and led to a disembodying of our faith, the transfer of our religious life out of bodily forms of ritual, worship and practice, so that it comes more and more to reside 'in the head' and results in the loss of liturgy and sacred time. (p. 1)

Such faith creates an unnatural environment where life cannot flourish. Thousands of people might attend worship services, but never live their faith in real life. It domesticates faith and cultivates lazy and bored disciples. It is a 'treasure hunting' approach to evangelism and mission (Frost 2014:12).

Missional spirituality, on the other hand, builds on the concept of incarnation – it makes disciples present in the everyday and aware of the importance of proximity. It is to carry the gospel in our bodies (Frost 2014:73). Smith (2016:loc. 779) reminds us that the way to the heart is through the body. He makes a powerful case for a spirituality and life of discipleship that is not merely intellectual or confessional, but holistic and focussed on the

desires of a person. An excarnational approach results in disengagement with our bodies and the totality of life. A grounded incarnational spirituality is deeply aware that God embraces our ordinary life. It is to be fully present in our bodies and to be at home in the world where God called and placed us. Helland and Hjalmarson (2011:loc. 386) make a strong case that 'we must ground a missional spirituality in practices and people, not merely in ideas and information' and that '[m]issional spirituality is embodied in daily life' (Helland & Hjalmarson 2011:loc. 559). An incarnational spirituality expresses N.T. Wright's conviction (2008:270 as cited in Niemandt 2014:50) that there is ultimately no justification for private piety that does not work out in actual mission. There is no way to untangle a life of discipleship and spirituality, or missional spirituality from a spirituality of the everyday. We need to abandon our predisposition to look for the Spirit in the extraordinary when God has promised to be present in the ordinary. We need to step down from the approach to try and find God in a fresh and novel way, as if his grace was always only accessible in some or other special event, and attend to the ordinary means of grace in the Word, and at the Table (Smith 2016:loc. 1080–1085). We must carry the gospel in our bodies, like a living record of life given, life healed, and life hoped for (Frost 2014:76).

■ A *kenotic* spirituality

Henri Nouwen influenced ideas about the life of discipleship and Christian spirituality profoundly with his idea of three movements towards wholeness and the relational nature of spirituality. He referred to a person's relations as 'inward (self)', 'outward (others)' and 'upward (God)'. His spirituality can be described as a spirituality of wholeness through human brokenness – a *kenotic* spirituality.

Jesus calls his disciples to live a life of self-abandonment (*kenosis*). I have explained in Chapter 2 that *kenosis* is following God's act of self-emptying and that it is the opposite

of self-preservation and self-fulfilment. *Kenosis* is about self-sacrifice and acts of self-giving, and the renunciation of power and privilege. Perhaps it is better to say that *kenosis* refers to a different kind of power; the power of the word, the liberating power of forgiveness, the power of unconditional fellowship, the power of silent persuasion and the power of patient waiting, in short, the power of vulnerable love (see Conradie 2015:180). It is an approach to the demands of mission and life where the disciple is consciously vulnerable for the sake of others. Smith (2014:loc. 1948–1949) talks about a spirituality of downward mobility – to keep up with Jesus and not the Joneses. The DRC explained that it is 'an attitude and demeanour, a quest even' (NGK 2013b:8). It is a spirituality of the cross. The cross provides significant depth and meaning to spirituality, and it challenges our lifestyle. The cross gives content to a kenotic spirituality.

Bush (2013:100) has a particularly interesting take on kenosis. Because Christ's *kenosis* is understood as an affirmation of humanity, *kenosis* deepens Christian love to a more elemental word of hope; 'you are a person – a person, not an animal; a human created in God's image' (Ma & Ross 2013:100). This attitude is especially important in the practice of missional leadership.

The importance of discernment has already been discussed. Discernment, in particular, and a deeply spiritual life in general, requires missional leaders to empty themselves of predetermined outcomes and the need to control the community's outcomes. A *kenotic* approach adds a critical element of humanness to discernment. Keifert (2017:196) underscores that missional leaders must empty the '[...] desire to control outcomes and takes on the role of a servant to the process of spiritual discernment'. A kenotic spirituality reminds each and every one that we need God's mercy and reconciliation with God, each other and 'the many publics that make up the life-world of the church' (Keifert 2017:195). Faith must seep into the flesh, action, service and liturgy of missional leaders. To be a hermeneutic of the gospel is to embody the gospel, to physically embrace humility, to submit to serving others, to worship through a liturgy of life.

A kenotic spirituality cautions us that missional leadership might entail suffering for the sake of the gospel. Sauer (2010:66) refers to suffering that Christians endure *because of* or *by* the world, or *for* the world, in fulfilling their service. Sauer (2010) developed a theology of suffering in mission and argued that suffering is part and parcel of the mission of the church and discipleship:

> His disciples are treated today as he once was, because Christ lives in them and they speak and act with his authority. Their fate is united with his. The core meaning of taking up one's cross in the discipleship of Jesus (Lk 9:23) is witnessing to Jesus Christ, even in a situation of persecution and martyrdom. (pp. 68–69)

According to Sauer (2010:71), suffering and the weakness of the witness are a mode of mission (with martyrdom being the most radical form of witness).

To summarise, missional spirituality can be characterised as a *kenotic* spirituality. This is a spirituality of the cross that insists on an attitude of self-emptying and abandoning power, a humility that focuses on service and vulnerability. *Kenotic* spirituality affirms the importance of sharing our humanity when we share our faith. This is only possible when missional leaders depend on God's mercy in all aspects of life.

■ Bold humility

Bosch constantly reminded his students, and the church, that mission is done in bold humility, stating, '[t]rue mission is the weakest and least impressive human activity imaginable, the very antithesis of a theology of glory' (Bosch 1979:76). Scholars summarised his contribution to mission studies with a publication entitled *Mission in Bold Humility: David Bosch's Work Considered* (Saayman & Kritzinger 2013). The very act of being witnesses demands humility because it is in no sense dependent on followers possessing the ultimate truth. On the contrary, 'at best, the truth possesses us. God is not in our hands, and God does not need our protection. We are in his hands and need his protection' (Conradie 2015:106).

The praxis of bold humility is perhaps best illustrated by Saayman and Kritzinger's description of the life of Bosch. They summarised certain fundamental features of his theology and mention (Saayman & Kritzinger 2013):

- a consistent and disarming honesty
- a deep empathy with people who suffer
- a refusal to impose suffering on others
- a 'catholic' commitment to defuse tension and facilitate reconciliation between opponents. (p. 7)

The Lausanne Movement (Lausanne III 2011) warned leaders in the Cape Town Commitment against the idolatry of power and called on leaders and all Christians to 'walk in humility'. This means that 'those who are filled by God's Spirit should submit to one another for Christ's sake' (Lausanne III 2011:n.p.). It is an issue of mutual submission and reciprocal love. Humility is the best defence against a power play. Conradie (2015:106) reminds us that the missionary is a witness and not a bulldozer. This entails a full commitment to the Holy Spirit, to live in the power of the Spirit and trust God with all of life on the missional journey. Mission is practised in a spirit and with a spirituality of prophetic dialogue (Bevans & Schroeder 2011). This emboldens followers of Jesus to proclaim the gospel in all relevant and appropriate ways, but meekly, gently, with patience.

Yes, mission is to be accomplished boldly, confident of the power of the Spirit, but not triumphalistically. It demands a kenotic spirituality to do mission and lead in mission, and in doing so in all humility, inspired by Christ to loving sacrifice.

■ A joyful spirituality

A kenotic spirituality does not mean leaders living without joy. Participating in God's mission is participating in the joyful venture of facilitating life in fullness. Newbigin (1989:127) fittingly reminds us that in the New Testament, mission begins with a kind of explosion of joy. Edinburg 2010 stated that all are called by God to follow this way joyfully, 'sent and empowered by the Holy Spirit, and nurtured by Christian disciplines in community' (Edinburgh 2010).

According to Niemandt (2016a):

> A number of recent theological studies have [*focussed*] specifically on joy and human flourishing.[8] Volf's, project at Yale University, [*sic*] has already produced important [*contributions*] on joy and human flourishing (Volf 2015a, 2015b). Marais (2015:8) has also listed seven books and a number of journal articles on the topic. It is significant that the first encyclical issued by Pope Francis was *Evangelii Gadium*. These contributions strengthen the idea that joy stands at the very core of Christian faith, [*spirituality*] and practice. Moltmann (2015:loc. 296) says that 'Christianity is a unique religion of joy', expressed in its liturgical feasts, its depiction of God and its treatment of theodicy. […]
>
> Bosch (1991:413) argued that to evangelise is to communicate joy. It conveys a positive message exhibiting an attractive lifestyle. Precisely, the reason is that the church exists for the sake of the world, people are called to become Christian – not only to receive life, but rather to give life (Bosch 2008:15). Evangelism [*(and mission)*] is an invitation to [*a*] joyful life in Christ. It is sharing one's faith and conviction with other people and inviting them to discipleship (Keum 2013a:30).
>
> Discipleship is, thus, participating in the Triune God's life-giving mission. (pp. 2–3)

The Arusha Call to Discipleship (WCC 2018) says, '[d]iscipleship is both a gift and a calling to be active collaborators with God for the transforming of the world (1 Thessalonians 3:2)'.

According to Niemandt (2016a):

> The mission affirmation of the WCC [(*Together towards life*)] emphasises the concept of life, while combining it with the mission of the church: 'God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God and empowers us to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth' (Keum 2013a:4).
>
> This concept of life must be expanded to include flourishing life. Flourishing life and joy are first located in the *Missio Dei* and life in the Trinity. Thompson argues, [*sic*] that God creates the conditions for joy, and, therefore, God is finally responsible for human joy and human flourishing (Thompson 2015:loc. 687–688). Joy is a response to God's activity. Human flourishing is linked to, and dependent on, participation in God's creation and recreation.

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8. The section on joy in mission draws heavily (and often verbatim) on Niemandt (2016a).

The gospel message is all about joy, good news and life in fullness. In the words of *Evangelii Gadium,* 'the joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus' (Francis 2013:3). Goheen (2014:246) argues, [*sic*] that the gospel gains its power from a community that embodies something of the life that the gospel promises. He refers to Nietzsche's critique of the church for its lack of joy, vibrancy and delight in creational life and pleads for a renewed appreciation of a life of joy in community. (pp. 3–4)

Adding to the discussion thus far, Mbiti (2013) captures the essence of the joy of creation when he recalls a stunning creation story from Africa:

God made humans out of clay of different colours […] Then he gave humans legs with which to walk and run, hands with which to plant grain, eyes with which to see that grain, and a mouth with which to eat it. Afterwards God gave them the tongue with which to sing and talk; and finally ears, so that they may enjoy the sound of music, of dance, and of the talk of great persons. Then God sent humans out, each a complete human being. (p. 44)

Mbiti (2013) proceeds to ask:

What beautiful creatures these first humans must have been: How well and perfectly equipped they were, to live, to plant grain, eat, talk, make music, sing and dance. What more would they have needed? (p. 44)

Together towards life 'has a number of statements that lay the groundwork for a deeper exploration of joy and flourishing life and the relationship between these two concepts' (Niemandt 2016a:4):

- It calls on the church and all the faithful to be 'vibrant messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ' (Keum 2013a:6).
- It places mission in the context of all creation and states that mission invites us to celebrate life in all its dimensions as God's gift (Keum 2013a:38).
- In one of the concluding affirmations, it states, 'we affirm that the purpose of God's mission is fullness of life (John 10:10), and that this is the criterion for discernment in mission' (Keum 2013a:37).
- Together towards life sees the mission of the church as to invite all people to the feast of life. The feast is a celebration of creation and fruitfulness overflowing from the love of God, the source of life in abundance (Keum 2013a:37).

According to Niemandt (2016a):

> The [*connection*] between [*joy and flourishing*] life, especially as discussed by Volf and others, gives deeper content to the invitation to the feast of life. Crisp (2015:loc. 139–141) argues, [*sic*] that joy is 'the crown of the good life'. Joy is the expression and manifestation of the good life, and the good life cannot be envisioned in its fullness without reference to joy. Joy casts a positive vision of what life is truly for (Crisp 2015:loc. 183). (p. 4)

Mission and spirituality are identical twins. Mission and spirituality are about flourishing life. We need a spirituality of joy (Niemandt 2016a):

> [*C*]onceiving of the churches as the sites in which God makes us 'fit to bear the joy that is our eschatological destiny' (Volf 2015a:loc. 113–114). Discipleship, seen from this perspective, includes communal participation in the joyful, life-giving mission of God in order to allow and assist life to flourish. (p. 4)

Missional spirituality and true discipleship are to celebrate that which is good, just and righteous. It is (Niemandt 2016a):

> [*T*]o reflect God's own rejoicing in the world and its goodness in the liturgy of the church and in the way we care for creation. Discipleship is to love and to open ourselves up to all the different experiences that life has to offer, for it is in this love of life that we become happy (Moltmann 2015:loc. 414). (p. 4)

■ A spirituality of devotion and worship

A missional life is living in the Trinity, drawn into communion with the Triune God, together with all of creation. This leads to devotion and worship. The worship event is the primary *locus* of transformation because of the Spirit's unique transformative presence in worship. Missional spirituality is to live in the loving presence of God and to worship God. Worship belongs to the core of a missional church and is the heart of discipleship. The DRC (NGK 2013b:n.p.) argues in its *Framework document* that worship, within the context of the *Missio Dei*, is our answer to – and our participation in – God's outward movement into the world;

'[t]he Spirit enables the church to sing and pray and use words that resonate with the relationship/conversation already existing within the Trinity'.

Spirituality finds expression in liturgy. Liturgy starts with God and God's action (the *Missio Dei*). We respond to God's action. 'Liturgy is to enter the sphere of God's acting', or to live in the Trinity, and our reaction when we are overwhelmed by God's love, 'the liturgy is a meeting between God and God's people, a meeting in which both parties act, but in which God initiates, and we respond' (Smith 2016:loc. 1152–1153).

Smith (2016:loc. 434) says 'to be human is to be a liturgical animal, a creature whose loves are shaped by worship'. Missional leaders must worship well and must be immersed in 'liturgies that are indexed to the kingdom of God' (Smith 2016:loc. 442). 'Liturgy is the heart of the missional community's organised life' (NGK 2013b:n.p.). Participating in organised worship (liturgy) shapes and strengthens congregational identity – precisely because, in worship, we are ritually reminded of God's identity and character. The DRC (NGK 2013b:211) affirms that the regular:

> [*W*]orship service is the place where the sending God is met, and where the congregation is equipped, empowered and sent out into the liturgy of life. [...] Sent/missional believers' identity is thus rooted in both what happens in the [*service*] itself and what happens after the service, in their interaction with their communities. (p. 211)

Liturgy nourishes spirituality, and spirituality flourishes in liturgy. As Smith (2016) says:

> The liturgy of Christian worship is the litany of love we pray over and over again, given to us by the Spirit precisely in order to cultivate the love he sheds abroad in our hearts. (loc. 1297–1298)

It is important to understand the link between worship and faithful presence. Worship implies a particular relationship with God and with the world. Worship reveals the meaning of the world as creation and our communion with God. It links our relationship with God to place and time. According to Fitch (2016):

> Faithful presence names the reality that God is present in the world and that He uses a people faithful to His presence to make

Himself concrete and real amid the world's struggles and pain. (p. 10)

This faithful presence is symbolised in the worship service and proclaimed from the worship service, and then carried into real life by means of the liturgies of life.

■ Habits or disciplines to cultivate missional spirituality

Missional spirituality, and the missional life of a congregation, is not the result of technique, strategic planning or programmes. The formation of God's people is all about habits and practices (sometimes called disciplines). Practices are routinised (ritualised) actions shaping our lives in a certain direction (Roxburgh 2015:49) and helping Christian communities to enter more deeply into the biblical narratives. The best way to resist the excarnation pressure of our times is to adopt incarnational practices. Frost (2014) explains:

> If we only live out our faith in our imagination and never express it in a rich rhythm of weekly practices, liturgies and activities, we are in danger of seeing the gospel only as offering a way for the redeemed soul to escape history. (p. 74)

We need an embodied missional spirituality expressed in rich liturgies, practices and life-giving disciplines. Discipleship is to carry the gospel into our lifestyle and our collective liturgies. Branson (2007:113) defines spiritual formation as corporate and personal attention to and participation in the initiatives of God, including the generative and ongoing graces of the Spirit. Smith (2016:loc. 101–102) argues that discipleship is about formation, or as he describes it, about the way the people of God curate their hearts. This is to be attentive to and intentional about what you love. Our formation depends on our desires (what we love) and not our propositions and intellectual convictions, 'so discipleship is more a matter of hungering and thirsting than of knowing and believing' (Smith 2016:loc. 102–103). We are defined by our desires, by what we love. What we love relates directly to what we imagine to be a flourishing life.

Mission has been described as participating in the Triune God's mission to bring flourishing life, and discipleship is to love the life in the Trinity we imagine. This new life starts with habits of the heart and practices. Habits of the heart describe 'those core disciplines which are normally built deeply into the lives of disciples and communities and enable them to flourish' (Frost & Hirsch 2011:loc. 2123–2125). We practise a flourishing life so that we can discern, more clearly, what God's preferred future might be. In doing so, we not only proclaim the kingdom, but also bear it in the community of disciple's own life in the presence of the kingdom – we become a sign and foretaste of the kingdom (Newbigin 1995:49). We become a faithfully (and bodily) present community.

Spirituality is personal and communal. 'The church – the body of Christ – is the place where God invites us to renew our loves, reorient our desires, and retrain our appetites' (Smith 2016:loc. 1047–1048). The church needs to attend to the formation of each and all, including leaders, to renew our loves. This is done by attending to habits and practices, as we are creatures of habit (Smith 2016:loc. 1670). We become what we do. Habits are woven into our character and the ethos of congregations through rituals of practice and repetition. In attending to habits, we respect the cumulative power of little things, the formative power of micro-practices. Smith (2016:loc. 2455–2456) states that little things repeated over time in a community have a formative effect – it is more a case of habit-formation than information. This is crucial because there is no formation without repetition.

The approach to habits or practices that cultivate a missional spirituality shows a deep respect for the diversity in Christian faith as well as the diversity in contexts, both of which demand an open-minded approach to something as deeply personal and physical as spiritual practices. Helland and Hjalmarson (2011:loc. 564) remind us that spiritual formation is connected to the physical formation. Diverse physicalities and experiences of faith necessitate an ecumenical approach to habits or disciplines.

It is clear that missional leaders have the responsibility to foster missional practices and habits that nurture mission in congregations. Leaders must encourage and facilitate practices and disciplines and hold people accountable for them (Van Kooten & Barrett 2004:146).

Christian tradition knows a number of habits or disciplines, and the following serve and nurture faithful presence and a missional life.

■ Prayer

The Cape Town Commitment highlighted the importance of prayer in the mission of the church, calling the church to a renewed commitment to prayer; 'prayer is the indispensable foundation and resource for all elements of our mission' (Lausanne III 2011:5). Prayer centres discipleship in the life in the Trinity, and it is impossible to consider participating in the *Missio Dei* without prayer. It is the very basis of discernment, the way to hear our calling and to nurture a love for our contexts. This explains the important role of prayer in mission history, perhaps best summarised by Dickson (2010:loc. 849–850) when he says that prayer to the Lord of the harvest is the most basic gospel-promoting task, even more important than evangelism. Marais (2017:370) affirms that a church that confesses the intentional loving presence of a Triune God can no longer orient themselves on a static dogmatic epistemology or ecclesial orders and regulations alone, but needs a discerning missional hermeneutic and practices. Prayer is one of the most important practices.

It is not the intention to add to the thousands and thousands of words of prayer in Christian literature, but to acknowledge the important role of prayer as part and parcel of missional spirituality and disciplines. This leads to the conclusion that missional leadership presupposes prayer. It is prayer that centres the life of the leader on the Triune God, enabling the person to enjoy the fountain of love flowing from the Trinity and to participate in the mission of love to bring life in fullness to all of creation. It is prayer

that creates an awareness of calling, that opens the leader to discern, that forms and shapes a *kenotic* posture and empowers with bold humility. Prayer nourishes mission because prayer immerses one in God's eternal goodness and presence. The leader surrenders all in prayer and is sent to cross bridges and take risks for the sake of the gospel. Prayer helps the leader to focus on the living presence of Christ rather than 'forcing' God's hand. In terms of being faithfully present, prayer opens up space for God to work in us and through us, in places where we find ourselves.

The Lord's Prayer forms the core of a missional spirituality and ought to be practised.

◼ An embodied scriptural life

Missional spirituality entails an embodied scriptural life (Helland & Hjalmarson 2011:loc. 253). This may take different configurations, but entails an indwelling in scriptures as a listening process where readers consciously open themselves to be formed and transformed by Scripture.

Missional spirituality approaches Scripture with a missional hermeneutic, acknowledging mission as central to the biblical story. It respects the *Missio Dei* as an overarching narrative theme of the Bible, the contextual locatedness of the Christian community, and reads the Bible to be able to equip the church for its mission and witness (see Goheen 2016:15; Hunsberger 2016:45). Although there might be considerable postmodern critique of grand narratives, Conradie argues that we need meta-narratives, and especially cosmological meta-narratives (that may include the central narrative of the biblical witness – NN), and pretending not to have meta-narratives might be even worse (Conradie 2015:124).

Sparks, Soerens and Friesen (2014:122) offer an interesting way to embody scriptural life. This entails a process where the scriptural narrative, the local stories (stories of place) and the personal stories of the leader(s) are plaited together in a new, life-giving braid (see Figure 6.1).
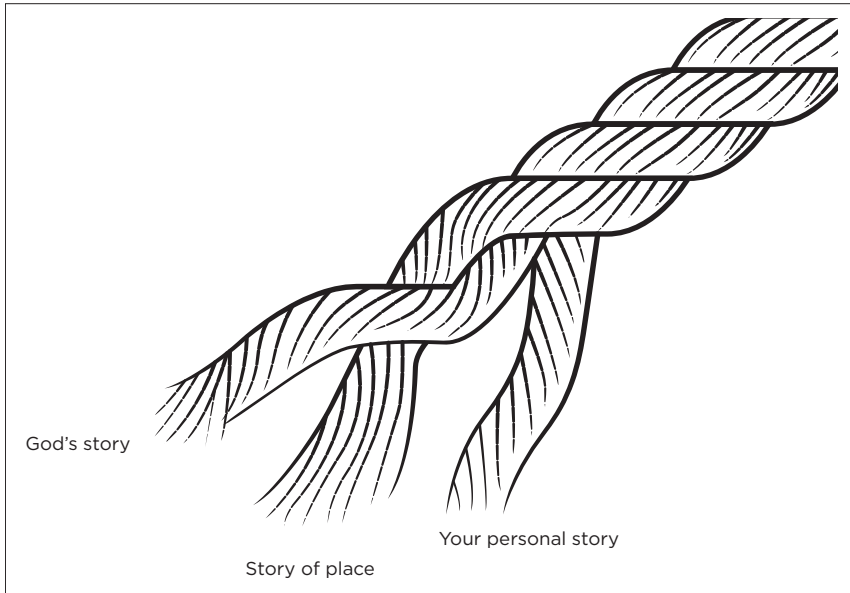
FIGURE 6.1: Stories in a life-giving braid.

The posture is one where the leader immerses himself or herself in the scriptural narrative and simultaneously listens to his or her own story and the stories of the place. Such an approach honours the importance of narrative in theology and missional leadership. Conradie's (2015:115) perspective is that all human action is a quest of narrative. Ultimately, it is God who is telling the story so that we can at best try to follow that story and engage in the more limited task of retelling episodes from it, anticipating, without yet knowing, where it will end.

Helland and Halmarson (2011:loc. 883) affirm that prayer and deep involvement with Scripture are the centre of our piety and action. This entails more than merely reading or studying Scripture, but actually engaging with Scripture as a practice, a kind of truth in action. They call it a '*missio*' reading of Scripture that inspires obedience to its truths in all spheres of life.

Prayerful reading of the scriptures presupposes a posture of openness to be shaped, not only in the disciple's relationship with God, but also to be shaped for the sake of others.

■ Hospitality – Welcoming the stranger

The church is a community of strangers. We might need to adopt more and more of the history of God's people as a community of strangers and exiles (Paas 2017:240). To be a stranger is a vulnerable existence. Paas explains that to be a stranger is to be different and to be powerless. The church needs to know that its existence is never secured by alliances with power or by the respect of the world. This liberates the church from awkward political or social choices – the church does not have to choose the side of power, but it can remain a critical, ironic, prophetic force within society – without turning its back on society (Paas 2017:241). We are strangers and must welcome strangers.

The practice of hospitality deconstructs the suspicion and fear of strangers. In welcoming strangers, disciples follow Jesus and develop contextually relevant ways to cross boundaries and reach out to the 'other', and to include them in a new form of community. Hospitality is to walk with strangers and welcome them at your table.

Hospitality must be part and parcel of the heart of a congregation's spiritual life – in public worship. In a certain sense, hospitality to strangers is one of the most important indicators of whether worship is public at all. Worship must be accessible and hospitable to people as a whole (Harrison 2017:399).

Hospitality finds a practical expression and table-habits by creating gracious tables as listening spaces. We need to develop rituals that reinforce hospitality, and we need to appreciate one of the most powerful and missional rituals of all, namely celebrating Holy Communion. Fitch (2016:48) says the Lord's Table is about presence and the social re-ordering of our lives in his presence.

There are numerous practices in terms of celebrating Holy Communion. Important in terms of missional spirituality is the appreciation of the Holy Table, which is an opportunity to extend hospitality to strangers and to invite them into a deeper relationship with the gathered community.

Hospitality is not only extended to others, but is also received. It is part and parcel of the missional posture to be dependent on the hospitality of strangers. A missional posture is to be open to receive from the 'other' and to be served by the 'other'.

■ Sabbath-rest as habit

Business is contrary to the demands of missional leadership. The focus on discernment and listening emphasises Ortberg's (2002:77) demand that 'you must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life'. Hurry clouds discernment and consumes energy. Leaders must practise the habit of silence. This is a kind of receptive Sabbath-rest that opens up the mind and awareness for God's presence (*Missio Dei*) and the Spirit's life-giving work. A hermeneutic of love and leadership for the sake of others can be very demanding and requires the re-energising power of quiet Sabbath-rest.

It is fascinating that Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) address this in their quest for 'presencing'. They remind leaders to retreat and reflect, to allow the inner knowing to emerge. This happens when leaders 'go to the places of stillness where knowing comes to the surface' (Scharmer & Kaufer 2013:n.p.). Stillness and reflection allow leaders to take stock of everything they (Scharmer & Kaufer 2013):

> [*H*]ave learned from a deep place of listening, asking, 'What wants to emerge here?' 'How does that relate to the journey forward?' and 'How can we become part of the story of the future rather than holding on to the story of the past?' (loc. 366–369)

This reminds one of the 'Daily Examine' prescribed by one of the great missionaries, St. Ignatius of Loyola. This entails

reflective time every day to pay attention to the missionary's life (Smith 2016):

> [R]eflect on God's presence; review your day in a spirit of gratitude; become aware of your emotions before God; pray over one feature of your day; and then intentionally look forward to tomorrow. (loc. 909–912)

'We need to set apart a time and a place to be with God and him alone' (Nouwen n.d.:n.p.). It is a discipline of solitude and will take different shapes and practices for different people. But, says Smith (2014:loc. 794–796), 'a real discipline never remains vague or general. It is as concrete and specific as daily life'.

Sabbath-rest and rejuvenation are closely associated with the practice of regular, communal worship. This is a core Christian practice since the beginning. Worship restores us and worship re-stories us. It vitalises our discernment and our ability to participate in God's mission in daily life.

■ Missional spirituality as discernment and listening

Missional spirituality is to discern and to listen. It is an acoustical art demanding a listening heart (Niemandt 2013a:188). Mpinga (2014:85 as cited in Niemandt 2019:n.p.) says 'the missional church will use discernment in order to find out a way of reaching out to the community in which it is working'. Listening is more than an approach or state of mind; it must become a way of acting.

In terms of nurturing a missional spirituality, listening must focus on three dimensions:

• listening up towards God
• listening in – into the congregation
• listening out – to the context and to people in the parish who may not be closely related to the life and ministry of the congregation.

Missional leaders must nurture listening habits to be able to discover their calling, to bring text and context together and to be able to incarnate the gospel in multiple contexts. Two particular listening practices, dwelling in the Word and world, are discussed in the next chapter.

■ Missional spirituality as a laborious joyful journey

Missional spirituality is paradoxical. It is simultaneously infinitely complex and simple. It is like a symphony, composed of pure, simple notes, but together forming a complex and wondrous whole. It is complex because it is a life in the Trinity, inviting us deeper and deeper into the mystery of the living Lord. It is complex because it is orientated towards and from God's preferred future and challenges us to incarnate Christ and to be faithfully present. Yet it is simple. It only demands the faith of children and is proclaimed by people sharing bread and wine. It is simply possible because Jesus Christ became human and shaped a journey for us to follow as first followers. It is a movement to a deep inner truth but also a movement towards the whole of creation (Niemandt 2013a:191).

Discernment: Following God in mission as listening

■ Following God

Discernment brings clarity on the journey with the sending God, on both the issue of where we are on the journey and where we are going. This means leadership is more about followership. It is all about God. We are not the subject. Nor are we the action (Boers 2015:loc. 187). The direction and initiative come from God. We can only joyfully participate. Boers argues for a 'prepositional-participation'. Prepositions join us to God and his action in us and in the world, so 'our identity and vocation are rooted in God first of all' (Boers 2015:loc. 696–697). Leadership is a function in the missional church and does not exist for the sake of the leaders or the church. The identity of the church ('who is the church?') is one of discipleship and followership. Sweet (2012b:9) refers to the perichoretic dance of the Trinity and describes the task of the

church, saying 'we don't take Jesus into the world. We discern where he's dancing and join in the dance'.

One of the best illustrations of leadership as followship can be found in a video labelled 'Dancing guy'[9] in which Sivers shares important insights in leading or starting a movement. The video shows a young man at the Sasquatch Festival. He gets up from his place and starts dancing. He is alone in his dance, and then another person joins him in his dance. He is labelled the 'first follower'. Soon the whole place is a movement of young people joining in the dance. Sivers' words summarise an important insight; 'it was the first follower that transformed a lone nut into a leader'. Sweet (212b) calls this video a moving parable:

> Like all life's decisions, dances begin with a motion, then someone passes the motion, and the motion goes forward with a yes from all. The way of the dance may start with an unconventional and unique way of moving. But the truth is, without someone to stand up and join in – to be a 'first follower' – no true dance is born. (p. 3)

Jesus does not call leaders; he calls followers to follow him. The leader of the church is Jesus Christ. All of the rest are followers. The Jesus paradox is that only Christians lead by following (Sweet 2012b:21). Missional leadership is an issue of followership, and thus discerning how to be a disciple.

■ Discerning to join the Spirit in mission

Discernment is the first step in mission. Mission is joining in with the Spirit or, in the words of Archbishop Rowan Williams, 'finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in' (Kim 2009:1). Discernment is to detect a sense of direction to establish where the Spirit is leading (Conradie 2017:320). It 'is the core practice of a missional church – seeking the presence or movement of the Triune God in relationship with all of creation' (Niemandt 2015b:7). We can only follow God in mission when we join in with the Spirit,

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9. See 'Dancing guy' at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fW8amMCVAJQ.

discerning what the Spirit is up to and participating in the life of the Trinity. The most important implication of the *Missio Dei* is the acknowledgement that the Triune God is actively involved in God's creation, and that the church is invited to participate in God's mission. This church, as a band of faithful followers, is called by the Spirit to be on a journey with God. 'Discernment leads to new insights – in terms of the self, the other and God (Van der Merwe 2014:11)', but demands prophetic courage (Niemandt 2014):

> Osmer (2008), in his authoritative book on practical theology, *Practical Theology. An Introduction*, discusses 'Prophetic discernment' as the normative task of Practical Theology. It involves both divine disclosure and the human shaping of God's Word (Osmer 2008:134), and entails listening to this Word and interpreting it in ways that address particular social conditions, events and decisions before congregations (Osmer 2008:135). 'Discernment is the activity of seeking God's guidance amid the circumstances, events, and decisions of life' (Osmer 2008:137). He also discusses the importance of a spirituality of prophetic discernment. To discern means to sift through and sort out, to weigh the evidence before reaching a decision. (p. 46)

Boers (2015:loc. 2096–2097) also emphasises the importance of discernment, especially from his high regard for the prophetic role of leadership. Discernment is an essential part of prophetic credibility. As there are true and false prophets, discernment is essential, but it demands courage – because, as Conradie (2017:320) warns, 'there is only one thing more dangerous than identifying the "finger of God" in human history, and that is' to not even try to do so.

The WCC (2013:56) understands the mission of God to bring life in fullness and to allow life to flourish through the energising work of the Spirit. The WCC (2013) argues in *Together towards life* that the church must:

> [*D*]iscern the Spirit of God wherever '…life in its fullness is affirmed and in all its dimensions, including liberation of the oppressed, healing and reconciliation of broken communities, and the restoration of creation.' (p. 360)

The church is called to 'discern the work of the' life-giving 'Spirit and to join with the' Holy 'Spirit in bringing about God's reign of justice' (WCC 2013:56). Bosch (1991:430, as cited in Niemandt 2017) states:

> Discernment is the art of 'reading the signs of the times' (Bosch 1991: 429). This also means that the message of the gospel is not something we bring to contexts, but something we derive from contexts. (p. 4)

'It is an issue of textual and contextual exegesis, where a church discerns what God is doing in, through and amongst all the movements of change in which it finds itself' (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:24). The very idea of contextualisation means that there is no set of constant rules or a situation where God's will be communicated in an untranslatable language without any adaptation. Discernment plays into the understanding that the gospel does not demand the universal application of an unchanging pattern of personal and social behaviour (Newbigin 1989:158). The gospel is not a series of abstract moral and political principles. Newbigin explained the life of this community of followers as a life where they remember, rehearse and live by the story which the Bible tells. 'This remembering and rehearsing will be through [discernment -] the continual reading [of] and reflection on the Bible' and the life in which the community finds themselves (Newbigin 1989:n.p.).

Missional leadership has been defined as 'transformational. A [missional] church exists for the transformation of the community that it serves, through the power of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit'. (The Archbishop's Council 2004:81). Missional leadership is the transformation of people, the church and institutions to participate in God's mission. This transformation leads to missional activity and renewal. Discernment is unmissable on the journey of faith renewal and transformation. The church has a posture of being open and waiting on the Spirit to be transformed and renewed by the Spirit.

According to Sweet (2010), the:

> [S]kill of discerning is the door to transformation, to renewal of our personal lives, the beginning of the renewal of faith communities and the world. It is about awakening each other to the God who is already

there, nudging people to pay attention to the mission of God in their lives and to the necessity of responding to that initiative in ways that 'give birth to new realities.' (p. 29; see also Niemandt 2014:47)

Research into the praxis of missional transformation confirmed the importance of discernment. Cordier and Niemandt (2015a:8) concluded, '[t]he minister as a spiritual leader himself possesses the ability to discern and to establish spiritual discernment as a practice amongst the leadership team and the congregation'.

If 'discernment is the first step in mission' (White & Acheampong 2017:3), discerning vocation is the first step in a life of discernment.

■ Discerning vocation

Disciples are chosen to be followers. The leaders who equip, sustain and nourish disciples are actually followers called to serve the church and world. 'A follower is one who has said yes to being chosen and who announces that human chosenness to the world' (Sweet 2012b:44). Vocation belongs to the centre of any discussion on missional leadership. Guder (2015:61) underscores Barth's contribution to theology with his remark that Barth's legacy is making mission, missional purpose and missional vocation a pervasive and shaping theme of his theological project. Barth understood the importance of justification and sanctification, but added vocation (Guder 2015):

> Justification and sanctification are not adequately understood and confessed apart from their outworking in the vocation of the individual Christian as witness and the sending of the community of the Holy Spirit to be and do that witness in the world. (p. 61)

The 'gospel must be understood as justification, sanctification, and vocation' (Guder 2015:100). Guder (2015) summarised Barth's argument by stating that to end with justification and sanctification is to fall into individualism and reductionism and to miss the missional impetus of the church:

> The good news of God's gracious accomplishment of salvation for all, which we appropriate as God's justifying us and sanctifying us exclusive of any merit on our part, must necessarily define who we are

and what we are for as those who have received these benefits. The justified and the sanctified are, by virtue of their enabled response to God's gospel, the called. (pp. 130–131)

The identity of the missional church is closely associated with the vocation of the church to be a witness of God's great deeds in Christ, to be a hermeneutic of the gospel and to lead its life worthy of its calling. Frost and Hirsch (2011:loc. 2147–2148) explain that every believer who takes their vocation seriously as a disciple of Jesus will see themselves as a 'sent one' wherever they find themselves, and will look to be mobilised into action in that place. The missional church must be understood 'in terms of its gathering (justification), its [up building] (sanctification), and its sending (vocation)' (Guder 2015:100). Vocation is an integral part of the understanding of missional church. The 'people of God […] are called, gathered […] by the Spirit', equipped for their mission 'and sent to participate in God's mission' (Niemandt 2012a:1; White & Niemandt 2014:481). This shows the clear relationship between vocation and sending. In a certain sense, there can be no sending without calling (vocation).

Vocation has an individual as well as corporate dimension and is closely related with a missional spirituality. The vocation of each member of the people of God is important, but a congregation, and the church as a whole, is also called into being and sent (Hunsberger 2004:38). Spirituality creates the fertile circumstance where calling can be heard and vocation can be discerned, both individually and in the community of disciples. Spiritual 'formation happens in communities that are consciously united around their missional vocation' (Guder 2015:118). The missional community is understood as a hermeneutic of the gospel (Newbigin 1989:222–233), and this informs the way the Bible is being read. Guder argues that this influences the way the community of disciples approach the Bible. Reading the Bible as a called and sent community means constantly asking 'some version of the question, "How did this text equip the missional church then for its vocation, and how does it do that today?"' (Guder 2015:129).

Although vocation has an individual and corporate dimension, Guder (2015:115) emphasises that the approach to vocation must be holistic. He refers to Acts 1:8 – 'You shall be my witnesses' – and asserts that vocation is a 'plural concept, [because] the entire community is made up of persons who are defined as witnesses' (Guder 2015:n.p.). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a corporate event where the first church was all gathered as a community in one room, sharing the empowering experiences of the presence of the Spirit. If the community of disciples is defined by its missional vocation, discerning that vocation and making sense of it in each and every context is of utmost importance. Hunsberger (2004:39) argues that the process of discerning vocation includes attending to issues such as *where* the congregations are, *when*, meaning in the flow of history, *who,* indicating the continuity with tradition, and *why,* relating vocation to God's kingdom. Vocation is holistic in the sense that it is much more than the intellectual of emotional acquiescent to calling – it is most certainly also carrying the gospel in our bodies. Following Jesus is nothing less than the physical embracement of our vocation. When we participate in God's mission, we participate in the ongoing incarnational mission of God, in real life in its totality. Discipleship, says Frost (2014:88), is to 'physically wade into the brokenness of humankind […]'.

To be a Christian is to be called. A Christian is more than a person that received the benefits of salvation and sanctification. Christians are blessed to be a blessing. God calls his people to become a community of followers, an *ecclesia,* but God's calling is much broader in scope. God calls the community for the sake of the world because God so loved the world. The Christian calling is a calling to the life and service of witness (Guder 2015:132). According to Guder (2015:132), the missional vocation of the church is one of the most important themes in the New Testament. It is the 'central thrust of the apostolic mission and the purpose [of Jesus'] own formation of the disciples' (Guder 2015:132).

Research into the praxis of missional transformation in the South African context affirmed the importance of vocation and calling. Cordier and Niemandt (2015b:4, 5) concluded that

a 'grounded, clear, and internalized missional theology and calling' of leaders is of utmost importance. According to Cordier and Niemandt (2015b:4), this entails 'more than [a] mere intellectual acknowledgement of the *Missio Dei* and *missio ecclesia'*. Vocation and a sense of calling are internalised knowledge and agreement, 'and leads towards a new discovery of the self and a personal missional calling' (Cordier & Niemandt 2015b:5).

■ Sense-making in complexity[10]

The 'church and denominational structures are complex systems; not [only] in terms of organisational theory but, primarily, because the church finds its identity in the activity of the Holy Spirit' (Niemandt 2015b:3). One can take another step back and state that human life is *per se* complex and multidimensional (Veldsman 2018:3). The context is complex. The world is characterised by the dynamics of process and complexity (Haight 2014:loc. 687–688). Humans have the capacity for self-consciousness, which leads to complexity. Add to this the complex nature of human communication and the nearly bewildering complexity of social networks. Avery (2004:51) refers to complexity where disorder plays a vital role, characterised by new kinds of tensions that compel people to self-organise as they discover and create a new future. Social systems (families, communities and institutions) are vastly complex, and this increases when one considers larger social systems, as in the case of language and religion.

The landscape changed. Heath (2008:34–35) makes a moving point that we are now foreigners living in a world we do not know, 'we are in a time of chaos and confusion, an ecclesiastical *tohu wabohu* over which the Spirit of God broods and speaks' (Heath 2008:36).

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10. The section on complex leadership draws heavily (and often verbatim) on Niemandt (2015b).

According to Doornenbal (2012:154), complexity theory provides attractive ways of thinking about the church. Sweet (2009:43) reasons from the organic nature of the church and emphasises the nature of the congregations as self-organising, complex, adaptive, self-regulating systems (Niemandt 2015b:3).

He (Sweet 2012a) talks about 'Complex Church':

> Through Christ in the Holy Spirit, God indwells the church, empowering and energising its members. The church, in the grip of the power of the Holy Spirit, finds itself in dynamic and transformational space created by the Spirit; and change in the church will be unexpected and from the margins. (p. 40; see also Niemandt 2015b:3)

Brewin (2013:loc. 1096–1280) uses complexity theory in his description of the Christian faith and the church. He (Brewin 2013) notes the following characteristics of emergent systems:

- They are open to their environment: sensing it, responding to it. They have blurred boundaries rather than fixed lines, and are characterised by disequilibrium rather than homeostasis, in order to respond to and engage with its environment. (loc. 1061)
- They adapt themselves to its unique and localised needs. They will be open places, fully engaging with the environment that is hosting it; sensing it, responding to it, learning from it, always seeking to change and evolve. (loc. 1111)
- They are learning systems in a cycle of sensing, learning, adapting, and changing. (loc. 1129)
- They have distributed knowledge that is dispersed over a large variety of agents. (loc. 1221)

'The church is a complex emergent system' (Niemandt 2015b: 3–4). Plowman et al. (2007:342 as cited in Niemandt 2015b) describe complex organisations as follows:

- they are made up of many agents who act and interact
- with each other in unpredictable ways
- they are sensitive to changes in initial conditions
- they adjust their behaviour in the aggregate to their
- environment in unpredictable ways
- they oscillate between stability and instability

- they produce emergent actions when approaching disequilibrium. Additionally, complex systems are dynamic and non-linear, and rarely explained by simple cause–effect relationship. (p. 4)

Sweet (2012a:43) also attends to complexity and describes the following characteristics of complex, non-linear systems:

- Small, simple inputs can have massive consequences.
- Small, simple changes in initial conditions produce radically different outcomes (e.g. a difference of one part in 1016th in the ratio between two fundamental forces could have meant that no stars were formed).
- The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- The richer the interactions, the more diverse the relationships, the greater the creativity and adaptability of the system.

According to Niemandt (2015b), the:

[*R*]ecognition of the unexpected and dynamic ways of the Spirit will also challenge a linear and mechanistic view of the church, because of the surprising work of the Spirit. Joubert (2013:117) argues that the default position of church leaders is to consider it their responsibility to create unity, clarity, order, stability and a shared purpose for people in church. This notion is challenged by the increasingly fluid new world that leans more towards the other side. It favours new forms of complexity, openness, disruption, uncertainty, self-discovery and non-linear change, which also calls for different roles for leadership than is typically presented. (p. 4)

Plowman et al. (2007 as cited in Niemandt 2015b:4) 'researched the way leadership functions in complex organisations, and found the following three mechanisms used by leaders in emergent, self-organisation systems':

1. leaders disrupt existing patterns
2. they encourage novelty
3. they act as sense-makers

Sense-making is a particular kind of discernment (Niemandt 2015b):

'Sense-making' is the process by which individuals 'construct meaningful explanations for situations and their experiences within

those situations' (Plowman et al. 2007:351). Brewin says that the role of leaders in a complex organisation is to 'change the perceptions of a situation' (Brewin 2013:loc. 1311). (p. 7)

Sense-making is more than grasping, perhaps first and foremost intellectually, the nature of things, but includes a sense of where we are and where we are going. Sense-making is a critical facet of leadership in complexity – 'leaders must be able to scan the environment and interpret issues that might influence decision-making and strategic change in organisations' (Niemandt 2015b:7). Leaders read the signs of the times and give meaning to unfolding events. This is actually the task of church and theology – as Moltmann (2010:loc. 3216–3217) explained, 'the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel'.

According to Niemandt (2015b):

Osmer (2008:24) says leaders must guide the congregation as a community of interpretation. Brewin (2013:loc. 1201) argues that they must make connections, must try new things 'always sensing, getting feedback, adapting, and remembering'. Joubert (2013:126) argues that leaders must be able to assimilate complex ideas, systems, problems, situations, interactions, or relationships. He says leaders must uniquely address the impasse of religious institutions to adapt effectively to change, by infusing new life into existing forms of religious expression in order to bind the family of God together in meaningful, collective experiences of his transcendent reality (Joubert 2013:129). [...]

Plowman et al. (2007:351) found that leaders are involved in two [*sense-making*] activities: (1) assuming the role of a 'tag', and (2) creating correlation through language. The role of a 'tag' boils down to the ability to focus attention on core issues; that is, leaders give meaning to emergent events by reframing them.[11] According to Plowman et al. (2007:352), tags enable specific behaviours by

11. According to Lichtenstein and Plowman (2009:625), a tag is an identifier for a valued set of behaviours; as such a tag directs attention to things that are important, giving meaning to actions that might otherwise go unnoticed.

directing attention to what is important: 'A leader becomes a tag when others recognize them as a symbolic reference for their corresponding message'. (p. 7)

Organic leadership is based on mutual sense-making (Avery 2004:63). According to Niemandt (2015b):

Complex leaders become enablers of emergent self-organisation by being [*sense-makers*] through correlation, and this is done by the creation of correlation through language. [*Sense-making*] is being accomplished in part through linguistic and communicative processes (Brown, Colville & Pye 2015:266). 'Leaders manage words rather than manage people' (Plowman et al. 2007:347). The language of leaders is a powerful organisational tool both for articulating meaning and collective action. Leaders use language to help give meaning to unfolding events. […]

Leaders *interpret* emerging events rather than direct events. Plowman et al. (2007:352) found that with language as a medium, leaders can 'establish the identity of the objects, events, and actors that constitute their social environment'. Joubert (2013:119) recognises the important role of language and warns that leaders are often left with a 'verbal repertoire' that stimulates 'vertical' rather than 'lateral' orientations, as well as with a large vocabulary for issues related to order, fear and conformity rather than flexibility, risk, exploration and fluidity. In such cases, the church becomes a prisoner of language that prevents the church from seeing, hearing, or learning in creative new ways. By using a consistent language, leaders give meaning to the changes that are underway. [*Wheatley*] and Frieze (2011:16) stress the importance for leaders to host meaningful conversations that create the means for problems to get solved, for teams to function well and for people to become energetic activists. (p. 7)

Conradie (2015:v) remarks on the importance of sense-making in a complex world. Sense-making provides reorientation and direction on the basis of discernment but 'requires a high level of abstraction and complexity aided by the use of particular myths, metaphors and conceptual models' (Conradie 2015:v).

According to Niemandt (2015b):

One of the most transformative applications of language is the use of narrative [*and metaphor*]. Brown et al. (2015:268) argue that stories are active constructions of embedded participants' local 'realities'

and 'a potent tool for meaning-making'. Narrative has the ability to form and transform individuals, congregations and communities and is especially appropriate for mainline denominations (Van der Merwe 2014:8). (p. 7)

'Transformative missional leadership demands narrative' (Niemandt 2015b:7) and metaphor (more on narraphor is discussed in Ch. 8).

■ Leaders listen to develop missional language

Following Jesus as a disciple and discerning where the Spirit is working to join in God's mission places particular emphasis on listening. Followship is to be nourished by the gifts of the Spirit and to discern vocation. One can describe a missional attitude as an attitude to discover and explore, to listen and discern, to rediscover that God is leading us through his Word and Spirit. Bevans and Schroeder (2011:20) note this shift to listening and sharing with people as one of the significant changes in the understanding of mission. Mission is not only doing things for people, but being with people and listening to them. This demands listening of a particular kind. Leadership is an acoustical art requiring a listening posture. Contextually relevant leadership in an organic paradigm implies particular attention to listening and the development of listening skills. According to Roxburgh (2015:58), listening is about giving attention to someone other than oneself. It shifts borders and expectations into a new space where you hear stories of what God is doing in the world.

The discovery of calling starts with is listening. Listening is more important than vision. Organic leadership shows the importance of teamwork and the critical role of communication, and is dependent on listening and appreciation of each other's language. The most important word any team leader can use is 'I hear you!' (Niemandt 2013a:116). The process of sense-making implies particular attention to listening and developing a missional language. The very beginning of the church is

characterised by a language-event, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all of those gathered together and the crowd was surprised, 'because each one heard their own language being spoken' (Ac 2:6 NIV). The church received a new language and entered a new reality. The semiotical posture of the missional church is one of listening.

Research into missional churches in South Africa underscored the importance of language (Niemandt 2010a:408). All the congregations involved in this particular research process appreciated the importance of a 'new missional language'. 'This new language created the [experience] that things [...] changed in the congregation. New language seems to be a dominant expression of organic change' and the 'ability to discern God's activities in the congregations and communities' (Niemandt 2010a:408, 2015b:8). According to the research, prayer and listening assisted them to discern God's mission. Particular mention was made about the importance of listening to strangers, marginalised people and the community (Niemandt 2010a:408). This listening process cultivated a new missional language. This is also corroborated by 'Hirsch (2006:53) [when he] mentions the importance of new narratives in congregational transformation' (Niemandt 2010a:408). Branson (2004) also refers to the fact:

> [*T*]hat transformation happens through language and conversations: 'A congregation needs a particular kind of conversation, a generative discourse, to create the perceptions and imaginations adequate to comprehensive renewal'. (p. 37)

Niemandt (2010a:408) mentions South African research and concludes that '"new language" created a new reality and ability to discern God's activities in the congregations and communities'. The 'new language eventually led to transformation in the congregation and the establishment of a new congregational identity' (Niemandt 2010a:408). Granberg-Michaelson (2004:41), reflecting on his experience with denominations, argued that people today need radical structures to enable careful listening to the presence and Spirit of God.

If leadership is about the transformation of people and organisations, and if the relational approach carries weight, listening and language is of utmost importance. Transformation happens when people are able to construct a new language house and give words to a new future. This starts with careful listening.

Goleman (2002:19–20) attends to leadership as emotional intelligence and also mentions the importance of listening. Scharmer is perhaps the most prominent author on the importance of listening in leadership. He underscores the importance of the inner world of the leader and argues that successful leadership is much more dependent on listening and dialogue than on processes and structures of leadership. As much as a carpenter uses a hammer and saw, a leader uses listening and dialogue; 'leadership in this century means shifting the structure of collective attention – our listening – at all levels' (Scharmer 2009:19). He adds, 'it is only through this listening that we will unlock our collective capacity to create the world anew' (Scharmer 2009:loc. 187).

Scharmer is deeply aware of the complexity of society and the fact that old forms of organisation and social institutions are collapsing. He makes a prediction, saying, 'what I see rising is a new form of presence and power that starts to grow spontaneously from and through small groups and networks of people' (Scharmer 2009:4). Another important question for Scharmer is about the future emerging in this context of complexity, asking 'how can we act from the future that is seeking to emerge, and how can we access, activate, and enact the deeper layers of the social field' (2009:8). He proposes a different way to attend to the future and to be aware of the present. This requires three movements.

The first movement is the establishment of horizontal connections (Scharmer 2010:6). It comprises the following:

- stop downloading
- opening up and connecting horizontally
- the suspension of 'old habits of judgement'
- putting yourself in places of most potential

- immersing yourself in these places while listening with an open mind, open heart and open will.

The second movement is the establishment of vertical connections (connecting to the source); this comprises the following:

- Going to places of stillness and to connect vertically to deeper sources of knowing and self-knowing.
- The questions 'who am I?' and 'what is my purpose?' ask for deep reflecting which allows deeper inspirational and initiative knowing emerges. Scharmer calls this 'presencing' and pays particular attention to the importance of listening.

The third movement flows from the previous two movements and entails:

- Rapid cycles of prototyping to explore emerging future possibilities by doing something together, have feedback and generate new insights on the initial prototype. Scharmer (2009:loc. 3376–3377) defines it as 'having established a connection to the source (presencing) and having clarified a sense of the future that wants to emerge (crystallising), the next stage in the U process is to explore the future by doing "prototyping"'.
- A process of letting come, enacting and embodying.

It is against this background that Scharmer developed his theory on listening and the importance of listening as the first step towards processing. Scharmer (2009:loc. 467–861) mentions four types of listening (see also Figure 7.1).

Firstly, listening as downloading – Scharmer (2009:loc. 467–861) calls this 'I-in-ego'; listening by reconfirming habitual judgements, 'when you are in a situation where everything that happens confirms what you already know, you are listening by downloading'.

Secondly, listening by paying attention to facts and to novel or disconfirming data or listening as seeing (I-in-it). This type of listening is object-focussed or factual listening. In this type of attending, you focus on what differs from what you already know. Your listening has to switch from attending to your inner

Emerging reality
sensing emerging futures

Listening 4
presencing
(I-in-now)

Listening 3
sensing
(I-in-thou)

Self — — — — — — Other

Listening 1
downloading
(I-in-ego)

Listening 2
seeing
(I-in-it)

Current reality
re-enacting current reality
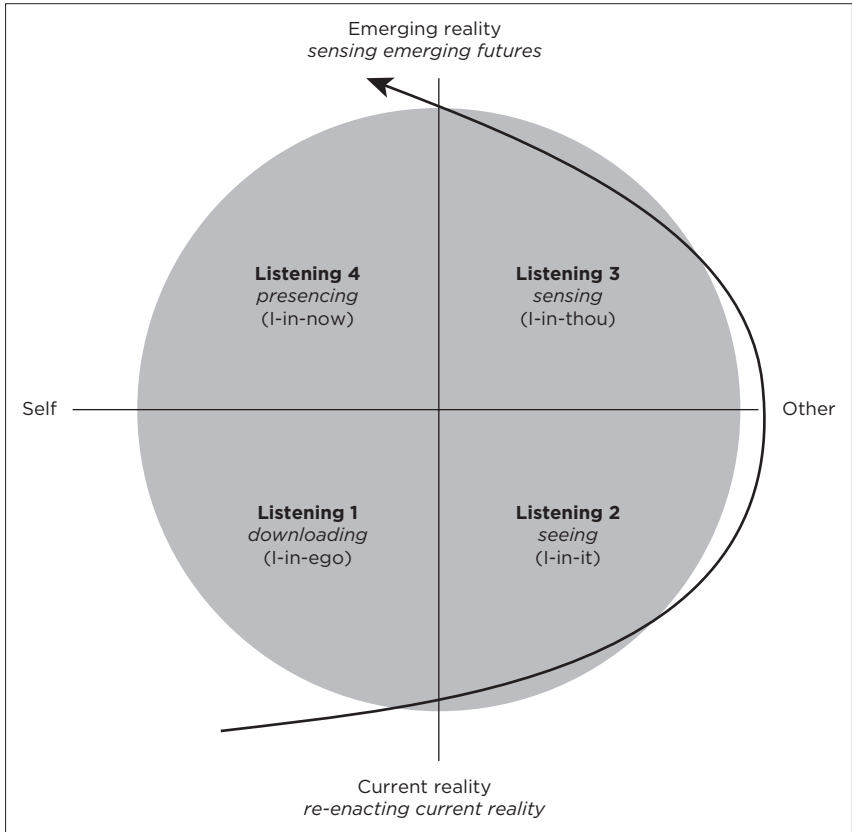
Source: Scharmer (2009)

FIGURE 7.1: Four types of listening.

voice of judgement to attending to the data right in front of you. You begin to focus on information that differs from what you already know (Scharmer 2009:loc. 467–861). He calls this 'object-focused or factual listening' the basic mode of good science.

Thirdly, listening as empathic listening (I-in-thou), or listening as sensing. Scharmer explains, 'when we are engaged in real dialogue, we can, when paying attention, become aware of a profound shift in the place from which our listening originates'.

Empathic listening shifts perceptions from the objective and facts to the story of the system or living being. This demands an open heart – the empathic capacity to connect directly with another person or living system.

Fourthly, there is generative listening or presencing (I-in-now). This is listening from the emerging field of the future. 'This level of listening requires us to access our open heart and open will – our capacity to connect to the highest future possibility that wants to emerge'. People open up for change. In Christian terms, one can say that level four opens a person up to discern the presence of the Triune God. This is a deep spiritual experience that touches the very core of being human.

Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) opine that presencing merges presence and sensing:

> It means to sense and operate from the presence of an emerging future field. As we connect with this field of heightened awareness, our attention morphs from slowing down, opening up, redirecting, and letting go to letting come, crystallizing, and embodying the new. (loc. 470)

Listening is a core practice of missional leadership. It is through listening that the *Missio Dei* becomes apparent. Listening to God is to open up for the reality and relevance of the living Word for our complex times. Listening is an individual and communal responsibility. It means listening to God, to each other and to the context. We also need to listen to the tradition because we are not the first of God's people on a journey of discernment. This forms the groundwork for discernment and missional spirituality. We listen in order to be aware of the Triune God's presence in and among us.

■ Listening: Dwelling in the Word and the world

Missional leadership is interpretive leadership (Branson 2007:118). Leaders shape a community of interpreters (listeners) that learn and is able to interpret texts and contexts.

Two very important listening processes emerged in the missional church movement – dwelling in the Word and dwelling in the world (see Nel 2013:1). This represents as double-listening – respecting the biblical text as well as the context, or listening to God in and through his Word as well as discerning the reality of the *Missio Dei* in everyday life. Dingemans (2005:241) uses the image of a river and the two riverbanks. On the one side, the Bible and orthodoxy – the tradition of interpretation in church history. The other riverbank is the context – the world, culture and the reality where the church finds herself in. The church is the bridge connecting both riverbanks through the process of discernment. The bridge connects the Bible and the tradition of interpretation with the contextual reality. Missional leadership is building bridges through discernment – connecting text and context. Bridges open up new opportunities and lead to new worlds. This is the re-incarnation of the gospel, making the good news visible and understandable in everyday terms in every context.

Dwelling in the Word is but one of many ways to listen to God's Word. The broad approach is described as 'missional listening' (McKnight 2010:107–112). McKnight's missional hermeneutic and listening process can be summarised in the following:

- It begins with the Bible – to read it with tradition, respecting the way in which the wisdom of the ages informed and formed the church.
- A missional hermeneutic acknowledges that Scripture is inspired – 'God-breathed'. McKnight states that missional listening is powerful exactly because the Spirit 'that hovered over the author is the same Spirit at work in the reader'.
- Missional listening is a transformational process that creates a person who loves God and others.
- It is a process of discernment and blossoms into a life of good works.

Dwelling in the Word is a particular practice that plays an important role in many missional churches.

■ Dwelling in the Word

One of the more profound decryptions of what is intended with the idea of dwelling in the Word (indwelling) is found in Newbigin's discussion on the Bible as universal history. He states (Newbigin 1989):

> If we follow these suggestions we get a picture of the Christian life as one in which we live in the biblical story as part of the community whose story it is, find in the story the clues to knowing God as his character becomes manifest in the story, and from within that indwelling try to understand and cope with the events of our time and the world about us and so carry the story forward. At the heart of the story, as the key to the whole, is the incarnation of the Word, the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. (p. 109)

Newbigin (1989:97–99) argues that an important aspect in the use of the Bible by a witnessing *community is not to understand the text, but to understand the world through the text* (Nel 2013:3).

Nel (2013) explains Newbigin's concept of 'indwelling' and argues that it:

> [S]timulates the imagination of believers to live according to what is *plausible* according to the Bible: 'It invites believers to *imagine* their everyday life within the Biblical narrative of God's continuing mission to the world by creating analogies between what is described in the biblical text and things elsewhere in the world'. (p. 3)

Dwelling in the Word stimulates the missionary imagination of a congregation (Nel 2013):

> Dwelling in the Word is the practice of a repeated communal listening to a passage of Scripture over long periods of time in order to enable a Christian community to undertake its decisions and actions in line with the biblical meta-narrative. (p. 1)

This (Niemandt 2012b; see also Nel 2013:1):

> [C]ommunal dwelling in the biblical narrative [*is*] focused on formation rather than information and done in such a way that the participants are invited to come into the text and to be read by the text. It is listening to the Bible and trying to hear what it is saying to

those with whom the readers have been interacting, but not in [*an*] intellectual and exegetical way of the experts, trying to analyse the word. (p. 12)

Roxburgh (2015:60) explains dwelling in the Word as a way of letting God address us through Scripture, rather than using Scripture as a tool for imparting new information or confirmation of established ways. It is a move away from an analytical approach trying to prove propositions and facts, towards a formational approach that allows the text to read us, or at least to become part of our everyday lives and to form the way we imagine life. Keifert (2006:69 as cited in Hendriks 2013) called it:

[*T*]he most significant innovation for building the missional capacities of a local church [...] Dwelling in the Word stimulates the ability of congregants to imagine their everyday life within the narrative of Scripture. If [*communities*] start doing it together, it shapes a communal spiritual discernment capacity. (p. 827)

Along with Burns (2017:364), Nel (2013) summarises the practice as follows:

- Invite the Spirit to guide attending to Scripture.
- Read 'a chosen text aloud in a group. After the initial reading of the text, time is given for silent reflection on [*its*] meaning [...]' (Hendriks 2013:827).
- Emphasise listening and the role of a 'reasonably friendly stranger'. After the first reading, every group member is instructed to find a 'reasonably friendly-looking stranger' with whom to share what has been gleaned in their personal reflection on the text.
- After sharing in pairs, members give feedback to the group on what they have heard from their respective partners.
- The group is then invited to discover the meaning of the text for their specific context by asking, 'what might God be up to in the passage for us today?' (pp. 1–2)

Nel (see Niemandt 2013a:76) summarises the difference between mere talking about the Bible and classical Bible study, and dwelling in the Word (see Table 7.1).

TABLE 7.1: Bible study versus dwelling in the Word.

Bible Study	Dwelling in the Word
Reading for members of the congregation	Reading with members of the congregation
Reading a particular text once	Reading the same text over time
Reading the text to complete the process of reading	Reading the text with an open agenda
Trying the find the 'correct' reading and interpretation of the text	Discovering multiple readings and points of view
Reading for information	Reading for formation

Dwelling in the Word impacts congregations profoundly. It establishes a base to welcome strangers in the discerning community. It broadens the responsibility to interpret the Word and involves more members of the congregation in the process to bring text and context together. This also enhances the ability to imagine God's preferred future as informed by God's Word. 'Over time, dwelling in the Word shapes a group's collective imagination' (Nel 2013:6). It impacts the listening skills of the congregation and its leaders. Nel (2013:6) mentions the fact that 'word-dwelling develops the skill of interpreting the Word *with others* and provides a language for sharing thoughts with each other'. Dwelling in the Word builds trust and community.

■ Dwelling in the world

The practice of dwelling in the world builds on the *Missio Dei* and assumes God is active in the world around us. God is not only active but also calls and sends his people, and dwelling in the Word involves going about our lives as if God has sent us and is sending people to us (Burns 2017:365). It is an essential way to be faithfully present. Vanhoozer (2007:16) calls this an everyday theology and states that 'disciples must walk the Christian way the whole weekend and throughout the whole week' (Vanhoozer 2007:7). 'Everyday theology is simply faith seeking everyday understanding' (2007:7); an attempt to make sense of life and to bring the Bible to bear on all areas of life. Vanhoozer argues that this intention to make sense of everyday life is because disciples do not follow the gospel in a vacuum, but live their Christian lives through particular times and places. For Bass (2015:23), the church is not only a sacred space; the

world is profoundly sacred as well. 'God is not above or beyond, but integral to the whole of creation, entwined with the sacred ecology of the universe' (Bass 2015:25). Disciples must become readers of the everyday by interpreting the signs of the times – it is a kind of cultural literacy (Vanhoozer 2007:17). Meylahn (2012) states that:

> [*B*]eing church, doing theology is about listening to the narratives of a particular local context and then seeking to interpret these narratives within their cultural, social, political narrative setting, with the help of other disciplines. (p. 40)

This is all about listening to the narrative of place and space, and 'then seeking to interpret these narratives within their cultural, social, [and] political narrative setting' (Niemandt 2019:161). It is listening to our neighbourhoods.

Burns (2017) explains that dwelling in the world involves the following essential characteristics:

- requires noticing the people around us and offering peace to them
- demands observation of those on whom this peace rests
- means intentionally building relationships with these people of peace. (p. 365)

Dwelling in the world is an incarnational practice of the everyday. It is to discern God's activity in everyday life and to exegete context. It is an exercise in contextualisation and discernment. It is important to heed Newbigin's (1989:163) warning that the Word of God must not be domesticated by the world. True contextualisation (Newbigin 1989):

> [*H*]appens when the word is not a disembodied word, but comes from a community which embodies the true story, God's story, in a style of life which communicates both the grace and the judgment. (p. 164)

Two questions shape dwelling in the world (see also Figure 7.2):

- *What is God up to?* What is God busy doing in his creation?
- *What does God want to do?* What is God's preferred future? What is God up to? How does this new transformed reality look like, and how can the congregation participate in this process of transformation?
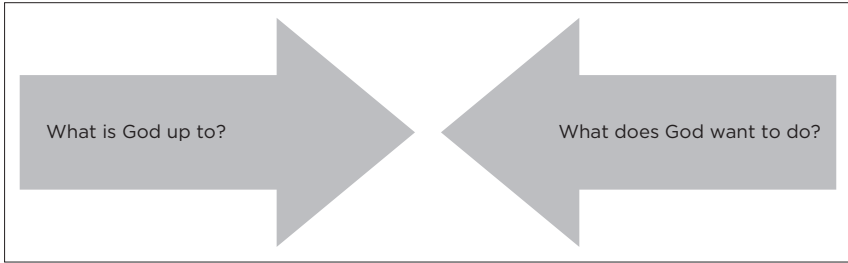
FIGURE 7.2: Two questions that shape dwelling in the world.

☐ **What is God up to?**

The question 'what is God up to?' is not an easy question because it elicits a second question on *how* God is doing it. Conradie (2017:320) cautions us in this approach to discernment because one must face difficult questions such as 'what instruments are God using?', 'is this *really* God's work?', 'where do we draw the line between God's work and the laws of nature?', 'between God's work and human intervention?'[12]

It is important to note Heath's approach to do this with a hermeneutic of love (2008:119). Dwelling in the world is profoundly determined by a hermeneutic of love. Haight (2014:loc. 2855–2856)

12. See Edwards (2010) for a nuanced discussion on God's engagement with and in this world. Conradie's (2013:200–209) overview of the complexity of discerning God's actions might serve as a guideline to approach this kind of questions with at least fear and trepidation. Conradie's (2015:207) summary might illustrate this, stating, '[a]ny claim to identify particular instances of God's actions should not be understood in an interventionist way, since that would raise the question why God does not interfere more often in order to prevent innocent suffering. One may argue (at least if one adopts a panentheist point of view, but Calvin would also concur) that God is involved in one way or another in every event and action taking place in the world. This would imply that it is not so much the particularity of the action that is important, but the particularity of the discernment. The question is then: What exactly is God doing in a particular event? What is the direction in which God is guiding us? How does that relate to the larger history of God's economy? And what does this tell us about the identity and character of God? In the biblical roots of Christianity, clarity on this emerged only gradually and not without contestation with rival religions: This God is known for compassion, mercy and justice'.

connects the interaction of the creator with created reality by referring to the fact that love is the basis of life, '[t]hus, the value of life itself rests on the power of the creator taking the form of love'. The life of the Trinity is a life in God's love. The first conversation that took place in the Trinity was, '[h]ow can we show our love?' God's creation is a sign of his unspeakable love and 'an expression of God's loving care: God's loyalty to and solidarity with God's own beloved creation' (Conradie 2017:314, 322). This can be described as the 'deepest intuition of the Christian faith [–] […] God is a passionate God of love' (Conradie 2008:26). It's only God's love that enables missionary life and transformative leadership. God loves us so that we can be transformed.

A hermeneutic of love changes the way we look at the world (Heath 2008):

> What if we looked at our world […], 'with pity and not with blame'? What if we heard God's call to evangelize out of love instead of fear, hope instead of judgment? What if we saw sin for the complex mixture it is, grounded in wounds and unmet needs? What if we automatically tried to see the 'total fact' of others? In short, what would it mean to read our world with a hermeneutic of love? (p. 119)

A missional spirituality makes us mindful to live in God's love. Love changes everything. It changes the followers. It changes the people they come into contact with. It changes the world.

A hermeneutic of love consciously orientates the incarnational movement on the example of Jesus Christ, whose incarnational presence was characterised by love. Newbigin (1995:40) even described mission as 'love in action'. It implies, at least, being present with, living together, *convivens,* joy and laughter (Conradie 2015:175). A hermeneutic of love creates an awareness that it might just be possible to encounter the loving Jesus in our everyday lives. There is in a sense a reciprocal relationship between dwelling in the world and a hermeneutic of love – the ability to dwell in the world is an integral part of obeying the law of love. Helland and Halmarson (2011:loc. 284) made this the core of their understanding of missional spirituality when they described missional spirituality

as 'an attentive and active engagement of embodied love for God and neighbour' (Helland & Halmarson 2011:n.p.).[13]

Dwelling in the world assists a congregation to experience a new awareness of God's presence in the everyday. It refocuses congregational life on the work of the Holy Spirit and to discern the importance of an incarnational lifestyle. It orientates faith. As Bass (2015:63) puts it, '[f]inding God in the dirt allows us to experience faith in new ways'.

☐ What does God want to do?

The second question implies God's continued action and involvement. To exist is to have a future, God's future. Conradie (2015:176) says it invites a prospective dimension to a Christian's understanding of God's actions. The *Missio Dei* expresses something of hope for God's future actions, based on God's covenant faithfulness, God's trustworthiness and God's loyalty to what God created. God was busy, is still involved and will be active in his creation, and constantly invites his people to participate in what he is up to and what might flow from the future. Conradie (2015) puts it eloquently:

> God is pulling the world towards Godself from the future. God is calling the world to come home. God calls us from ahead, inviting the whole household to gather in God's presence, to become a home for all God's creatures large and small. (p. 218)

'What does God want to do?' places us in God's future and compels missional leaders to attend to God's preferred future.

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13. Haught also suggests the approach of understanding God as a God of love. Conradie (2015:199) summarises Haught's approach: 'A God of love offer [*sic*] the best available way to fathom the mystery of the world and, more specifically, to do justice to the interplay between indeterminacy, creativity and the apparent aimlessness associated with biological evolution.' He suggests that if the origin and destiny of the world lie in the hands of a God of love, one would expect the world to function more or less as it does. This God is not an almighty tyrant who manipulates everything according to a preconceived plan. Instead, this is a God who makes room (not empty space) for others, for the whole household to attend to multiple tasks simultaneously (see Haught 2000:113–114).

The two questions ('what is God doing?' and 'what does God want to do?') build on a basic structure of Christian faith, as Moltmann (2010:loc. 853–854) explains; it makes present the Christ who has come, and anticipates the Christ who will come,and between the times it makes new creations of human beings in Christ's presence. The focus of the first movement in discernment (dwelling in the Word and world) is on what God is doing, and the aim of the second discernment is to establish the sense of direction of God's engagement. Moltmann (2010:loc. 2995–2997) refers to God's future as a participatory eternity, in which earthly life is taken up into the divine life, and yet, though in God, still remains over against God.

The link between the two questions is that (1) it is only in discerning what God is doing that one can ask what God wants to do and (2) what his preferred future might be. Conradie (2015:184) calls this a particular kind of 'retrospective logic'.

The biblical narratives contain many stories that can only be retrospectively interpreted as a witness of God's involvement in history (i.e. Joseph being sold in slavery, the Israelites escaping from Egypt, the fall of Jerusalem, the events in Jerusalem after the resurrection of Christ through the eyes of the travellers to Emmaus). As Conradie (2015) explains:

> The Christian experience of salvation is typically one of already having been rescued from a predicament. It is therefore one of being grateful for what has happened and of living out the implications of that sense of gratitude. It is only later, in a moment of reflection, that one may recall what has happened and may seek to make sense of it. Yet, such retrospection is itself causally efficient. In our testifying to God's activity in the world, the world is being transformed in anticipation of what is to come. (pp. 183–184)

■ Habits and practices for dwelling in the world
□ Praying the newspaper

The community pages through local newspapers ask the question, 'what is God up to?' This is concluded with a prayer for whatever becomes part of the shared consciousness.

☐ Discernment by meeting in vulnerable spaces or places of concern

Conduct leadership meetings outside the normal space. Conduct the meeting in a vulnerable space or one of the outreach places of the congregation. De Beer (2016:n.p.) argues that leadership formation must be 'actively and organically emerging from, and in dialogue and collaboration with, local community, neighbourhood and church struggles; but also expressions of church and faith we have not yet seen'.

☐ Community questions

The congregations do not exist for the sake of the congregation, but for the world and the community the church finds itself in. This implies different questions when leadership gathers, such as 'what is God up to in our community?' or 'how can we become part of what God is busy doing in our city?' Another question can be, 'what is the kind of questions the world addresses to the church?'

☐ Prayer walks

'Intentionally walk your [neighbourhood] inviting God to help you see your place with God's eyes. What signs of life, redemption, creativity, unity, and love' can be seen? (Sparks, Soerens & Friesen 2014:33). Allow the space to embrace you, and become aware of the heartbeat of the place. Pray for the community, the public spaces and the transformation of the place.

☐ Networking for the sake of the community

Sparks et al. (2014:174) refer to 'curating strategic connections'. How might you help mobilise your friends and neighbours around renewal opportunities? The groundbreaking work of *Cinnamon Network* might serve as an example. One of the core values of this organisation is '[r]elationships – We value trust-based relationships and partnerships as the basis for successful working' (Cinnamon Network n.d.:n.p.).

☐ Randomising rituals

These rituals must guide communities to transcend boundaries, 'and to practice activities that will allow [members] to step into unfamiliar environments' (Niemandt 2016b:19). Sweet (2010: 97–98 as cited in Niemandt 2016b) mentions:

> '[R]andomizing rituals' to assist a leader in transcending boundaries, and to practice activities that will allow a leader to step into unfamiliar environments. A typical 'random ritual' is to make a choice to join the table of strangers at a conference or function and to open one up for interaction with strangers. (p. 19)

☐ Be a stranger

Be a stranger. Travel and be dependent on the hospitality of others. An African proverb says, 'one who is not travelled thinks his mother cooks best' (Ngaruiya 2017:loc. 1247).

Dump the well-known routines of normality and make time to take a look at your community with the eyes of a stranger. What do you see? 'What is God up to in our neighbourhoods and communities?' (Niemandt 2012b:10).

Dwelling in the Word and world is an integral part of missional discernment. It also reminds church leaders that missional discernment does not start with the church, but with the Word of God and the context. Roxburgh (2011:45) is adamant that questions about the church cannot be the starting point because the church is not the central point of the missional discourse.

Missional leadership: Transforming stories

■ The power of story

Story is the key to understanding humanity and humanity's understanding of life and self. We identify and remember by way of stories. Rasmussen (in Conradie 2015:102) says, 'we are incorrigibly cosmic storytellers'. We attempt to make sense of ultimate reality by way of narrative. 'It is in the art of storytelling', explains Conradie (2015:115), 'that the key to human knowledge resides'. That is why even scientists are becoming storytellers. The cosmos itself is a narrative, a great adventure (Conradie 2015:119). We cannot name the infinite, and although one may name an event, that would be to take a snapshot of a bird in flight. We need a narrative to honour the rich complexity that a reconstructed story allows (Conradie 2015:110). He (Conradie 2015) explains:

> Like any good biography, the story of the triune God's actions does give us a glimpse into the heart of God, even though the life of a person would always entail more than what any biographer could do justice to. (p. 110)

The acting of the Trinity in history has a narrative structure, and the observation that God creates history implies that God's mission, God's engagement in history, has a narrative structure (Conradie 2015:113).[14] This explains why narrative is the primary *genre* of biblical witness.

The Gutenberg era thrived on stories. Millions and millions of stories were streaming from printing presses and told in the pages of books and newspapers. Gutenbergers *read* stories. The Google generation *inhabit* stories – computer games and virtual reality allow stories to take on a new dimension. Social media is a platform to experience personal stories in photos (Instagram), videos (YouTube), brief narratives (Twitter) and face-to-face narratives (Facebook). It is all about the story – narrative has become one of the most valuable commodities in the digital world. Helland and Hjalmarson (2011:loc. 149) describe postmodern society as image-based, with visual language through stories, symbols, logos, conversation, metaphors and pictures shaping our lives'.

Stories are crucial for human interaction – not only in individual lives, but even more so in the case of families, communities and organisations. All of these are fundamentally shaped by communal narratives and metaphors. Metaphors form and fashion our faith. Conradie (2015:155) explains that 'metaphors are signs that are employed to highlight connotations by seeing something in the light of something else'.

Deep change in the culture of these systems demands powerful narratives and imaginative language. The metaphor explains something in the light of well-known phenomena and ignites imagination. Metaphor, says Conradie (2015:155), invites us to

14. Conradie (2015:247–248) tells the story of God's house-holding as a story with seven chapters. The Triune God's resolve to create 'in the beginning', 'out of nothing'; God's presence in the evolutionary history of the universe and of the earth itself; God's involvement in the emergence of the human species on the scene; God's continued providential care for creation to restrain the impact of sin in the world, to protect (*conservation*); God's acts of salvation in the history of Israel, through the work of Jesus Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit; the work of the Holy Spirit in the formation of Christian communities; and the expected completion, fulfilment or consummation of God's work.

imagine, to live as if, to entertain a novel possibility, which initially both shocks and intrigues. Metaphor enables one to see something in the light of something else, and 'root metaphors' are metaphors with staying power and the ability to continuously illuminate an issue. Cultural change demands vivid and strong metaphors.

Heath and Heath (2011:loc. 3602–3603) observe that 'every culture, whether national or organisational, is shaped powerfully by its language'. Senge (1990:346) is well known for his organic approach to leadership. He emphasises the important role of stories in the growth and development of any organisation. Leaders must tell stories that consolidate the dreams and ideas in the organisation. Senge (1990:346) refers to the stories narrated by leaders as 'the overarching explanation of why they do what they do, how their organization needs to evolve, and how that evolution is part of something larger'.

The same applies to the church. Faith demands metaphor – and transformational faith needs the power of metaphor to move people, congregations and whole systems into a new orbit. A missional ecclesiology demands a new story. The best response to the challenges in a complex world is to tell the stories of the church. To be human and a follower of Jesus is to know the story you are in and to be able to 'edit narratives with the pen of complex, sense-making minds' (Sweet 2012a:98). In a certain sense, the whole enterprise of Christian theology is about storytelling. Conradie (2015:111) described theology as retelling, retrieving, reinterpreting and re-enacting the integral story of God's creative, nourishing, hurt, enduring, salvific, innovating and consummating love for the world which God has brought into being. [15] Theology demands metaphors and processes to discern and receive root metaphors.

Hirsch and Ferguson (2011:loc. 1343–1344) state the importance of narrative in the church. Compelling narratives lie at the heart of any understanding of the church. These narratives invite others to join and take a role in the broader unfolding narrative.

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15. See Conradie's beautiful 'retelling' of the story of the cosmos – Conradie (2015:117–121).

Leaders are storytellers. They know that stories make life possible. It shapes and gives meaning to reality. Each person lives in a particular story, explaining how life works and what life is about. We cannot understand ourselves or even our humanity without stories. Stories shape and determine our identity. Hirsch and Ferguson (2011:loc. 1283–1284) state that metaphors and stories not only speak to the mind but also capture the heart, mind and will all at once. This is why people are instinctively fond of stories. They recognise themselves in life's unfolding drama. 'Leaders use language to help give meaning to unfolding events' and to facilitate change (Niemandt 2015b:7).

Missional leadership is about transformation and transformational stories. The *Missio Dei* has a narrative structure. Transformation begins with narratives. Missional leaders must connect the stories of God's people with biblical narratives because narratives shape and form reality and reflect people's deepest convictions (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:69). Missional transformation is only possible when the community of disciples can imagine God's future by finding themselves in a new narrative. Story shows the way. Narrative directs the journey. 'To tell a story is not to represent the world', says Conradie (2015:114), 'but to trace a path through the world that others can follow'. Missional congregations grow from the interplay between the Christian narrative found in scriptures and interpreted by tradition, and the 'listening interaction with the narratives of the people in their community' (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:73).

Missional identity is intertwined with the understanding of the shape of Scripture as narrative. Goheen (2016:10) argues that a missional reading of Scripture takes the longitudinal themes in Scripture and the message of the entire canon seriously. There is a new appreciation for the storied nature of the entire biblical canon. Missional leaders function in the interface between a narrative-prone context and a narrative-shaped tradition, and needs to appreciate the power of narrative to form and shape human behaviour.

Cordier and Niemandt (2015a) conducted extensive research into congregational transformation in South Africa and found that the congregational leader (minister or pastor) is:

> [R]esponsible for cultivating [a] missional language and dream in such a way that the congregation buys into it and that it becomes part and parcel of the identity and ministry of the congregation. (p. 6)

There is no missional transformation without a new missional language, and the formation of missional language is one of the most important factors in creating a missional culture (Cordier 2014:200). One of the most powerful ways of creating missional language is through narrative and metaphor.

Missional leaders are the first followers who understood the gospel story and are able to re-tell it in a new context. They live in the biblical narratives and shape their lives and the community of disciples in terms of these stories to construct new language houses.

■ Social imaginary and language house

The importance of language and narrative can be explained in terms of the function of social imaginary in congregational and church life. Taylor (2004:23) coined the idea of social imaginary. Social imaginary is about the way people see their lives in relation to others. How do people organise mutual flows of relationships and expectations? What are the deepest norms that determine these expectations? Social imaginary is how a particular social system makes sense of life and the values, 'institutions, laws, and [symbols] through which people imagine their social whole' (Scheg & Shaw 2018:274). Social imaginary is transmitted by language, especially through stories. Branson (2007:96) explains that social imaginary is shaped by traditions, narratives and images. This social imaginary gives us interpretive access to concepts concerning blessings, hope, fears, identity and agency.

Conradie (2015) explains:

> [*T*]hat stories do not only form part of one's cultural heritage. [*We*] live within the symbolic 'world' created by certain paradigmatic stories. [*These*] stories construct a habitable world, a frame of reference which enables people to orientate themselves and to cope with life and its many demands. (p. 127)

This is very similar to Senge's (1990:346) description of 'mental models: the images, assumptions and stories we have [in] our [minds of] ourselves, other people, institutions, and every other aspect of reality'. These are determined by stories as 'the overarching explanation of why they do what they do, how their organization needs to evolve, and how that evolution is part of something larger' (Senge 1990:346). Old Testament scholar Brueggemann refers to 'language houses' (see also Branson 2007:97). We all live in complex language houses. The language house is formed by social imaginary – 'a community's imagination, its stories and practises [*sic*], its history and expectations – these are created and carried by words that interpret everything' (Branson 2007:95; Roxburgh 2011:61). We are affective, imaginative creatures, shaped by stories and the idea of what constitutes our reality (language house). The metaphor of a home refers to the fact that our home shapes our identities and sense of life; similarly, the idea of a 'language house' shapes the ways in which we live, understand how the world works and act within social institutions (like the church) (Roxburgh 2011:61).

Smith (2009) explains that:

> [*O*]ur ultimate love is oriented by and to a picture of what we think it looks like for us to live well, and that picture then governs, shapes, and motivates our decisions and actions. (loc. 853–854)

People and institutions, including congregations, live within these 'pictures' or complex linguistic houses. Language is what opens this world and renders it accessible. According to Smith (2009:53), this world, or 'pictures are communicated most powerfully in stories, legends, myths, plays, novels, and films rather than dissertations, messages, and monographs'. This is exactly why

narratives are so powerful. Transformation happens not when our minds are captivated or reason convinces us, but when our imaginations are captured. When 'our imagination is hooked, *we're hooked*' (Smith 2009:loc. 870–871).

In the case of the church, Scripture, tradition and context together form a 'language house' that shapes the realities and imagination of congregational life. Scripture and tradition function as a mirror, helping us to pinpoint blind spots and to discover new possibilities. Scripture and tradition also serve as lenses that focus on the imagination and the Triune God's preferred future for the church and congregation.

A missional church that faithfully reflects the nature of God's missional vocation in our context, being faithfully present, needs a radically different language house and social imaginary (Roxburgh 2011:66). Missional leaders construct new and imaginative language houses that enable congregations to inhabit God's preferred future. This is done by reconnecting with the social imaginaries found in the biblical narratives. Although the default position of many in the church is to attempt to encounter God through universal principles, formulae, visions and values, the power of story and the impact of social imaginaries show that missional transformation is effected through the concrete, grounded stories of God's life in the ordinary (Roxburgh 2011:72).

■ Leaders lead by gathering and telling stories

Sweet (2011:loc. 1144–1145) is convinced that the power of the Word to move people from mere religiosity to full-life immersion is not found in the words themselves, 'it's in the images, the stories, the music of Scripture'.

Missional leaders lead by gathering, telling and reframing stories. They also appreciate the compelling need of a new story, a new imagination that invites God's preferred future into the

current situation to renew it and to bring life into fullness. Leaders construct language houses. Leaders tell stories to teach the world a new way to be human.

■ Narraphor

Narraphor brings together the concepts of language house and social imaginary and creates an avenue to understand new possibilities of language applicable in the missional discourse. Conradie (2015:154) explains the ability of humankind to name the transcendent. He (Conradie 2013a:48) says that 'one of the distinguishing characteristics of the human species is its ability to use signs to refer to something that is not immediately present'. Humankind is a symbol-making and symbol-carrying species – a symbol-using and a symbol-misusing species. With this in mind, the importance of narrative and metaphors, and narraphor, is evident.

Sweet (2014:27, in Hurt 2015:n.p.) coined the concept narraphor and describes it as follows:

> At the core of who we are, we crave a narraphor. A narraphor is a story made with metaphors that help us understand the world, ourselves, each other and our community. (n.p.)

Narraphor is a combination of narrative and metaphor. While metaphor compares two different things or ideas to make a point, narrative deals with storytelling. Metaphors allow leaders to draw a picture of possibilities. Stories are extended metaphors and rely on metaphor. Metaphors pop up in narratives. Narraphor, as a combination of two of the most potent linguistic tools, provides new configurations and conceptual building blocks to construct language houses. Narraphor is a creative mixture of concepts, of metaphor and narrative, and of word image and story. It is a juxtaposition of story and symbol. Narraphor is broader than the constituent parts and creates a broad storyboard upon which the new language can grow and capture imaginations. The concept of narraphors sensitises missional leaders about the importance of stories and metaphors, and underscores the importance of

utilising narraphor in the construction of new social imaginaries (language houses).

In addition to narrative and narraphor, one may use other metaphors to explain something of God's mission and to give a glimpse of God's acts in history. Some refer to a theodrama (Vanhoozer 2005). Conradie (2015) suggest an opera – an *opera trinitatis*:

> [/]nvolving choruses, drama, choreography and participation from the crowd – who may not be virtuosi but can appreciate the music and may be invited to sing along and to dance in the streets. (p. 116)

Missional leaders appreciate the power of narrative, the narrative structure of the *Missio Dei*, and the importance of a beautiful story (*poiesis*) to help the follower see (or hear) a new language house. Leaders must be able to discern stories; they must be 'story catchers' – or, even better, master weavers – capable of plaiting the scriptural narrative, local stories (stories of place) and the personal stories of followers together in a new, life-giving braid. 'The key to innovating missional community', argue Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006:71), 'is formation of a people with a specific memory and narrative'. The purpose of telling the story is to find our place and our vocation within this story.

Missional leadership: Imagination and innovation

The concepts of social imaginary and language house, and the art of storytelling are closely related to a biblical imagination. In terms of congregational discernment, this entails a process of living in, understanding and describing God's preferred future for the congregation by way of narrative and by being informed by biblical narratives. Missional leadership not only has a relational and interpretive focus, but it also entails *implemental* leadership. 'Implemental leadership', says Branson (2007:122), 'attends to structures, activities, resources, and responsibilities in order to give meanings and relationships the necessary avenues for embodiment, equipping, expression, organization, and endurance'. This necessitates creativity and innovation.

■ Creativity

The work of the Spirit is characterised by creativity and novelty. The church is, in a certain sense, a surprise sprung by the Spirit

on the world. Just when all hope seemed to have been lost, the Spirit calls the church together to ignite a new flame of hope and life. There is matchless creativity visible in the work of God's uncontrollable Spirit. The Word is creative and life-giving, and the gospel adapts and forms in the most creative ways to find a way. Flemming (2013) states:

> The good news, by its very nature, crosses boundaries. It resists any single, standardized cultural expression. The Spirit leads the church on a journey into new ways of articulating the faith, as it encounters new circumstances. (p. 156)

'To be incarnational, [the church has] to cross boundaries, break down social constructionist symbolic fences and barriers, and build bridges that create the possibility of open communication and interaction' (Niemandt 2017:4). This underscores the importance of creativity. Creativity and imagination are two of humankind's most treasured resources. Haight (2014:loc. 2729–2730) understands creativity as one of the basic characteristics of being human; 'human beings cannot understand or think about reality without an accompanying imagination'. Missional leadership, in particular, demands creativity.

This creativity is more than acquired knowledge or new patterns of thinking. It is first and foremost a gift of the Spirit. The Spirit is the origin of creative leadership. Guder (2015:102) reminds us that the work of the Holy Spirit opens up possibilities of receiving 'entirely new presuppositions for our thinking, presuppositions that emerge out of the gospel'. Faithful presence and missional movement are only possible through the creative, boundary-breaking power of the Spirit. The Spirit gifts God's people with new ideas, a new imagination of God's preferred future and new possibilities for the church and creation.

The mere fact that 'missional leadership is about [the] transformation of people and institutions' reminds us that *transformation* is closely associated with *imagination* (Niemandt 2016b:1). Leaders must see or hear God's preferred future to be able to lead people (to follow) God's preferred future.

Leaders must discern, understand and live God's preferred future. A biblically formed and informed imagination enables missional leaders to tell an alternative story about God's future. It opens our eyes to see God's mission as Jesus saw it.

The WCC (2013:66) states in *Together Towards Life* that 'Today's changed world calls for local congregations to take new initiatives'. The church must cross cultural and racial boundaries, develop global connections and 'embrace exciting opportunities for contextual expressions of intercultural mission' (CWME 2012:27).

■ Complexity demands novelty

We live in a changed, complex world, a world that is moving beyond leadership to inspiration (Scharmer 2009:loc. 1347). Haight (2014:loc. 752–753) observes that the universe is moving not only by expansion but also by complexification and the generation of novelty. This is equally true for complex systems such as the missional church. The complex nature of the missional church has been explained in Chapter 7. The church is a complex emergent system. It is made up of complex networks of relationships and interactions. The relationship between the church and context is complex and unpredictable, and both influence each other. The Spirit is unpredictable and constantly surprises the church. The implications of the church as a complex organism are vast because, as Haight (2014:loc. 761–762) explains, the future is not simply unknown; it is open to change, 'more than one alternative is open, and there is some opportunity for unpredictable novelty'. The story in which the church finds itself is an open-ended story. The story of creation, says Conradie (2015:113), 'is an open-ended story of God's economy, of God's mission, of God's house-holding, of God's loving engagement with this household, including God's love for this earth'. Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006:146) argue that this context demands a special kind of thinking from leaders, a kind of thinking that is outside the box, intuitive and unexpected according to accepted wisdom.

Plowman et al. (2007) suggest three mechanisms for leaders to use in complex systems:

1. '[*L*]eaders disrupt existing patterns'.
2. Leaders 'encourage novelty'.
3. They act as sense-makers. (p. 347)

The *encouragement of novelty* is especially relevant in this section of the reflection on missional leadership.[16]

According to Niemandt (2015b):

> Plowman et al. (2007:347) [*describe*] the difference between 'complex leaders' and 'traditional leaders' in terms of risk-taking and innovation: Traditional leaders operate as controllers, by leading through command-and-control. They believe in the importance of a vision and the importance of communicating a clear vision. Complex leaders encourage innovation, establish simple rules and act as enablers of emergent self-organisation by encouraging innovation.[17] Leaders must be revolutionaries in the strategy-making process (Ungerer 2009:23). (p. 5)

Plowman et al. (2007) describe it as a paradoxical leadership approach:

> On the one hand, the leaders tried to do what they thought 'good' leaders would do – articulate a vision and get others to buy into it. On the other hand, with something of a *laissez faire* attitude, they encouraged church members who had an interest in a particular program or ministry to get together with others sharing that interest and to try it. (p. 350)

Niemandt (2015b) discusses how:

> Creativity and imagination are closely linked to the work of the Spirit, and a lack of creativity indicates a reduced understanding of God, as well as an underestimation of the unpredictability of the Spirit's presence (Niemandt 2012a:7). This calls for the reactivation of our underutilised imaginations, for imagination

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16. The section on complex leadership draws heavily (and often verbatim) on Niemandt (2015b).

17. Also note the remark by Sweet (2012a:40): 'The more complex life becomes, the more simple we need to make it. This is the fundamental principle of complexity science: that complexity in the world derives from simple generative rules and regularities. The universe is a marvellously complex system arising from splendid simplicities. Hence the key to navigating complexity is simplicity.'

empowers us to see differently. The imagination enables us to see alternatives – a much-needed skill in the new, globalised world – a world in which a new age of creativity has dawned. This seeming 'chaos of cultural change' is actually […] a God-given space for creative innovation, acknowledging that the church is summoned by God to discern a pattern for living the [*gospel that is appropriate for our creative age*]. (p. 5)

This new age of creativity does not necessarily demand detailed analysis, but rather big-picture thinking, systemic approaches, non-linear dynamics and synthesis (Niemandt 2012a:15).

This imagination of communion means to live, understand and describe God's preferred future. It is the kind of imagination that enables a leader to tell an alternative story about the new possibilities already present where the Spirit is working (Niemandt 2012a:14).

According to the contributors to 'The role of leadership in emergent self-organization', three phenomena encourage innovation:

• the establishment of a few simple rules
• swarm behaviour
• the promotion of non-linear interactions and emotional connections.

In terms of the establishment of a few simple rules, there must be clarity on core issues, but there may be ambiguity in terms of the rules as to how to achieve them. Plowman et al. (2007:350) conclude, 'what we saw was a tenacious rigidity about the principle, and complete flexibility about how to go about carrying out the principle'.

This is more or less the same approach as explained in terms of the role of values, and the metaphor of a fountain of waterhole in the Kruger Park. The waterhole is a natural centre where animals come and go, and serves as a point of reference and a life-giving centre for a variety of fauna and flora. Simple rules focus on life in an environment and provide a gathering point for complex living organisms (Niemandt 2015b):

The 'second is what they call "swarm behaviour of membership and staff"' (Plowman et al. 2007:351). They refer to the 'swarm intelligence' found in social insects such as bees, termites, and ants and found that it is also observable in organisations, when complex collective behaviour emerges from individuals who follow simple rules. The implication is that people in organisations can solve difficult problems [(*such as missional re-imagination of the church*)] even though each local interaction might be very simple. Niemandt (2012a:7) [*argues*] that missional leadership recognises that multiple perspectives and talents are needed to solve the challenges the organisation faces. Leadership is a team function – Osmer (2008:26) argues a strong case for collaborative leadership. Wheatley and Frieze (2011:16) emphasise a style of leadership in a complex world where the leader provides conditions and good group processes for people to work together. Missional authority does not focus on the individual, but on the faith community and their collective participation in the process of faithful distinction.

The third element in terms of the encouragement of innovation is the promotion of non-linear interactions and emotional connections amongst people. Innovations demand rich and meaningful interactions that prepare the terrain for unexpected and mutually supportive outcomes (Lichtenstein & Plowman 2009:623). Complex systems thrive on relationships. (Joubert 2013:125). Innovation flourishes in healthy relationships and gives birth to novelty and creativity – anything that enhances interaction will enhance the potential creativity of the system'. (p. 6)

Heimans and Timms (2014) argue that the case for a collaborative approach is to:

[*R*]einforce the human instinct to cooperate (rather than compete) by rewarding those who share their own ideas, spread those of others, or build on existing ideas to make them better. (n.p.)

Niemandt (2015b) observed that:

Breedt and Niemandt (2013:4, [*8*]) state in clear terms: 'If leadership is about anything, it is about relationships [...] Relationships are not something the church does. Relationships are what faith is'. They say that 'effective leadership has to do with the ability of the leader to create positive relationships within an organisation.' Relationships have the power to unleash the potential of the individual *together* with that of the organisation. (p. 6)

The best interpretation of the concepts of non-linear interactions and emotional connections among people in terms of the missional church is to describe it as a community of love.

■ Biblical imagination

Leaders spark imagination. When missional leadership was defined as the transformation of people and institutions by means of meaningful relations to participate in God's mission, the spotlight fell on the whole issue of transformation. Missional leadership is all about transformation, new dreams and change. Leaders help people to transform and to realise possibilities and dreams. According to Niemandt (2012b):

> Mission demands a transformative spirituality, a pneumatological approach to mission that exceeds and subverts our theological and ecclesiological boundaries. This is only possible if missional leadership is enriched by a biblical imagination. (p. 14)

Missional leaders must 'cultivate an environment within which God's people discern God's' work amongst themselves and the communities they find themselves in (Cooke 2013:125). This necessitates imaginative discernment (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:17).

'Discernment is a communion imagination that participates in the movement of the Spirit in the world. Communion imagination is closely associated with *poiesis* – imaginative creation and beauty' (Niemandt 2012a:7). Keifert (2017:193) describes *poiesis* as productive Christian creativity. This is found in liturgy and the Christian assembly, and by dwelling in the Word, imagination grows in the mutual interpretation of Word and world.

Niemandt (2012b) says:

> We must appreciate the role of aesthetics and develop ways of factoring artistic and emotional beauty into the understanding of church. This [*communion*] imagination [*is*] to live, understand and describe God's preferred future. It is the kind of imagination that enables a leader to tell an alternative story about the new possibilities already present where the Spirit is working. (p. 14)

Here the 'direction of the eye needs to be guided by the ear' (Conradie 2016:181). It is a kind of discernment of the work of the Spirit, but within a narrative structure. Conradie (2015:114) explains it as 'storied knowledge' that retraces a path through the terrain of lived experience – it is an imaginative retelling of the story so that others can follow the path traced through the world.

According to Niemandt (2012b):

> The church lives in a dialectical tension – at once remembering the past (crucifixion) and proclaiming the future (resurrection).[18] Just as Jesus Christ embodied this dialectical, eschatological reality, the church embodies the same reality. Communal discerning brings a new appreciation for the work of the Spirit. (p. 14)

According to Niemandt (2012b):

> It is the Spirit that brings life, creativity, and inspirational courage to his people while at the same time requiring intuition, risk, responsiveness, and flexibility from us (Hirsch & Ferguson 2011:loc. 1377–1380).

> Creative leadership, orientated [*from God's*] future, is an innovative way to participate in God's continuing creation and recreation and a profound way to recognise the fact that being human is being *imago Dei* – an imaginative expression of God. Missional imagination understands that the Spirit is already creatively [...] at work and joins in with the Spirit. It's because of this that reframing the central paradigm of church is one of the keys to change and much-needed innovation. This calls for the reactivation of our underutilised imaginations. Imagination enables us to see differently. The imagination enables us to see alternatives and possibilities, [*to tell different stories – a*] much-needed skill in the flat world – a world where a new age of creativity dawned.

> The chaos of cultural change is a God-given space for creative innovation; acknowledging that the church is summoned by God to discern a pattern for living the gospel that is appropriate for our creative age. This new age of creativity does not necessarily demand detailed analysis but rather big-picture thinking, systemic approaches, [*non-linear*] dynamics, [*storytelling*] and synthesis. It involves the

18. This shows a remarkable resemblance with Scharmer (2009:loc. 389–391): 'Having spent the last 10 years of my professional career in the field of organizational learning, my most important insight has been that there are two different sources of learning: learning from the experiences of the past and learning from the future as it emerges'.

ability to put together seemingly disparate pieces of information, to see relationships between seemingly unrelated fields, to detect broad patterns rather than [*deliver specific*] answers, and to invent something new by combining elements no one else [*thinks*] to pair (Hirsch & Ferguson 2011:loc. 1349–1353). (pp. 14–15)

Scharmer (2009) also argued the need for a new imagination:

The primary job of leadership, I have come to believe […], is to enhance the individual and systemic capacity to see, to deeply attend to the reality that people face and enact. Thus the leader's real work is to help people discover the power of seeing and seeing together. (p. 136)

This new imagination is informed by the future. Scharmer and Kaufer (2013:loc. 51–52) say 'presencing an emerging future possibility is at the core of all deep leadership work today'. It is building the aeroplane while you are flying it (Niemandt 2013a:95).

From a Christian perspective, one can say that missional leadership is participating in God's future – as it is emerging. It is a participatory eschatology. It is a kind of imagination that is forward-looking, linked with hope and expecting the in-breaking of God's kingdom in this reality. This is what Moltmann typified as a *signum prognosticon* – a sign that looks forward to the coming glory. For Moltmann, Christian faith has the structure of looking towards the past and the future, describing how 'it makes present the Christ who has come, and anticipates the Christ who will come, and between the times it makes new creations of human beings in Christ's presence' (Moltmann 2010:loc. 851–855). A participatory eschatology highlights the awareness that the living Lord offers us a new future and invites us to participate in it. We need to open our hearts and minds to receive this gift and to participate in the *Missio Dei* to realise God's future. This means that we cannot imagine the future in a linear, flat fashion. Mclaren (2010) describes an alternative way to understand the emerging future:

Suddenly we find ourselves not in a one-dimensional determined universe with a fixed future, but in a deep, expanding universe with a future full of widening possibilities. At every moment, creation continues to unfold, liberation continues to unshackle us, and the peaceable kingdom continues to expand with new hope and promise. (p. 260)

A participatory eschatology reminds us that God's future is a future where God invites us to participate in his future, and thus in the unfolding and creation of this future.

■ Creating a culture of innovation and biblical imagination

Missional leaders create a culture of innovation and biblical imagination by attending to the following.

■ Flat open structures

Creativity flourishes in open, flat structures where there are little or no hierarchal limitations and where input is not evaluated in terms of position or power. Some refer to open platforms or fishnet-structures that are activated to attend to a particular challenge, but without a permanent horizon.

■ Embracing liminality

Flemming (2004:99) argues that 'ambiguity and uncertainty are not the enemies of leaders, but often their best friends'. Leaders do not fear liminality but understand uncertainty and liminality as birthplaces of a new future. This is particularly the case with creative innovation – which mostly starts in ambiguity. Innovation rarely happens spontaneously and is certainly not a congenital characteristic, but emerges from ambiguity and crisis situations. New combinations and possibilities grow at the crossroads of crisis and opportunity. Hirsch and Catchim (2012:190) mention the seemingly innate capacity of missional leaders to thrive in the face of ambiguity. This is extremely important, as innovation is saturated in ambiguity.

Embracing liminality is to appreciate 'both/and' thinking more than 'either/or'. This reminds me of Collins (1995) on visionary companies:

A truly visionary company embraces both ends of a continuum: continuity and change, conservatism and progressiveness, stability

and revolution, predictability and chaos, heritage and renewal, fundamentals and craziness. And, and, and. (n.p.)

Chaos often leads to recreation. Missional leaders appreciate 'chaordic' change and are able to discern the black swans that inaugurate new possibilities.

Sweet (2011) explains:

> The real method of invention is the bringing together of opposites. Every study of creativity ends at the same place: in a loop. The secret of creative thought is for the mind to go parabolic by juxtaposing difference. (p. 170)

Research in the *South African Partnership for Missional Churches* affirms the important capacity of missional leaders to cope with complexity and uncertainty. Research confirmed (Cordier & Niemandt 2015b):

> [*T*]hat leaders [*need*] openness, teachability, and the ability to change; as well as the ability to handle conflict, resistance, and criticism in a mature way. This is enhanced by the minister's ability to persevere with patience. (p. 6)

■ Spontaneity and improvisation

Vanhoozer (2005) describes theology as drama. Doctrine is not stale and immovable, but energetic and energising. The people of God play their part in a great divine story. He develops the metaphor in terms of drama, script, *dramaturge* and performance. This drama plays out best where there is an opportunity for improvisation, especially in the areas of dramaturge and performance (Vanhoozer 2005):

> The goal of both script and direction is to serve the drama: 'script and performance are equally necessary, though not equally authoritative. Biblical script without ecclesial performance is empty; ecclesial performance without biblical script is blind'. (p. 362)

For Vanhoozer (2005:115–241), the Bible is the script for a performance. Participants add content, interpretation and especially local flavour.

■ Playing and having fun

Play is an important part of missional leadership. Playing and having fun is conducive towards a creative environment, and creativity ignites missional innovation. Ungerer et al. (2013) underscore the importance of having fun in organisational renewal:

> In essence, having fun means getting over yourself – not being concerned about the impression you are making and whether 'they' are laughing at you or with you. In fact, smiling and laughter are the whole point of having fun. (p. 173)

We must acknowledge that the cosmic and the comic are intertwined and that the comic takes away the seriousness of the cosmic. According to Conradie (2015:30), the transcending humour of the divine comedy enables us to grasp in humility the earthly and earthy (*humus*) limits of our human experience. Smith (2009) also underlines the importance of play:

> We play because our God is good. Grace is sufficient for us. God wants us to be full of joy, and play is a way to experience the goodness of God and the richness of life. (pp. 47–49)

Play creates good connections and allows space for creativity and freedom of expression. For Hirsch and Ferguson (2011:loc. 1369), play is one of the major sources of innovation.

A poem by Leonard Sweet (Facebook n.d.) comes to mind:

> Fill my life with laughter, Lord,
>
> with things to smile about;
>
> with the ability to see the funny side of things,
>
> with the grace to take a joke and laugh at myself.
>
> Thank you for the greatest joke ever, the joke you played on Easter morning.
>
> Spare me from a finicky faith.
>
> When I look foolish, release in me good humour instead of a bad temper.
>
> May I share the good news with laughter on my lips.
>
> Fill me with the levity of mercy

when life bares its teeth or

when people curl their lips or

when facing an onslaught of unfairness.

For laughter 'suffereth long' and is kind.

May my community of faith be a community of laughter

that fears not the future but 'laughs at the time to come.'

May every wind turn to a gale of laughter which can carry me to a different place,

where the spirit of joy prevails in my heart,

where a cry for the hapless, the hopeless, and the humourless

become tears of resurrection triumph.

– Leonard Sweet (n.p.)

■ Holy dissatisfaction

Creativity blossoms when people share a holy dissatisfaction with the *status quo* and are pushed to search new solutions for the passivity in the system (Hirsch & Ferguson 2011:loc. 1319). This is a kind of prophetic restlessness. Blair et al. (2012:134) describe this as a kind of energising that stirs the shared imagination to see that there is a better way. Holy dissatisfaction draws energy from the fact that people long for change, and inspires hope that change is not simply possible, but inevitable. Holy dissatisfaction leads to a holy urgency. Churches become proactive and alert, and start to consider new solutions. They become a learning organisation – highly adaptive and responsive to the changing conditions around them (Frost & Hirsch 2011:loc. 587–590).

■ Allowing mistakes

Creative organisations allow and even celebrate experimentation and failure. There is no better way to learn than by trial and error. Where creativity flourishes, failures will blossom. This should not

deter missional leaders – the biggest mistake is to do nothing (Niemandt 2013a:160). Failure is mostly temporary and should not define the whole life of a leader. Cordier (2014:49), in his research into missional transformation in South Africa, also refers to the importance of creating an atmosphere of trust and granting leaders permission to take risks and make mistakes. A creative organisation does not only allow mistakes, but also celebrates mistakes to show appreciation for the innovative spirit.

■ A lively curiosity

Gibbs (2005:65, 168) appreciates the importance of lively curiosity and an interest in everything and regards such an attitude as indispensable in complexity. Leaders have a genuine interest in other people and what they think. Plowman et al. (2007:351) talk about the 'promotion of non-linear interactions and emotional connections amongst people'. Rather than listening to people to affirm their own preconceived ideas, leaders appreciate people who upset the applecart. Missional leadership is open to the ideas of people on the margin and strangers – a lively curiosity is actually part and parcel of an attitude that nurtures hospitality to strangers. We are dependent on strangers for the solutions emerging from God's preferred future.

■ Ideagraphers and imagination practitioners

Niemandt (2013a:106–107) calls on leaders to dream new dreams in the development of new prototypes or solutions. Martoia (2003:104) refers to 'ideagraphers' and underscores the vital importance of creativity in leadership – leaders must be catalysts and developers of new ideas. Ideagraphers and imagination practitioners understand the power of metaphor. Metaphor brings together diverse and sometimes opposite ideas and imagines new possibilities. When you change the metaphor, you ignite the imagination. People do not change because of dogma or propositions, but they change

when creative metaphor opens new possibilities. Imagination practitioners are able to transform the patterns of the past into a route-map towards the future.

■ Transformational credibility and social capital

Leaders entrusted with cultural transformation need transformational credibility and social capital. Cordier and Niemandt (2015a:6) describe this as 'the credibility to be trusted with the implementation of important changes'. Bevans and Schroeder (2011:31) refer to the mutual trust needed to build confidence in missional dialogue.

■ Intuition and creativity

Intuition is the heart of creativity. Imagination needs intuition, and leaders must trust their intuition. According to Hirsch and Ferguson (2011:loc. 888), intuition is the ability to visualise possibilities, to form images and ideas in the mind (especially of things never seen or never experienced directly), and to resolve problems while being guided by intuition.

We need intuition to grasp the fundamental religious ideas by which we make sense of ourselves, reality and the origin of all, or as Conradie (2015:105) explains, '[i]ntuition is our human way of handling the kind of complexity associated with infinite wholes'. Niemandt (2012b) takes this further, saying:

> Intuition is both a gift and a skill, improving over time if used and honed. It combines all the senses and different modes of perception in one movement: the rationality of breaking things down and analysing component parts, the imagination of putting the whole back together again, the semiotics of pattern recognition and assumption making, the discernment of the 'greater than in the sum of the parts of [a] whole [...]' (Sweet 2004:145). (p. 15)

Hirsch and Ferguson (2011:loc. 888–890) link imagination and the ability of leaders to solve problems with the non-linear logic of intuition and insight. They (Hirsch & Ferguson 2011:loc. 704–706)

cite Einstein, saying 'the intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift' (Pallister n.d.:n.p.).

■ The cycle of innovation[19]

The adaptation of the proposed cycle of innovation by Hirsch and Catchim (2012:197) might be fruitful (see Figure 9.1).
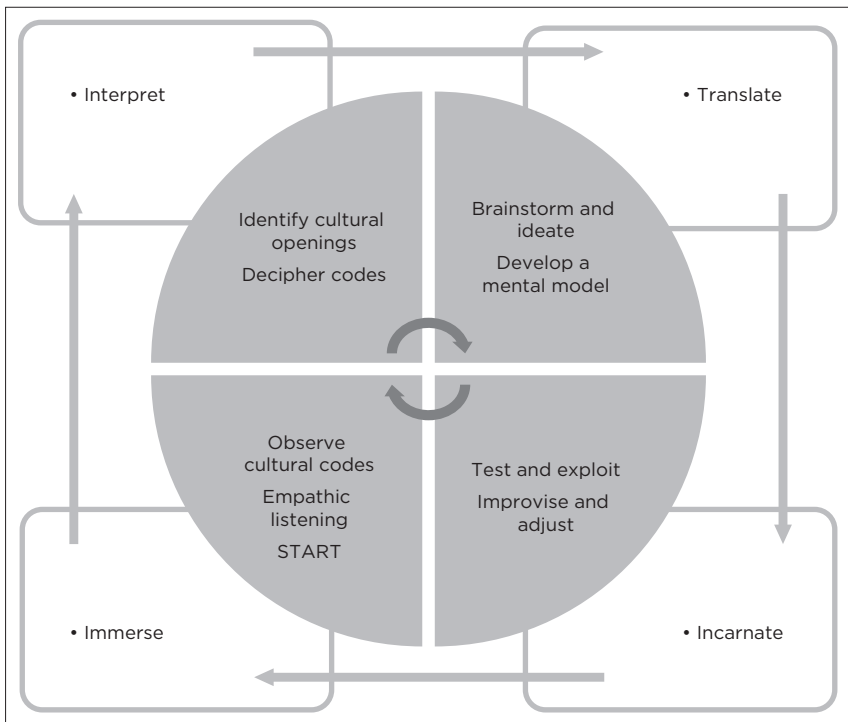
Source: Adapted from Hirsch and Catchim (2012:197)

FIGURE 9.1: The cycle of innovation.

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19. See Niemandt et al. (2018) for a comprehensive explanation and model of missional transformation.

■ Immerse (plunge)

Missional innovation starts with the plunge. This is more or less similar to the inculturation of the gospel in a new context. Hendriks (2013:828) explains 'plunging' as 'to cross [a] congregation's cultural boundaries, which includes conceptual and geographical boundaries'. It is to move from their own dominant culture into another culture, similar to jumping into the water. Everything is different – your movement, your context, your surroundings. Churches find this very threatening, as it is difficult to leave your familiar surroundings and embrace something totally strange or unfamiliar (see also Niemandt 2013a:110). Plunging requires empathic listening, a listening that is not focussed on solving problems, but rather the kind of empathic listening inferred in Scharmer's third movement of listening (see Ch. 7). This is listening as sensing (I-in-thou). This is listening with an open heart and the intention to connect directly and deeply to the other. It shifts perceptions to the story of the system or living being.

■ Interpretation

The next step in the cycle is interpretation. The information is interpreted in terms of cultural codes. This demands a curiosity that opens participants up for unexpected insights and opportunities. Osmer's (2008:4) well-known practical–theological questions help this cycle of interpretation:

- what is happening' (the first question)
- the hermeneutical question – 'why is this happening?' (the second question)
- the normative question – 'what ought to be happening?' (the third question)
- the strategic question – 'we do not know how to address the challenge?' (the fourth question).

■ Translation

Translation is a dynamic process that leads participants to a stage of dreaming and imagining new possibilities. This is the

opportunity to develop prototypes. Scharmer (2009:loc. 627–628) describes the importance of prototypes in terms of discerning the future, '[t]he key idea in prototyping strategic microcosms is to create a landing strip for the future'. The cycle of translation is the space where ideas are given breath and new dreams are dreamt. It is the birthplace of new plans and processes and the opportunity to develop prototypes. In terms of Scharmer's (2009:loc. 3376) explanation, translation means establishing a connection with the source (presencing) and clarifying the future that wants to emerge (crystallising), and now exploring the future by doing (prototyping) – 'prototyping is the first step in exploring the future through experimentation'.

■ Incarnation

The final stage of the cycle is incarnation. The new situation informs and moulds the leader's approach and plans. The preceding insights lead to a revised framework that supplies the necessary scaffolding for reconstructing the prototype into a model. New steps are implemented. The plan is translated into praxis, refined and optimised.

■ Innovation leads to experimentation

Creativity, novelty and innovation are not postures of practices for the sake of the novel itself, but must lead to experimentation and implementation – or incarnations (as has been explained in the cycle of innovation). The story must be told and then enacted. The script developed in the theodrama must be played out on the stage of the context.

Missional leadership: Disruption and leadership from the margins

◼ Disruptive leadership

Disruption is part and parcel of a VUCA world. Disruption is no longer a mere catchphrase; it impacts all aspects of leadership in unpredictable environments. Wheatley (2013:1) refers to distraction and argues that we live in a milieu or ecosystem of interruption technologies, a 'life of incessant connection but total distraction'.

A disruptive context raises the need for leadership in these circumstances. Van der Walt (2018) identifies the emergence of disruptive leadership as leaders that thrive and grow in disruption. Plowman et al. (2007:347) also identified the importance of leaders who disrupt existing patterns in situations of complexity. Disruption presents creative opportunities, will change concepts of leadership and should be embraced and received as a gift from the Holy Spirit.

Disruptive leaders do not lead from positional power, but from self-awareness. Missional leaders focus more on disturbance than on confirmation, and they expect to discern, learn and create better when they enjoy differences and welcome disturbance. The missional journey is a journey of dislocation, challenging all the preconceived ideas and even the very faith of missional leaders. It is a jump into the future…

■ Prophetic posture

A context of disruption necessitates new attention to prophetic leadership and a broad prophetic posture from all leaders. It is interesting that organisational scholars (Blair et al. 2012) recognise the importance of prophet-leadership in organisations. According to Westphal (2018), prophet-leaders can make a similar difference in today's complex society and leadership challenges as they did to communities in Old Testament times. Westphal (2018) argues:

> Organizational prophet-leaders are often people outside the official hierarchy who feel compelled to expose wrongs or draw attention to uncomfortable truths, because they believe this will serve the organization or community in the long run. (p. 1)

The work of Blair et al. (2012) gave extensive attention to the ancient metaphors of prophets, priests and kings, and applies it to modern leadership theory. They summarise the various roles in Table 10.1.

They propose that the typologies of prophet, priest and king, what they call the 'trioptic typology', represents an approach to organisational leadership that is ideally diffused throughout an organisation, allowing participants to perform different functions that correspond to these metaphors.

TABLE 10.1: Prophets, priests and kings in modern leadership theory.

Context	Prophet	Priest	King
Location in organisation or community	The margins	Between the margins and the centre	At or near the centre
Energies directed towards…	Disordering	Re-ordering	Ordering
Primary focus on…	The liminal	The landscape	The ligaments

Bevans and Schroeder (2011) played an essential role in the development of missional theology, especially in their groundbreaking work on mission as prophetic dialogue, entitled *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*. They focussed on mission as dialogue, prophecy and dialogue, and prophetic dialogue. There is a broad consensus that mission is dialogue. Mission demands a stance of openness, an attitude of respect, listening and teachability. The church listens before it speaks. Dialogue is a norm for Christian mission. But mission is also prophecy. Mission without the spirit of prophecy lacks direction and purpose. Bevans (2016:7) reminds us that mission is ultimately about sharing the good news of God's reign with the peoples of the world. The relationship between dialogue and prophecy is of profound importance. The basis is dialogue. However, dialogue is incomplete without prophecy. Hence, the focus of these missiologists is on the prophetic nature of mission. Yes, the relational aspect of mission is of utmost importance, and missional leadership is a relational enterprise. However, the relational aspect does not overshadow the prophetic nature of the gospel. Christians have a story to tell. Christian mission is about sharing the gospel – the good news of God's reign and the life-changing story of Jesus of Nazareth. The WCC (2012:155) states in its document *Mission from the Margins* 'that mission is not a mere narration of the story of salvation in Jesus Christ alone but prophetic utterances, speaking truth to powers and holding them accountable'. Dialogue is imbedded in prophecy, and the gospel is communicated by means of prophetic dialogue. Bevans (2016:9) describes this as a dance – prophetic dialogue is the dance that is mission. Sometimes, the rhythm of dialogue may set the pace, sometimes the rhythm of prophecy will take the lead – but the particular context will prescribe the kind of dance.

The church participates in the *Missio Dei* in many ways such as proclamation, healing, accompaniment, but certainly also in prophetic witness. The WCC (2012) explains:

> Through the prophetic task, we bear witness against systems, structures, norms, customs, practices, rituals, and conduct that deny the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of all people. (p. 160)

The prominence of a prophetic approach allows further investigation into the contribution of a prophetic posture to the understanding of missional leadership.

With this in mind, the four primary functions of prophets, as identified by Blair et al. (2012), are applied to enhance the insights into prophetic leadership, which include criticise, energise, translate and reconcile.

Prophets *criticise*. They are positioned at or in the margins of a community and speak into it with the intention of facilitating transformative change. Prophets are change agents. They critique the *status quo* – Brueggemann (2001:3) argued that the 'task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us'. Prophets invite the whole system to a new, better future and warn about the deathly nature of remaining loyal to old, well-known ways.

Prophets *energise* the system. This is the imaginative function of leadership. They act as agents of change in a way that brings hope to the situation and embody the possibility of new solutions. They stir up desire and determination to implement change.

The position of prophets at or in the margins of society allows them to function in the borderline and to facilitate those on each side of the boundaries to understand each other. The *translating* function uses language, symbols, images and other forms of imaginative communication to facilitate communication. Blair et al. (2012:134–135) suggest three ways of speaking at the borderline, namely, speaking the world's truth to the organisation or community, speaking on behalf of the organisation or community to the world and speaking to both from a stance of truth which transcends organisation, community and the world.

Prophets *reconcile*. Theirs is a reconciling mission. They connect those who were once separated by the boundaries. Prophetic leaders build bridges on which others can walk from the present to the future. They facilitate dialogue, mutual respect and a shared dream of future possibilities.

Prophet-leaders disrupt and disorder the establishment. They not only speak the truth to those in power but also act as facilitators and matchmakers who bring opposing parties together.

■ Traders and gatekeepers[20]

Complex challenges and a disruptive world, as well as the importance of creativity and a biblical imagination, represent a significant challenge to leaders. It highlights the difference between traders and gatekeepers in the system and encourages the missional posture of traders.

One finds gatekeepers in the proximity of walls (Niemandt 2017):

> All the great walls have had points of entry, gates and checkpoints: Just think about the iconic status of Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin during the height of the Cold War. Checkpoints and gates have gatekeepers. […] Walls, paradoxically, need gates to facilitate control, movement and, eventually, life. […] Gatekeepers represent a concentration of power, systems that regulate the flow and the mechanics of inclusion and exclusion. Gatekeepers are the guardians of the *status quo*. They must ensure stability, fidelity and control. Gatekeepers keep things separate, apartheid intact and foreigners out.

> But, you also find 'traders' in close proximity to gates and walls. They are the agents who, in one way or another, facilitate movement, trade, flow and life in the midst of the shadows of walls.

> All complex systems end up with walls and gates, as well as gatekeepers and traders, in an intricate movement to manage the flow between 'this side' and 'that side'. The life and actions of a complex system, such as [*congregations, churches*] and [*denominations,*] are influenced by the relationship between 'traders' and 'gatekeepers' in the system. Traders are at the forefront of change. They are the 'innovators' and 'early adopters' in the system (Keifert 2006:55). Traders ring in changes and introduce new grammar, ideas and innovation.

> They find ways through the wall, secret messages through the cracks so that vital information can flow. They find gateways and alleys that can circumvent or break through barriers so that interaction and exchange can happen. [*Gatekeepers lead in adaptive change*]. (p. 2)

20. This section draws heavily (and often verbatim) on Niemandt (2017).

A description by Haight (2014) comes to mind when he describes the 'Anthropology of Constructive Action':

> God has entrusted creation to human beings not merely as caretakers of a past condition but as co-creators with God of the future. This formula corresponds with the recognition that being is not static but in process, and that human beings were created by God not simply to enjoy creation but, as part of the universe, to work with the processes of evolution and to assume responsibility for its historical movement. (p. 55)

Big systems, denominations and even countries need traders (Niemandt 2017:2).

They are the disrupters essential for the future of the system. The future demands adaptive change and the ability to navigate chaotic waters (Niemandt 2017):

> Friedman (2016:306) makes a compelling case for the same posture when he says that the most resilient countries and systems are those that are able to absorb many alien influences and incorporate them into the system while maintaining overall stability. The age of acceleration, where mankind's ability to keep up with change becomes severely challenged, demands: 'interdependencies that embrace the immigrant, the stranger, and the loner, and inspire more people in more places to want to make this rather than break things' (Friedman 2016:350). Gatekeepers see themselves as custodians of the past and traditions in the system. They guard the identity of the system. They manage the flow and keep things apart so that they do not fall apart. (p. 2)

Gatekeepers find a multitude of ways to utilise church polity and structures to entrench their positions and control the flow of change – if any.

Missional leaders are, 'by the very nature of the missionary enterprise, more traders than gatekeepers' (Nimandt 2017:3). They are disrupters who speak and act to expose the system to those on the margins. They are focussed 'on finding creative solutions and prone to be caught up in a mission to expend their talents for a self-transcending cause (Haight 2014:77)' (Niemandt 2017:3). Missional leaders reach out 'to the "other," welcome strangers, find their way through walls and gates, and eat what is put before them. And yes, just sometimes, they break down the walls [...]' (Niemandt 2017:3).

■ Mission from the margins

The appreciation for the role and agency of marginalised people in mission is one of the most significant developments in recent mission studies. This is also the case in broader leadership studies. Wheatley and Frieze (2011), in the discussion of the leader as host, make a strong case for engaging marginalised people in leadership systems:

> People who didn't like each other, people who discounted and ignored each other, people who felt invisible, neglected, left out – these are the people who can emerge from their boxes and labels to become interesting, engaged colleagues and citizens. (n.p.)

In ecumenical theology and mission studies, there is a major shift in the concept of 'mission *to* the margins' to 'mission *from* the margins'. The WCC (2013:38), in *Together towards life,* argues, 'people on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view'. The WCC opened up a new appreciation for the insight that the task of mission is to be taken up by those on the margins. The 'margins' is not a geographical description, but rather a reference to people who are not normally appreciated as having agency or power. People on the margins are people who have no social, cultural, political or economic standing. They operate on the fringes of society, experience hardship and are seen as pariahs, outsiders and migrants. This applies to the church as well. Margins exist in the church, as well as spaces that establish themselves as the centre. Colzani (2017:124) argues that marginalised people can renew mission and the very life of the church. He states that communities on the periphery are rethinking their programmes and regaining the freedom of pastoral initiatives, 'much of the vivacity and profundity of the faith today is found in communities at the margins' (Colzani 2017:124).

The church is obliged to recognise the power and energy of those on the margins and make room for them to lead its mission. Christ's teaching starts and spreads from the periphery, the margins. God is in solidarity with the marginalised and puts them first and reigns for the sake of the marginalised and the poor – and this is a

rejection of power and privilege. The church has much to learn from the margins and must remember that marginality is present in every church and congregation.

A *kenotic* approach to and understanding of missional leadership opens the way to understanding the possibilities of mission by those who understand vulnerable positions and exclusionary forces from first-hand experience. People in the margins can often see what, from the centre, is out of view. The WCC (2013) makes a strong case that the marginalised can enrich the theology and praxis of mission:

> Marginalized people have God-given gifts that are under-utilized because of disempowerment, and denial of access to opportunities and/or justice. Through struggles in and for life, marginalized people are reservoirs of the active hope, collective resistance, and perseverance that are needed to remain faithful to the promised reign of God. (p. 59)

There is more to the issue of mission from the margins than issues about agency. Bevans and Schroeder (2011:28) remind us that marginalised people are actually a 'sacrament' or 'community' of dialogue and the very vision of the church for mission originates from solidarity with the worlds marginalised. The church is a church *for* the marginalised, a church *of* the marginalised and a church *with* the marginalised. The WCC (2013:75) puts it in even more emphatic terms, stating, 'the marginalized in society are the main partners in God's mission'. Mission is not to secure the stability of the church, to keep the gates safe and intact. We need missionaries or leader-prophets who catapult the church right into the centre of marginalisation. The habitat of the marginalised is, in a certain sense, the natural habit of the church. The marginalised reminds us that Jesus of Nazareth was a marginalised refugee with a ministry that challenged the Roman Empire. Jesus was in solidarity with the weak and vulnerable of his time, the disempowered and the disenfranchised.

This insight challenges the church to develop habits and practices of inclusion and to listen, and become present, for marginalised people. This is a life characterised by mutuality,

reciprocity and interdependence, and a daily protest against the myth that we can live self-sufficiently. The practice of hospitality and welcoming the stranger is a typical missional practice to welcome those from the margins and those who differ from us. This is especially the case in terms of embracing diversity. Cultural diversity and a kenotic approach to mission will allow the church to cross boundaries and to be changing and being changed.

The important role of people from the margins also challenges the church to develop discernment practices that consciously involved people from the margins. Blair et al. (2012:134) understand this as the precise place for prophetic leadership – 'from their unique position on the margins, prophets use their uniquely developed capacities to find ways to help those on each side of the boundaries to understand each other'. No important discussion or decision can be taken by leadership structures in isolation – there must be deep engagement with the marginalised. According to biblical narratives, God showed up at some of the most surprising situations; the teenage Jesus teaching in the temple, among the early non-Jewish converts in Antioch, and countless hungry and sick people desperately looking for life.

■ The courage to lead and take risks

Mission is about crossing borders and exposing the church to new contexts. This creates, by its very nature, the conditions of liminality. The courage to actually participate in transformation is one of the important contours of missional leadership. There will be no transformation if nobody steps forward to lead and take risks. Barrett (2004:74) stated that missional congregations take risks as a contrast community. The researchers of the GOCN explained taking risks as follows (Barrett 2004):

> The missional church is learning to take risks for the sake of the gospel. It understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord. It is raising questions, often threatening, about the church's cultural captivity and grappling with the ethical and structural implications of its missional vocation. (p. 74)

Missional leaders, as traders, are prepared to accept the calling to participate in transformation. Prophet-leaders confront kings and speak the truth to those in power about the deathly nature of remaining loyal to old, outworn ways. Blair et al. (2012:132) warn that prophets are frequently resisted and often rejected. This is more often than not the case in the church. Missional leaders, as prophets, must know that this particular leadership demands missional courage. Scharmer (2009:loc. 3480) refers to the fact that leadership entails calculated risks. He (Scharmer 2009:loc. 6627) explains that the whole innovative process of developing prototypes and imagining the future must be tolerant of mistakes and builds on the capacity to take risks, or as he phrases it, 'Fail Early to Learn Quickly'.

Cordier (2014:292) also highlighted the importance of risk and the willingness to experiment as important capacities of missional leaders. This refers to both the personal capacity and openness to take risks, as well as the ability to allow systematic risk in order to allow all participants the opportunity to experiment (Cordier 2014:232).

With the inherent risks of missional leadership, especially as prophet-leaders and traders, quite clear, the nature of the courage to lead and to embrace risks needs to be investigated. Sweet (2012b) describes five facets of missional courage:

• The courage to assume responsibility. For Sweet, this refers to the leader's ability to stand responsible for outcomes. Courageous followers take the initiative in and assume responsibility for self-assessment, eliciting feedback (about oneself), personal growth, self-management, taking care of oneself, passion (for work, role, others in the fellowship), initiative, influencing the culture (of the group), breaking the rules (when they need to be broken), breaking the mind-set (poor paradigms), improving the processes, and testing our ideas.
• The courage to serve. Sweet emphasises the fact that this kind of leadership is followership and that it implies a culture marked by servant followers. This is a kenotic posture, and

missional leaders know that to be sent to serve, means sent to sacrifice.

- The courage to challenge. Reference was made to the importance of prophet-leaders who restore balance and perspective in terms of the ways in which authority flows in missional churches. Prophet-leaders leadership challenges the authority, or the system of authorisation itself. This can be very risky. But, as Sweet argues, the failure to challenge others, whether it is their ideas, initiatives, or attitudes, does the church and its missional mandate no favours.
- The courage to take moral action. This implies the courage to be open and transparent in the life in community and to allow integrity to shape behaviour. Leaders must also lead by example; otherwise, their input will result in mere parody.
- The courage to participate in transformation. Sweet says that leadership-centric cultures tend to create protective force fields for leaders, and isolate them from critique or challenge. In a participatory missional system, each participant in church life should be respected as an agent of personal and community transformation and allowed to shape and influence the corporate identity and praxis. The problem is that many organisations, and churches, resist change and tend to favour stability and keeping the gates closed. Prophet-leaders take risks by leaving the safety of the familiar context and reaching out to the others, welcoming strangers, and telling compelling stories about future possibilities. (pp. 52–53)

When one considers the importance of adaptive or discontinuous change in complex systems (the missional church), the potential and opportunities for prophet-leadership are clear, and so are the risks associated with it. Yes, missional leadership introduces liminality and uncertainty, but uncertainty lies at the very heart of human creativity. The (missional) life in the church can be an adventure if we understand the community of disciples as a highly adaptive community with enough prophet-leaders who can tell dangerous alternative stories of God's preferred future. Frost and Hirsch (2011:loc. 380–382) say that the element of adventure is as intrinsic to discipleship and community as Jesus designed it to be 'when we embrace liminality – that in-between,

discomforting place described earlier – and engage it head-on, we discover the truest sense of adventure'.

Wheatley (2018:n.p.) links the ability to take risks and face uncertainty with a life of fulfilment and joy, 'only in our relationship with uncertainty are we able to flow gracefully with life's inevitable cycles and experience true happiness'.

■ The anatomy of a pioneer

Leadership in disruption requires the anatomy of a pioneer. Hirsch and Catchim (2012:162–165) describe the following characteristics of a pioneer – the kind of apostolic leadership that serves mission in complexity.

■ Pioneers invent the future while dealing with the past

Leadership is the art of map-making – of navigating to an unknown future with the memories and insights from the journey in mind. Pioneers chart new paradigms and create new ways to move forward.

■ Pioneers are willing to break with traditional ideas and methods

Adaptive or discontinuous change demands innovative approaches and a pioneer spirit that embraces new methods and ideas.

■ Pioneers are able to play multiple roles at the same time

Complexity demands cognitive, relational and behavioural adaptation. Pioneers understand that the new future requires multiple metaphors and cultural versatility.

■ Pioneers have a high tolerance for risk

Pioneers understand that the challenge is not failure, which will happen, but dealing with it.

■ Pioneers understand that many people want pioneers to fail

Pioneers break from institutional certainties and engage in possibilities. Gatekeepers prefer to keep the situation the same and want pioneers to fail. In most cases, prophet-leaders are not appreciated in their own contexts.

■ Conclusion

Human life is akin to living on the edge. The missional journey is an adventure, following a vocation that is sometimes larger than life. If someone is called to lead others in this journey by serving them and opening their lives to the disruption of a missional life, a prophetic posture and the mindset of a trader will certainly help in equipping the leader to take risks and accept the uncertain liminality of the missional adventure. This is possible because the Spirit is already there, and Christ is inviting leaders from the future. This can be summarised as a passion for mission. Missional passion is viral and contagious, ignites changes and brings life to the church and all of creation.

Missional leadership: Networking and swarm intelligence

■ The church as a relational community

Newbigin (1989:238) famously stated that 'Jesus […] did not write a book but formed a community'. He was adamant that there is no private salvation – we are saved together by Jesus Christ, the one whom God sent to be the messenger of the Good News (Newbigin 1989:92). Christian communities must learn as a matter of urgency 'how to hear and respond to the missional formation carried out by Scripture in the plural sense, as communities who are called and sent together' (Guder 2015:109). Guder (2015:127–128) refers to '"apostolic strategy" – the formation of equipped and empowered' witnessing communities. The ideal is that every Christian community should be 'like the first disciples. Every community [must] learn from Jesus and with Jesus, both his message and how it was to be communicated' (Guder 2015:128).

'God's chosen instrument for mission is the particular community, the congregation' (Guder 2015:104). Newbigin (1989:222–233) made a strong case that the community is the hermeneutic of the gospel. The focus must be on the formation of communities of faith – on the congregation. Guder (2015: 104, 109) concludes, in terms of his understanding of the Bible, 'that God is carrying out his saving and healing purposes for the world through gathered communities, referring to congregations'. God is a God of communion, and communion also describes God's vision for the fabric of creation and the church (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2018:268). Missional leadership is relational in nature and is embedded in a relational community. The local church is the witnessing community and the primary agent of vocation. The starting point is to affirm that baptism is the general ordination of all believers, who are inducted into the faith community, to their shared calling. One is reminded that the 'vocation of the entire people of God precedes, surrounds, and shapes the vocation of its [specialized] servants' (Guder 2015:142).

This relational community of disciples is bound together by love, and the whole ethos, lifestyle and witness of the community of disciples is characterised by love. The church is a community of love.

The Enlightenment shaped us in a powerful way, in particular, the 'anthropocentricity of the Enlightenment (the understanding that the human person' and especially human reason is the measure of all things), and the accompanying individualism (Guder 2015:106). Some of this can be seen in the prevalence of a 'member-driven, need-meeting understanding of the church, and individualism, which has very deep roots' (Guder 2015:n.p.). Guder (2015:108) even refers to the 'deterioration of the English language' and the lack of nuance to express the plural 'you' ('when we listen to Scripture in English today and hear the pronoun "you", we almost always think in terms of the individual and often [the] isolated individual') (Guder 2015:108). Sweet calls the Enlightenment the Gutenberg-world. This is a worldview dominated by the *text*, by propositions, by abstractions, by rule

of law, by freedom of speech and by individual rights. One can describe the Gutenberg-world, especially in terms of the church, as following a believing–behaving–belonging pattern. Propositions and clearly formulated beliefs come first. This will convince people to behave in a particular manner that reflects the beliefs, and from this, a community will come together. Christian leadership evolved into a situation where hierarchies proliferated in such a scheme. It became predisposed towards a *classical* form of leadership with a command-and-control system, controlling the beliefs and correct behaviour. One must note that the Enlightenment bequeathed humankind with a number of valuable legacies, including a particular approach to science, beautiful music and technology.

This context is changing. Sweet (2012a:6) talks about a shift from a Gutenberg-world to a Google generation. The unit of the premodern world was the family. The Gutenberg-world arrived together with the Enlightenment, and its unit was the individual. The unit of the Google-world is the network. Sweet (2011:loc. 811) states, '[t]he social networking generation is sold out to relationships', even to the extent that Googlers have made relationships a life mission. This shift is evident in the way Googlers are forming networks, connections and relationships. 'In the hands of Googlers, technology has been bent to the purposes of core human longings: knowing, being known, belonging, perception' (Sweet 2012a:6). It is a TGIF world. Google generations work with a belonging–behaving–believing scheme. They prioritise relationships, and living and being together will lead to particular patterns of behaviour. From this being and behaving together, certain beliefs will become evident. There is a new appreciation for the communion of believers and a diversity of people who enjoy relationships of mutual flourishing with the creator and all of creation. Van Gelder and Zscheile (2018:269) argue that community, rather than individualism, is the ground of being and the future of humanity. Porter and Mitchell (2015:12) see 'connectedness' as 'one of the defining attributes of the twenty-first century'.

Sweet (2012a:10) reminds us that the primary missional challenge of the church for the next two decades will be to incarnate the gospel in a Google-world. This should be a default position for the missional church, if it were not for all the reductionisms of the Enlightenment.

It is important to appreciate the corporate character of Christian leadership – and the fact that Christian vocation has a corporate character. Guder (2015) explains:

> The essential integration of the personal and the corporate is symbolized in Acts 2 in that these first Christians are gathered as one community in one room, sharing the experience of the wind while something like a flame of fire is seen over every head, and they all subsequently become translators of the gospel into all the tongues spoken by the multicultural gathering of Jews in Jerusalem. Out of that common event emerges the proclamation of the gospel as a corporate undertaking. (p. 115)

This is a very important theme in the research on leadership in Africa. Gitau (2017:loc. 1604–1607) found that the African communal ethos of collaboration and cooperation through dependence, interdependence, learning, caring, giving and receiving is still effective in much of African life. In Africa, says Rasmussen (2017:loc. 1679), '[e]verything works relationally'. Ngaruiya (2017:loc. 1049–1051) found in the study of leadership in Africa that human connectedness is critical in communities. Ideas are transmitted and actions that transform life are initiated through connectedness, and it is in connectedness that leaders exert influence. The most effective leaders are those who work within their community (Ngaruiya 2017:loc. 1051).

The church as a relational, missional community shifts expectations and insights. The leader is no longer an intermediary between God and his people, but a facilitator of ministries and mentor to disciples. Leadership authority does not derive from positional power but from relational agility and, most of all, from love. The leader does not lead from a position of command-and-control but by liberating space and ministries, acknowledging the mutual maintenance of

each one's sacred worth. Leadership is not to equip members of congregations, but missionaries. In short, the leader changes from mobiliser to participant, and from commander to network builder. The networks serve just relationships in the community and help each person to play a part in the life of the community of disciples. It is impossible to imagine relational leadership in any other way than a leadership shaped by and motivated by love. A leader loves people and serves the people in self-sacrificing love.

■ Building networks

■ The rise of a network society

Van der Walt (2018) draws attention to the fact that one of the adaptive changes leadership theory faces is the shift in focus from individual to collective leadership. Leadership is evolving into the development of inclusive processes spread throughout networks of people. Wheatley places her discourse on leadership within the larger contexts of big systems and the way physics and science operate. She values the importance of relationships as a building block of all of life (Wheatley 1999:13–14). We are all connected, and in the vast web of life, much more are in store for us, because 'relationships are the pathways to the intelligence of the system' (Wheatley 2005:40). There is a significant shift to networks, and some even refer to a 'network society' (Castells 2000, see Niemandt 2013b):

> The network society represents a profound social transformation because of the different phenomena related to the social, political, economic and cultural changes caused by the spread of networked, digital information and communications technologies. New technologies, and especially mobile telephony, deliver connectedness in the palms of our hands and social media [*serves*] as an expression of the passion for connection, community and knowing others, and being known by others. [...] What is different about this situation is that digital communities bring people together apart from their bodies. [...] It is a world of [*hypo-connectivity*] and multimodal communication from anywhere to anywhere. [...] The network society is a hyper-social society, not a society of isolation. (pp. 25–26)

Networks are self-organising and flourish in a context of participation and co-creation. In networks, all participants are equal, share authority and collaborate to achieve a shared vision, goal or output. Networks thrive on cooperation and consensus. The Google generation shares open platforms and values each and every contribution. Networks empower all participants and value collaboration and participation. It is a matter of network-intelligence or collective intelligence. Van Gelder and Zschweile (2018:307) describe the predisposition towards platforms that facilitate network connections, providing channels for people with shared interests. Networks are flat structures operating on teamwork. It is a network of friends, partners and peers. It brings the movement from a consumption-based culture to a production-based one. Friedman calls this the power of 'uploading' – the ability of participants in networks to create content (i.e. Wikipedia, YouTube and Facebook). Uploading, according to Friedman (2005:95 as cited in Niemandt 2013b:31), 'is the realisation of the collaborative power of individuals and communities […] to create content around their own self-generated experiences and to be producers of culture'. (Friedman also described uploading as one of the most disruptive aspects of the new 'flat' world!) People are no longer mere consumers of information, but through networking become creators of content and meaning.

In the research of leadership by Gitau (2017:loc. 1602), the conclusion was that the web of relationships was particularly vital in leadership development in Africa.

■ A theology of networks

The persons within the Trinity function as a community of leaders, each acting uniquely but always interdependent and in collaboration with each other (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2018:305). The missional church is a life in the Trinity, shaped and formed by the inner relationships in the Trinity. As much as the Trinity can be described in relational terms, the life of the church is relational. Being a relationship of networks ought to be a natural state for

the church. The church is a living organism, a particular kind of very real body, where all members function together in a network where people learn, share experiences and serve communities and life. Themes such as being inclusive, participatory, collaborative and interdependent are well known in the biblical understanding of community.

Network leadership is connective – it is building relationships and not establishing control mechanisms. Network leadership empowers, connects people in the system to each other, facilitates communication and leads in mission. The network does not exist to consume content (even church-generated content) but is a lively and reproductive creator of meaning and content. These leaders create shared meaning on the missional journey and mutual appreciation for the gifts of the Spirit that feeds and sustains the mission. This also causes a redefinition of the role of leaders in churches and missional leadership. Leaders become facilitators of uploading and cultivators of networks that create meaning and direct sense-making.

◼ Team leadership or collegial ministry in relational communities

Missional ecclesiology emphasises the church as a priesthood of all believers. 'Each and every member is gathered, equipped and sent into their everyday-world with a missionary identity' (Cronshaw & Taylor 2014:n.p.). Guder (2015:154–155) uses the term 'collegial ministry' when he refers to the important role of Christian leaders equipping the faithful for everyday life. He states that 'collegial ministry is [relational], takes place in networks of relationships, and demonstrates the nature of God's love through the way that these relationships actually work' (Guder 2015:155). He understands the collegial character of missional leadership is a pervasive theme throughout the New Testament (Guder 2015:155). This relational approach must prevail among leaders, and this must shape the collegiality of the communities they serve. Leaders empower all participants in God's mission to 'act

responsibly as believers […] [in their capacity] as citizens. Mission is outworked in the marketplace' (Cronshaw & Taylor 2014:n.p.). In the words of Newbigin (1989:230), 'the exercise of this priesthood is not within the walls of the church but in the daily business of the world'.

The challenges of collegial ministry must be seen against the backdrop of rampant individualism and the predisposition of modern culture to go it alone. Modern culture does not appreciate nor nurture communal decision-making and joint discernment. This is changing. The Reformed Ecumenical Council (now part of the WCRC) explains (REC 2005):

> Leadership is no longer a lone-ranger function. The world, society, organizations, and the changes we are experiencing are just too complex. The problems we face are too complex to be managed by one person. We require more than one brain to solve them. (p. 326)

A network society requires network-sensitive leadership. Collegial ministry focusses on discussion, collaborative discernment and relationships. Authority and power is less about position and more about communication and service – familiar territory for missional leaders.

The ideas of Wheatley and Frieze (2011) provide valuable insights into the role of teamwork in networks. They (Wheatley and Frieze 2011) argue that team leaders in networks:

- provide conditions and good group processes for people to work together
- provide resources of time, the scarcest commodity of all
- insist that people and the system learn from experience, frequently
- offer unequivocal support – people know the leader is there for them
- keep the bureaucracy at bay, creating oases (or bunkers) where people are less encumbered by senseless demands for reports and administrivia
- play defence with other leaders who want to take back control, who are critical that people have been given too much freedom

- reflect back to people on a regular basis how they're doing, what they're accomplishing, how far they've journeyed
- work with people to develop relevant measures of progress to make their achievements visible
- value conviviality and *esprit de corps* – … the spirit that arises in any group that accomplishes difficult work together. (pp. 6–7)

■ Networks and the future of denominations

The emphasis on networks raises many questions in terms of the future of current denominational structures. Van Gelder and Zscheile (2018:288–289) identify not only the rise but also the fall of current constructions of denominations. Current forms of denominational organisation are clearly not an everlasting biblical ordination but are shaped by cultural and societal movements and constructs. Emerging cultural forces – especially the shift from hierarchies to networks – are undercutting the very foundations of current denominational structures. These structures are at odds with an emerging network society that values participation, co-creation and network collaboration. Elton (2007:154) argues that an organic approach to organisation and leadership shifts interest towards fluid and flexible networks, and self-organising structures. Elton foresees a new appreciation for the congregation, because they are 'closest to their particular setting' and have the best potential to impact incarnational embodiment. Treating congregations as living systems and exploring new ways of pairing energy and potential can unleash the enormous potential. This might be in the form of dispersed networks, or what Elton (2007:155) calls 'mobile missional structures'. Elton (2007:158) makes a case for congregations as the basis of fluid networks, held together by a missional theology and led by missional leaders empowered by the Spirit to create a Christian movement. The glue of these networks, according to Elton (2007:159), is 'the commitment to consciously strive towards unity and uphold the overarching attributes of the whole Christian church'.

Van Gelder and Zscheile (2018:307) observe that churches are only beginning to grapple with the shift from the hierarchical to flat, networked organisations. We are in the midst of a paradigm change, the birth of a more organic and dynamic denominational system. This is happening while the whole idea of leadership is also morphing into a more participatory model of discernment and service. This is a journey full of surprises, as change will happen from the margins, and leadership will disrupt current expectations and ideas. Traders will find new ways and imagine new 'language houses' of what can be possible. This will change the expectations, habits, practices and structures of leadership. The old idea of the priesthood of all believers will, perhaps in new configurations, provide fresh opportunities to contextualise to the gospel in changing contexts.

■ Leadership in and with the priesthood of all believers

The discourse on missional leadership recognises the importance of specific leaders with specific responsibilities in the shaping of authority and power. It has been argued that the relational understanding of the Trinity, and its implications for the social reality of the church, can be viewed as a model of distributed authority and network leadership. The church always accepted a configuration of persons holding specific authority and responsibility. This can be called missional forms of ministry. Haight (2014:loc. 5226–5228) argues along similar lines, stating that baptism introduces a person into the church as the community that extends Jesus Christ's presence in history, and that baptism makes each member a responsible role player within the community – this responsibility is not homogeneous but differentiated, as all do not do the same thing. The people of God receive and are equipped for different forms of missional ministry.

Hirsch and Ferguson (2011:loc. 4642–4645), however, warn against the kind of 'professionalisation' of ministry that 'limits ministry to an elite group which inevitably replaces the priesthood

of all believers' (Sheng 2011:n.p.). Their concern is also that such a professionalisation can diminish the responsibility of the people of God to attend to their calling 'to be apprentices who are agents of the King in every sphere and domain' (Sheng 2011:n.p.). This will lead to a situation where the people of God become mere spectators in the arena of mission. Van Gelder and Zscheile (2018:313) are also critical of the default assumptions about ordained clergy as a separate professional religious class. A missional understanding of the church and leadership means that these assumptions must be re-examined so that the power of God's people can be unleashed.

Yes, there is differentiation in people and vocation, yet each and every member of the church has also been baptised into the priesthood of all believers. While Luther did not use this exact phrase, he recognised that in the teaching of the New Testament all baptised believers are priests and spiritual in God's sight. His doctrine cleared the way for non-clergy (laity) to practise their own vocational callings and use the gifts of the Spirit as their priestly service to God (Helland & Hjalmarson 2011:loc. 584–586). Moltmann (2010:loc. 515–516) argues emphatically that the church is a community of free and equal men and women, joined with each other in an open, inviting friendship. For him, the priesthood of all believers dissolves the division between priests and laity. Volf (1998:152) argued in the same vein, 'Christ does not enter the church through the "narrow portals" of the ordained office, but rather through the dynamic life of the entire church'.

The current influence of Pentecostal and charismatic theologies intensifies the issue. When diverse gifts from the Spirit, and differentiation in vocation, are accepted, all members are accepted just as they are. The diversity serves the upbuilding of the congregation and obedience to God's kingdom. There is no differentiation in status, and participants are valued in terms of their contributions to the community.

This approach challenges hierarchical (and exclusive papal) systems, but certainly finds fertile ground in an organic approach

to leadership and systems. One can imagine clusters of responsibility in organic systems that recognise differentiation in gifts and personalities, as well as function in organic systems.

Network leaders are servants of the people, shaping discernment and imagination by serving the network in love and wisdom. Network leaders have a kind of intensified role in the community of disciples – and certainly a differentiated role. The biblical and ecclesial orthodoxies recognise the fact that the Holy Spirit called, equipped and sent out specific leaders to play a specific role in the priesthood of all believers. Authority is delegated by Christ, but the power granted is power to serve, form and shape. The concept of leaders as conveners, developed by Wheatley and Frieze (2011:4), explains the possibilities of network leaders. Such leaders appreciated the rich gifts endowed by the Spirit to the community of disciples. They know that the best way to unleash these gifts is to bring the priesthood of believers together to discern together and to discover gifts and God's preferred future in conversations that matter.

■ The priesthood of all believers and swarm-like behaviour

Complexity theory and the appreciation of network leadership, seen from a theological perspective of the priesthood of all believers, focus attention on 'swarm-like behaviour' or 'swarming'. Rolling (2013:6) noted the importance of swarm-like behaviour, especially in terms of creativity. He argues that we can be much more creative while working and playing in concert. 'Congregating into social networks', says Rolling (2013:18), '[…] makes us all smarter'.

Koot (2016) defined swarm leadership as follows:

> Swarm leadership is the art of being part of the 'Human Cloud' or swarm, that seeks to make the difference. It forego's [*sic*] the need to control or regulate the contribution of others. It's about helping the

whole as a part, that sees itself as a part or reflection of the whole. You act from where you are. It's about trusting in, and contributing to, the collective effort for care for nature and humane solutions. (n.p.)

The interest in 'swarm behaviour' is also echoed by Plowman et al. (2007:350–351). The '"swarm intelligence" found in social insects such as bees, termites and ants […] is also [present] in organisations when complex collective behaviour emerges from individuals who follow simple rules' (Niemandt 2015b:6). They refer specifically to the emergence of creative new solutions in a case study of a church. Niemandt (2015b:6) also observed 'swarm behaviour' in the processes used by a denomination on South Africa to enhance denominational networks and discernment. The Highveld Synod of the DRC applied the 'big systems' theory, a form of swarm behaviour, in the discernment processes of the denomination. This 'Large Group Interactive Event' represented typical swarm behaviour.[21] It 'allowed the collective wisdom of participants to emerge and guided the organic formation of consensus, leading to decisions that "stuck" and therefore got actioned' (Ungerer 2009:32 as cited in Niemandt 2015b:6). This was not a hierarchical approach, but an example of the whole priesthood of believers participating in the synod, where participants were regarded as equal partners. The structured processes allowed each participant to make a unique contribution in discerning God's preferred future for the denomination, and the eventual decision was more than the sum of all contributions – a typical 'swarm' outcome.

Swarming is a form of network behaviour or self-organisation. Self-organisation is about decentralised control, participation by all role players and distributed problem-solving. This requires excellent communication – a great deal of open communication between all participants.

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21. Koot (2016) mentions other possibilities such as World Café, Open Space Technology or UN conferences.

Swarming is a form of indirect cooperation. Koot (2016) refers to flocks of birds and adaptive mimicking; if others turn and flee, you better do it too. Indirect cooperation implies support for the broad idea or purpose of the system.

Collective wisdom or appreciation for the diversity of knowledge implies appreciation for the voices of marginalised participants. Koot (2016) makes a strong point in stating that swarms have no interest in which opinion is right or wins; the swarm just wants to flourish. He (Koot 2016:n.p.) also mentions smart decision-making tools and open dialogues, where participants are as 'truthful as possible and do not fear to stand alone for a bit'.

Swarms must have a clear collective purpose or longing. Organic systems need direction. The more complex life becomes, the more simple we need to make it. The role, and possibilities, of social media in creating swarms seems to be an era that demands further investigation, but the potential seems to be very promising.

The following description of principles of swarm intelligence or behaviour by Marcus et al. (2014) is highly informative in terms of the development of a missional appreciation of swarm behaviour:

1. An overriding objective that forges unity of mission and connectivity of action; is compelling enough to override standard practices as needed; and obviates bureaucratic obstructions, distractions, or bickering.
2. A spirit of generosity that rallies groups and individuals to assist one another and overcome constraints of resources, know-how, or tools to achieve the paramount mission, expressed as 'Whaddya got? Whaddaya need?'
3. Respect for the responsibilities and authorities of others, described as 'staying in one's lane', while assisting others to succeed in their lane to accomplish mission-critical duties and tasks.
4. Neither taking undue credit nor pointing blame among key players, oftentimes portrayed as 'checking your ego at the door'.

5. Genuine inter-personal trust and respect developed well before the event so that existing and dependable leadership relationships, integrity and camaraderie can be leveraged during the event, often described as 'don't wait for an emergency to exchange business cards'. (p. 11)

Creative application of techniques that can unlock the power of swarms represents powerful possibilities for missional leaders, because it recognises the importance of multiple perspectives and talents to solve organisational challenges, and appreciates the inherent dynamics of the priesthood of all believers.

Missional leadership: Nurturing culture

■ Introduction

Leaders nurture and cultivate a missional culture in congregations. Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006) argue that leadership as cultivation is a powerful metaphor because it:

> [*D*]escribes the leader as […] one who works the soil of the congregation […] to invite and constitute [*an*] environment for the people of God to discern what the Spirit is doing in, with, and among them as a community. (p. 28)

Missional leaders remind us that every congregation has a culture of common habits, beliefs, values and practices. This determines how it works and sees itself and forms communal living (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:167). This is the congregational ethos. Ethos is how we see and interpret our world, the way in which people act together. Ethos determines the character and inner life of a congregation and brings to light what they truly

value (Hirsch & Ferguson 2011:loc. 1670, 2309). Missional leaders tend to the ethos of a congregation as much as a gardener tends to the soil.

Missional leadership represents a paradigm-shifting departure from traditional hierarchical ideas about leadership in the church. Understanding the church as a complex living organisation, as life in the Trinity, implies the abandonment of linear leadership models that presume leaders can control the future with clear vision statements and large-scale organisational interventions. Complex (missional) leaders enable rather than control. 'Leaders cannot control the future', argue Plowman et al. (2007:344), 'because in complex systems such as organizations, unpredictable (and sometimes unexplainable) internal dynamics will determine future conditions'. Leaders cultivate 'conditions where others can produce innovations that lead to [a new] and [mostly] unpredictable future' (Plowman et al. 2007:344).

Missional leadership is to attend to the congregational culture. This is an issue of formation. Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006:34) are adamant that a missional mindset is not a matter of technique, strategic planning or programme, but all about the formation of a community by attending to habits and practices. Missional leaders tend to the congregational culture to enable the communion of disciples to discern together and to be able to join in the life-giving work of the Spirit. It is more an issue of formation than control, more directing than organising. Leaders need to focus on nurturing and cultivating, but must remember that the process of growth and new life is a gift from the Spirit. Cordier (2014:190), in his research into the praxis of missional transformation in South Africa, affirms this observation. There is an inseparable interdependency between cultural formation and attending to habits or practices. Habits and practices transform culture. And culture is expressed in practices and habits.

The terminology of cultivating and nurturing respects the organic nature of the church. Leadership, as followership suggests, is not a

mechanistic process where change is forced by huge interventions that will result in a cause–effect change. Organic leadership is attending to a garden, turning the earth, preparing the soil and waiting on something bigger than yourself to bring change. Cultivation involves 'learning skills through repetition, habit, and devoting time and attention to a field, soil, a plant, or a group of animals' (Roxburgh 2010:183). This stands in contrast to strategic leadership and the kind of reductionism associated with those processes – as if the life of an entire community can be changed by merely stating a new goal and outcome! Planning and the objectification of people do not lead to missional transformation. Congregations are not machines or factories, but sensitive organisms held together by intricate living networks. Roxburgh (2010:177–191) argues that strategic planning does not work and is not appropriate for organic missional churches. The strategic planning model does not fit the missional paradigm.

Minatrea (2004:162 as cited in Niemandt 2008:626) refers to cultural engineers as those who 'fashion the structures necessary for the church to serve God's mission effectively'. The idea of engineers still carries too much of the weight of a mechanistic intervention, and one should perhaps refer to organisational cultivation that allows new life to blossom. An organic approach to congregation values the nurturing of climate. This is a culture that feeds and nourishes discernment, creativity and intuition. Perhaps the idea of 'Spiritual Institutional Entrepreneurs', developed by Porter and Mitchell (2015), might shape insights into the possibilities of missional leaders as cultivators of a missional culture. According to Porter and Mitchell (2015:4), *institutional entrepreneurs* maximise opportunities within the existing organisation to bring about transformation or to increase organisational effectiveness. These leaders attend to the following issues:

• understanding your job or as a calling aligned to personal values
• alignment of personal, group-level and organisational values embedded within each level (the alignment of personal, group

and organisational values is the cornerstone of this process [2015:7])
• developing honesty and trust in the system
• nurturing creativity
• a learning culture
• leading through intentionality and the importance of emphasising meaningful work
• development of covenantal relationships of reciprocity, interdependency and respect.

In terms of leading a community of disciples, these insights might translate into:

• assisting each and every member of the congregation to discover and enjoy their vocation (calling) as an intrinsic part of a life of faith
• developing clear missional values and alignment of personal, small-group and organisational values
• developing honesty and mutual trust
• nurturing creativity
• a learning culture, or an open-mindedness to embrace innovation
• leading through intentionality and sense-making
• re-imagining the biblical concept of a covenant community and applying it to missional communities.

The concepts of calling and vocation (Ch. 7) and values (Ch. 4) have been discussed in detail, as well as creativity and innovation (Ch. 9). The development of a climate of trust must be explained.

■ A climate of trust

Missional leaders attend to trust to assist congregations in navigating the inherent liminality involved in missional change, 'trust is critical for innovating a culture of missional transformation' (Roxburgh 2010:86). Trust goes hand-in-hand with authenticity.

Keifert recounted from personal experience and the observation of hundreds of congregations that long-term pastors seem to be more successful in leading missional transformation. He is convinced that this is because long-term pastors have the opportunity to build trust in the congregation (see Niemandt 2013a:135). Trust and authenticity function as social capital that feeds missional transformation. Trust and integrity feed growth and change. Trust is built through relationships, a high work ethic and commitment to calling. Authenticity is to be true to oneself, and not to take oneself or even the leadership position too seriously.

Common values forge community life and a wellspring of new life. Values function in the background, very much as the soil is an indispensable part of a garden. But it is still of utmost importance to be clear on the values that form and nurture a congregation. It is part and parcel of the new narrative or language. Hirsch and Ferguson (2011:loc. 4516) emphasise the importance of a clear formulation of the values of a congregation – they refer to 'Vivid Values'. These vivid values create direction in the sea of unpredictable change of missional transformation. Vivid values eliminate the need for overt control mechanisms and enhance growth.

Although the well-known pastoral model sounds rather agricultural, cultivating organic change is quite different. The pastoral model is an adapted version of the transactional leadership paradigm. Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006:12–13) maintain that the pastoral model represents an old paradigm based on the objectivation of ministry. Their (adapted) summary explains the difference (see Table 12.1).

Organic, missional leadership is clearly differentiated from the transactional pastoral model. There is more emphasis on empowerment, deep respect for the networked nature of the community of disciples and open-mindedness towards creativity and leadership as a process towards the future.

TABLE 12.1: Pastoral versus missional model.

Pastoral	Missional
Ordained pastor must be present at every meeting to validate importance.	Ministry staff are coaches in a system that is not dependant on them to validate the importance of an event.
Ordained pastors take care of church members by being present for people as they are needed.	Ordained clergy equip and release multiple ministries of the people of God throughout the church.
Time, energy and focus shaped by people's needs and agendas.	Focus shaped by the needs of the community.
Pastors provide solutions.	Pastors cultivate and facilitate an environment that engages the imagination, creativity and gifts of the people of God in order to discern solutions.
Preaching and teaching offer answers and clear-cut solutions. The focus is on, telling, didactic and reinforcing assumptions.	Preaching and teaching involve the whole community engaging Scripture as a living Word that 'reads' the community and draws them into God's kingdom. The focus is on metaphors, narratives and asking new questions.
Peacemaker. Suppress conflict.	Creative facilitation of tensions and differences.
'Recovery expert' to return to the way it used to be.	Cultivator of imagination and creativity.
Maintenance, centralised ministries focussed in and on building.	Freedom, diversity of ministries focussed on community.

Source: Adapted from Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006:12–13)

∎ Covenantal communities

Porter and Mitchell (2015:16) appreciate the importance of covenantal relationships in the workplace. These relationships are built on mutual respect, regardless of hierarchical positioning. Members are interdependent and appreciate reciprocity. Porter and Mitchell (2015:16) describe interaction as a 'kind, considerate, and welcoming, yet people are still able to discuss challenges, issues, and problems without deceit, manipulation, or emotional blackmail'. These covenantal prerequisites are not foreign to Christian communities and can actually be described as typical of communities of disciples. The community is bound together by God's covenant with his people, and the nature and content of the relationship are determined by the covenant.

■ Cultivating transformation

Missional leaders cultivate transformation. They mobilise energy, loyalty and commitment in the community of disciples to serve God's kingdom and participate in God's mission. They know that the future of the congregation is constantly at risk in a VUCA world. Congregations live in liminality between creativity and new opportunities on the one hand, and decline and death on the other hand. Transformational leadership is aware of the whole organism and cultivates an environment that is conducive towards change and regeneration (See Figure 12.1 to Figure 12.3). These are exactly the circumstances in which transformational leaders flourish, 'galvanising those in the organization around developments that lead to life and vitality' (Granberg-Michaelson 2004:157).

Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006:63–64) offered a number of principles to understand and facilitate congregational change:

• Focus on the culture, not the organisation. The culture of a congregation includes the ethos, the values that shape the community, mutual expectations, the operating hermeneutics and the internal organisation of community. This can be described as a systemic approach. The culture of congregations reveals the existent system. Taking a systemic approach helps with the identification of 'deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action' (Senge 1990:8).
• Focussing on the culture alone is not enough. Congregations are embedded in time and space, and congregations must be deeply aware of the neighbourhoods, communities and places where they find themselves. These places are not mere opportunities to expand the influence or membership of the church, but a life-giving space where the activities of the Spirit can be discerned; 'it is about seeing the church in, with, and among the peoples and places where we live, rather than a specific building with a certain kind of people' (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:63–64).
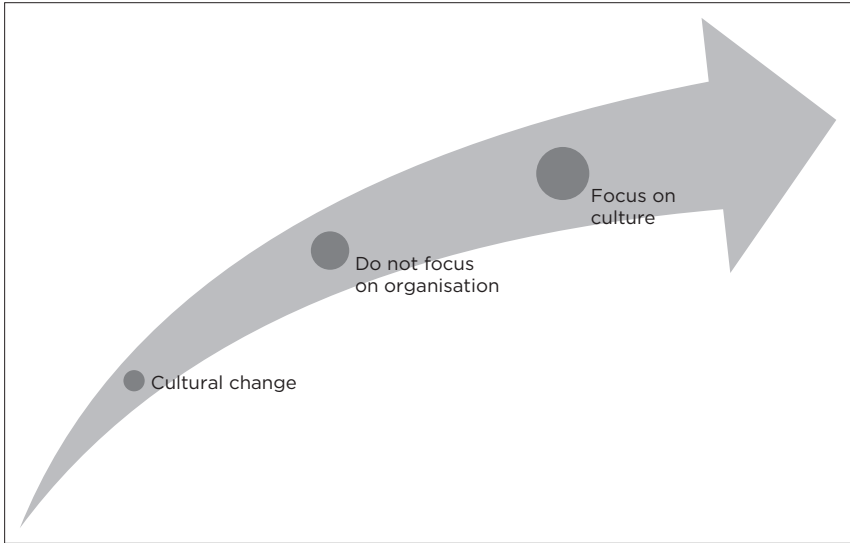
FIGURE 12.1: Cultural change.
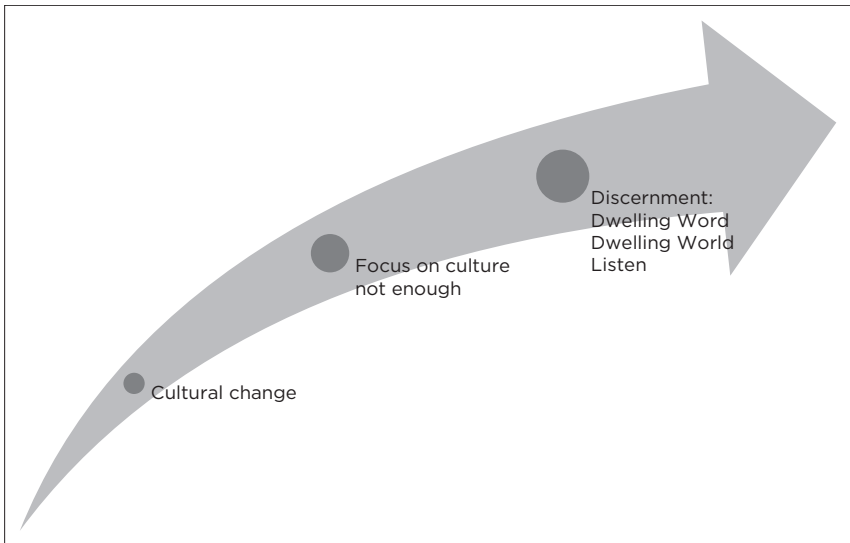
FIGURE 12.2: Discernment in cultural change.
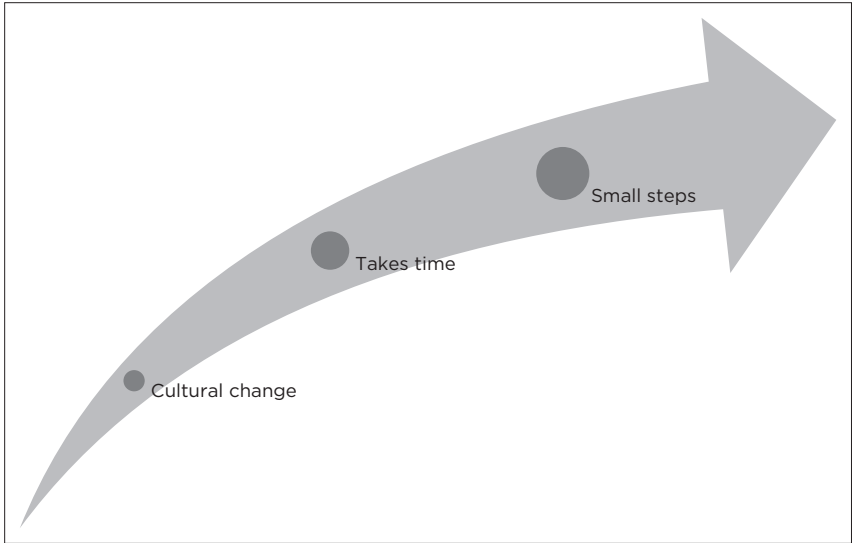
FIGURE 12.3: Incremental cultural change.
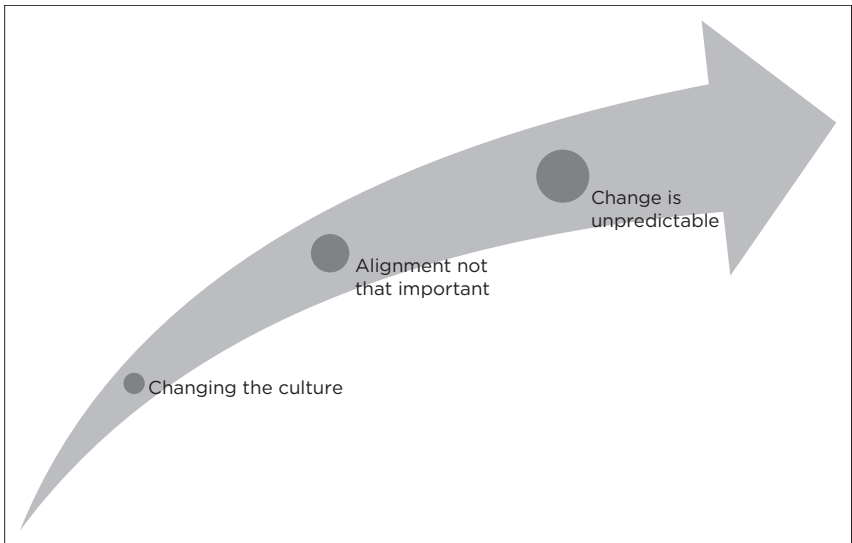
FIGURE 12.4: Cultural change and unpredictability.

- Change takes time and small steps. Missional transformation occurs in a series of small movements, actions and behaviours.
- Transformational change is not about alignment or mobilising all the resources around a common vision or goal. God's future emerges in a non-linear and unpredictable manner and is discovered in experiments, dialogue and engagements with strangers and marginalised people. This is leading from the emerging future. Change is unpredictable. Discernment is an important leadership capacity – to be able to discern the way forward on the journey of change and to be able to recognise the appropriate moment to take certain steps. For the missional leader, this is about discerning the Holy Spirit's activities in change.

■ Nurturing cultural transformation is an organic process

Change and transformation is an organic process and rarely happens in a linear fashion. Rogers (1983:36) calls this the *diffusion of change* and explains 'diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system'. Any change must go through certain stages of approval. This is why the modernistic models of strategic planning and deterministic organisational change do not serve missional congregations very well, at least not at the start of the journey and in the process of creating organisational culture. Missional transformation is more akin to sailing, moving with the wind and criss-crossing the landscape. The movement might be forward, or sideways, and there might be stationary times when congregations are 'waiting on the Lord' to show them the way forward.

Rogers (1983:163ff.) identifies five phases in the process of decision-making and innovation of change: knowledge or awareness, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation. He (Rogers 1983; see also Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:82–102) describes the phases as follows:

1. Knowledge occurs when an individual (or other decision-making unit) is exposed to the innovation's existence and gains some understanding of how it functions. 2. Persuasion occurs when an individual (or other decision-making unit) forms a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the innovation. 3. Decision occurs when an individual (or other decision-making unit) engages in activities that lead to a choice to adopt or reject the innovation. 4. Implementation occurs when an individual (or other decision-making unit) puts an innovation into use. 5. Confirmation occurs when an individual (or other decision-making unit) seeks reinforcement of an innovation-decision already made, but he or she may reverse this previous decision if exposed to conflicting messages about the innovation. (p. 164)

In terms of missional innovation and leadership, these insights enrich the understanding of change in congregations:

- Awareness – missional change does not start with the final goal or plan in mind. Awareness starts by listening to people where they are, to articulate what lies beneath the surface and to be aware of what is happening in the community of God's people. Leaders must be aware of the impact of discontinuous change, the demands of a VUCA world and the unsettling experience of liminality. 'Awareness', says Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006:90), 'develops by being able to speak about where the people of God find themselves in terms of their real lived experiences at this moment'.
- Persuasion and understanding – facilitating dialogue to integrate thinking and feeling. Understanding 'occurs when awareness enables people to ask new questions about what is happening relative to what they have been feeling and thinking' (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:92). The purpose of understanding is to take awareness deeper and test new ideas. This takes time, but it develops a culture where the missional imagination can grow. It is more about shaping a space than forcing a strategy or plan.
- Decision or evaluation – people apply their understanding and growing capacities. Current activities, attitudes and values are evaluated, and deliberate steps to move forward are considered. Participants make a choice to adopt or reject the innovation. The leader facilitates critical experiments that show people another kind of future that may develop.

- Confirmation and experimentation – the congregation tests new ways of shaping its missional life. Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006:97) explain that 'people practice and experiment with what they have been learning'. The goal moves towards adaptive change and thus a change in the culture of the congregation, not just its programmes and structures. It is inventing the future as it emerges, making it up as participants go along, 'improvising on the edge of catastrophe' (Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:100).
- Commitment or confirmation – Acceptability in the culture of the organisation or church. Acceptance could assume the form of official approval, formal change in policy or modification of the church order. It can even lead to expanding the church order to accommodate the innovation. Moynach (2017:8) defines innovations changing the rules of the game; '[i]nnovation is the modification of the "rules of the game" so that the church develops in new ways'. The missional culture is now embedded, not because of the particular leadership style or abilities of a specific leader, but because God's new reality is recognised and embraced by people being church together.

The five phases involve various role players (Keifert 2006:55–57); there are the innovators ('the brave') (2.5%) who are likely to be the first to accept the innovation. They present it as an option to the 13.5% early adopter's people ('respectables') who are usually familiar leaders. In turn, these present it to the 34% early majority ('the thoughtful'), who in turn can reach the 34% late majority ('sceptical'). When the late majority accept it, they can defeat the resistance of the 16% laggards ('traditionals') (see also Niemandt et al. 2018:10). Rogers reminds us that a social system will always include those who resist innovation, regardless of its merits – the uncompromising laggards who oppose change at any cost. If the process of diffusion is allowed enough time, the rest of the system will be persuaded to adopt the innovation in spite of the tensions with uncompromising sectors.

Innovators play an important role in the diffusion of change, but they cannot take the lead in the entire process. Few people

have the stamina to lead the entire process, and comprehensive change of the systems demands a team effort, in which all the role players are involved. Innovators (traders) facilitate change in supplying a spark of change and ideas.

The insights of Rogers also remind us that resistance must be accepted as part and parcel of change and transformation. Resistance should be embraced as a positive force, even if it frustrates innovators. Resistance offers opportunities to clarify possibilities and the detail of the 'language house' and content of God's preferred future. The more interactive the process can be, the better the chances that the innovation will be accepted. Scharmer (2009:loc. 585) describes it as a process of 'co-initiating; co-sensing; co-presencing; co-creating and co-evolving'. One of Senge's (1990:62) systemic laws is particularly relevant here: 'faster is slower'. A system always needs time to absorb change.

The process of change demands excellent and intensive communication. The organic nature of the church, and the nature of network leadership, underscores the importance of communication. 'Language houses' are formed in the imagination by narratives and spoken images, compelling stories and metaphors. The medium is indeed the message, and the gospel must be embodied – the leader is part and parcel of the message. This implies communication and dialogue. Transformation starts where God's people listen to each other, tell stories and use metaphors to imagine a new future.

Missional leadership is organic. It focuses on cultivation and tending relationships, building habits and modelling Christian practices. Missional leaders cultivate transformation. They mobilise energy, loyalty and commitment in the community of disciples to serve God's kingdom and participate in God's mission.

Chapter 13

Conclusion

The complexity, intensity of change and interwoven nature of globalisation are changing established insights, theories and practices on leadership. We might indeed see the end of leadership as we have known it for the last couple of centuries. These changes impact the very fibre of society and all institutions, including the church. The simultaneous developments in church life, especially the broad acceptance of the ideas on missional church, ring in a new understanding of the nature of the church and church praxis. This will change the long-held assumptions on leadership, the offices of the church and the understanding of the community of disciples.

The underlying assumption of this book is that new missional challenges demand new ideas about missional leadership. The church needs a new understanding of leadership to serve the missional church.

It worked with the conviction that 'missional leadership is the transformation of people and institutions to participate, through meaningful relations and in the power of the Spirit, in God's mission' (Niemandt 2016b:86). This placed the discourse on missional leadership within the reflection on the work of the
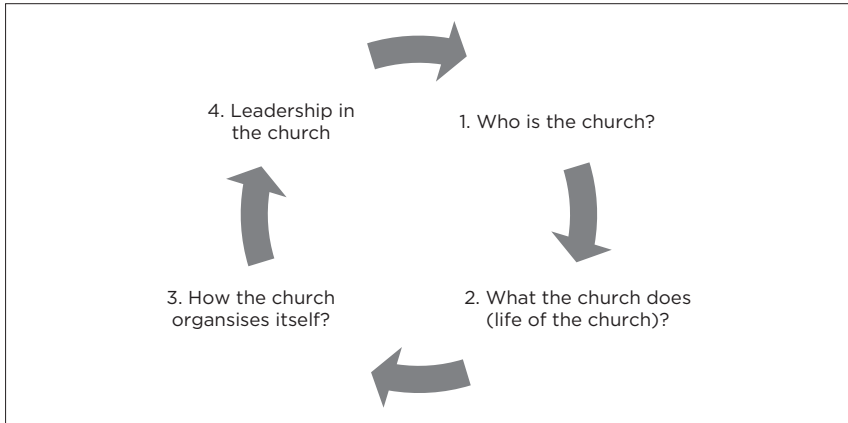
FIGURE 13.1: From identity to leadership.

Triune God, the *Missio Dei*, and a particular understanding of who the church is, what the life of the church entails, the organisation of the church and the role of leadership in this organisation and life of the missional church.

The recent attention to studies in Trinitarian theology and the understanding of the church as a life in the Trinity shaped and formed the concepts of church life. The church exists because of God's mission. 'Mission is an extension and amplification of God's very being' (Niemandt 2012a:2). 'Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the [unifying] love which binds together the Holy Trinity and overflows to all humanity and creation' (WCC 2013:51 as cited in Niemandt 2015a:4). Mission is participation in the boundless love and endless life of the Triune God. 'The *Missio Dei* [defined] the essence and substance of the church', and determined all ideas on organisation of authority and church life, including leadership (Niemandt 2015a:4).

The theology of the *economic Trinity* focussed attention on the sending work of God. This reminded us that the life of 'the Trinity is a missional life and the communion in the Trinity is a communion that flows outward' (Niemandt 2015a:4). The idea of the *relational Trinity* focussed on the interrelatedness of the

three persons in the Godhead. The church can exist because of the loving inner relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, finds its origin in the love flowing from the Trinity and models its existence on the inner relationships in the Trinity. These two perspectives reminded us that the sending, communal God works in and through community – the agency of God is the critical lens to understand the participation of God's people in God's mission. God is the primary agent of mission, and the church secondary. However, it is also emphasised that mission is expressed in relationships. 'Communion is constitutive for the divine life. Christians participate in and practice the relationality of the triune communion' (Niemandt 2012a:5). A relational community modelled on the Trinity implies a community of love, as the inner community between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is always a community of love.

The focus of the church also shaped ideas on leadership. The overarching narrative of God's involvement in creation and the mandate to be a blessing because God blessed his people emphasised the importance of the church as a community of disciples, following Jesus as Lord, in the life-giving enterprise of transforming lives and the whole of creation to participate in a flourishing life. Leaders are disciples, serve the community of disciples and participate in God's transformational dynamic, the 'gospel as a missionary activity, initiated by God and embodied and located in time and place' (Niemandt 2019:A–B), igniting new dreams about future possibilities. Church life is to be faithfully present – to be located within the mutual concerns of specific places in a way that signifies God's kingdom. The church is a sign of God's kingdom and a community that lives by the biblical narrative. The church is a hermeneutic of the gospel – it brings to the gospel story but is also, in its life and witness, the gospel. Every idea on leadership must serve this understanding and vocation of the church.

The church consists of the people of God, is an organically and socially constructed entity and has form, organisation and structure, and flow of authority and power that is part and parcel of structure. The church utilises structure, mobilisation of

resources and alignment of activities to open up the embodiment and expression of the church in time and space. A theology of authority lies at the core of the organisation of the church. Mission is thus defined by the authority of Jesus, and this authority protects the values and cohesion of the church. Authority finds expression in ministry and leadership in the church. Authority must be understood as a gift, and in terms of service and the beneficial application of power. This happens in submission, trust and dependence on the Lord.

Those with authority must participate in the discernment of God's future and hold the people of God accountable to the vocation to which God had called them.

Leadership plays an important role in the deployment and enactment of missional strategies to form communities of witnesses who continue the apostolic witness that brought them into existence. Leaders serve, nourish, sustain and guide these communities of disciples to be a hermeneutic of the gospel.

The core function of missional leaders is to discern what the Spirit is up to and then to lead the congregation in joining in God's mission. 'Discernment is the first step in mission' (Niemandt 2015a:6). Discernment starts with the discernment of vocation, and then ways to join in with the mission of the Spirit. This is about a calling to be transformed and to participate in God's transformation of all creation. Leaders serve mission in its quest to transform people, the church, institutions and all of life to become part and parcel of God's intended purpose to flourish.

The whole concept of missional church emphasised the church as a relational community, and this in turn determines the nature of leadership. Leaders facilitate relational networks within the complex relationships within the congregations as well as in relation to the context.

It is impossible to envisage any leadership in the vast enterprise of flourishing life that is not deeply embedded in missional spirituality. Spirituality serves the apostolicity and mission of the

church, and is understood as the source of transformative energy in the church. 'It is a spirituality of the "everyday"', as missional spirituality is focussed on a faithful presence in everyday life (Niemandt 2015a:7). It is a physical spirituality, touching hearts and bodies and all of life – embodied, incarnational and localised. Missional spirituality is a communal 'spirituality that forms and feeds mission' (Doorenbal 2012:212). It is also an incarnational spirituality of the everyday. It not only exhibits the joy of Christian faith but also carries the burden of a kenotic life of self-sacrificing love and service. Missional spirituality is to live in the loving presence of God, and to worship God. Worship belongs to the core of a missional church and is the heart of discipleship.

Transformational (missional) leadership needs the power of metaphor and story to move people, congregations and whole systems into a new reality. A missional ecclesiology demands a new story. The best response to the challenges in a complex world is to tell the stories of the church. Leaders know stories make life possible and value the importance of storytelling. Stories show the way towards new possibilities, and leaders ignite imagination through stories. Missional leaders use stories and metaphors as building blocks in the construction of 'language houses' or social imaginaries of what is possible – of God's preferred future for the church and all of creation. This is done by reconnecting with the social imaginaries found in biblical narratives. The purpose of telling the story is to find our place and our vocation within this story.

Missional leadership demands creativity and imagination. The ability to see and hear God's preferred future and to construct a language house implies creativity. This is especially relevant in terms of emerging complex systems such as the missional church. 'Complex leaders encourage innovation, establish simple rules and act as enablers of emergent self-organisation by encouraging innovation' (Niemandt 2015b:5). 'This is only possible if missional leadership is enriched by a biblical imagination' (Niemandt 2012b:14). Missional leaders must 'cultivate an environment within which God's people discern God's' work among themselves and

the communities they find themselves in (Cooke 2013:125). Creativity goes hand-in-hand with *poiesis*, aesthetics and emotional beauty. Artful creativity 'enables a leader to tell an alternative story about the new possibilities already present where the Spirit is working' (Niemandt 2015b:5–6).

Disruption is part and parcel of transformation in a complex world and demands leaders to cope with and thrive in these circumstances. Disruption presents creative opportunities, will change concepts of leadership and should be embraced and received as a gift from the Holy Spirit. The missional journey is a journey of dislocation, challenging all the preconceived ideas and even the very faith of missional leaders. A context of disruption necessitates new attention to prophetic leadership. Prophetic leaders promote dialogue, but know that dialogue without prophecy is incomplete. Dialogue is imbedded in prophecy and the gospel is communicated by means of prophetic dialogue. Prophetic leadership includes the ability to criticise, energise, translate and reconcile.

Missional leaders embrace disruption and 'are, by the very nature of the missionary enterprise, more traders than gatekeepers' (Niemandt 2017:3). They are disrupters who speak and act to expose the system to those on the margins. They are focussed on finding creative solutions. They are the disrupters essential for the future of the church – a future that demands adaptive change and the ability to navigate chaotic waters. The major shift in the concept of 'mission *to* the margins' to 'mission *from* the margins' affirms the importance of disruptive leadership. It opens the way to understanding the possibilities of mission by those who understand vulnerable positions and exclusionary forces from first-hand experience.

'Jesus […] did not write a book but formed a community' (Newbigin 1989:238). God's preferred instrument for mission is the communion of disciples, the congregation. The local church is the witnessing community and the primary agent of vocation. This relational community of disciples is bound together by love

and participates in God's mission of overflowing love. Missional leaders are facilitators of ministries and mentors to disciples. The leader changes from mobiliser to participant, and from commander to network builder. Missional leadership is a participatory model of discernment and service. The focus is more on the priesthood of all believers, although the importance of specific leaders with specific responsibilities is recognised. In a relational understanding of the Trinity and its implications for the social reality of the church, leadership is morphing into a model of distributed authority and network leadership – a collegial ministry. It is 'relational, takes place in networks of relationships, and demonstrates the nature of God's love [in] the [praxis of] relationships' (Guder 2015:155). Network leadership empowers, connects people in the system to each other, facilitates communication and leads in mission.

Congregations are not machines or factories, but sensitive organisms held together by intricate living networks. Leaders respect this and nurture and cultivate a missional culture in congregations. Missional leadership is to attend to the congregational culture and the formation of a community by attending to habits and practices. Habits and practices transform culture. And culture is expressed in practices and habits.

It is my deep conviction that the transformative nature of leadership, and the inner dynamic of the missional church, is opening a future with exciting new possibilities, a future that will unfold and become increasingly clearer as leaders lead towards God's preferred future. 'The church participates in God's mission, and thus also in the recreation of the cosmos to reflect the joy of the Trinity' (Niemandt 2016a:4). Leaders serve the church by focussing their 'love and life on the joy of the gospel' (Niemandt 2016a:7). The church is a hermeneutic of the gospel – the good news of joy and life in fullness. In the words of *Evangelii Gaudium*, 'the joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus' (Niemandt 2016a:3).

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The turn towards and focus on the missional church is probably the most important theme within the field of missiology and practical theology since the Second World War. Within this movement, the role of leadership is of vital significance. This scholarly monograph unpacks the challenges of leadership within a missional ecclesiology. Professor Nelus Niemandt is an internationally renowned specialist in the field of missional theology. The book has a strong theoretical foundation and provides an adequate theoretical framework for the understanding of aspects of missional leadership such as the spirituality of the leader, discernment, imagination, innovation and leading from the margins.

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This scholarly monograph on missional leadership represents an exceptional contribution to congregational leadership studies in the post-Christendom era. It is written by someone with vast experience as an academic scholar and church leader. The book maps new roads of adaptive challenges for scholars in missiology and for missional leaders. It demands from specialists in the field to dig deep into the cultural chambers of traditional church systems, to unpack and repack habits, attitudes and beliefs of the dominant congregational culture.

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