

LEADERSHIP AND REGIONS

DOCUMENT 6

We will look at *leadership and regions* under these headings:

- Who and where
- The tension of geography, gifting, and relationship
- Authority, relationship, servant-heartedness, team, and accountability
- Suitably gifted
- Standing invitation

WHO AND WHERE

Global Team

This team provides impetus for our global mission, guards our vision and values, oversees movement finance and communication, and helps develop leadership in different continents and hubs. The Global Team hosts an annual gathering, open to all who lead partner churches around the world, as well as churches exploring partnership with Advance. The current team is made up of: PJ Smyth (leader), Brian Barr, Alan Frow, Donnie Griggs, Matt Hosier, Rigby Wallace, Steve van Rhyn, and Ryan TerMorshuizen.

Continent Teams

We currently have teams in Africa, Europe, and North America. These teams provide impetus for the mission on their continents, oversee continent finance and communication, and help develop leadership in different hubs. Each Continent Team hosts an annual gathering, open to all who lead partner churches on their continent (and sometimes further afield), as well as those exploring partnership with Advance

Hub Teams

These teams help connect partner churches in smaller regions, such as cities (note that if there are only a few partner churches in a particular nation, that nation may function as a hub, until there are more partner churches). Once there are a reasonable number of churches in a hub, the hub becomes the main environment where partnership is expressed. While hubs are not isolated units, churches in the same hub will get to know each other well. This will happen as they *plant and strengthen* together for the good of their region, and work with other hubs for the good of their country and continent. Each hub will operate slightly differently, depending on their context. However, minimally, they will all facilitate fellowship, training, support (strengthening), and planting efforts.

Task Teams

In addition to these broader leadership teams, we also form Task Teams, when required, for projects such as the *Advance Church Planters Course* (ACPC), Finance, and Communications.

THE TENSION OF GEOGRAPHY, GIFTING, AND RELATIONSHIP

Leaders emerge according to their gifting, character, and fruitfulness. While geographical location is a factor, giftedness is a greater factor. For example, we don't just appoint a leader in every geographical area simply because we "need one." If there isn't a suitably gifted person in a certain region (such as a continent or hub), then a suitably gifted person will provide leadership from further afield, until someone emerges locally. This external leader will empower various people locally with appropriate responsibilities so that the local mission can move forward.

Therefore, although the current names of our teams are geographical (global, continental, and hub), they are actually more defined by a suitably gifted leader/team than the geography. However, geographical names are simpler, so we use them where we can.

Also, we do not restrict people's ministry or relationships on the basis of geography. For example, if an Advance leader, in California, planted a church in Germany, or developed a relationship with a church in Germany, he might play the primary role in the Advance mission in that nation, even though the "Advancers" in the UK are geographically closer to Germany than he is. In time, he might wean his relationships in Germany onto Advance UK, but the point is that *relationship* is more important than *geography*.

As we plant churches and grow, we might adjust our terminology to better reflect how we are working. This is dependent on *both* geographical doors that the Lord may open, and leaders that he may raise up. Therefore, our terminology for leadership and regions needs to remain flexible.

AUTHORITY. RELATIONSHIP. SERVANT HEARTEDNESS. TEAM. ACCOUNTABILITY.

Authority

The New Testament teaches that local elders are the highest human authority in the local church. Therefore, authority in a local church lies with the local elders, not with the movement. However, we also see that New Testament churches enjoyed meaningful connection with suitably gifted translocal individuals and other churches. Therefore, we think of partner churches as autonomous (self-governing) but interdependent.

Relationship

In keeping with the atmosphere of New Testament church, we have a relational approach to leadership. *Genuine relationship* is one of our four pillars of partnership (See *Document 2 The Power of Partnership*). A relational approach to leadership has many benefits, including raising levels of trust, which makes it easier for local elders to be receptive to external influence.

Servant-Heartedness

The Advance leadership ethos is to imitate Jesus, who came not to be served, but to serve. We go the extra mile for each other, always seeking what is best for one another, the local church, and our shared mission.

Team

Although the Bible never actually uses the word, "team," the concept is certainly seen throughout the Bible. God himself is a "team" (the Trinity). Jesus usually had a team around him, and sent his disciples out in teams of two. Local elderships are teams; and the apostle, Paul, was constantly working with teams of different shapes and sizes. Common sense and experience provide great reasons to prioritize working in teams, as do accountability, sustainability, friendship, and the benefit of the strength and breadth of gifting. To this end, we take *team* seriously - sometimes even foregoing opportunities for speedy advance, for the sake of strengthening a team. We see Paul do this in 2 Cor. 2:12-13. This means that we do not let the movement as a whole, or a particular church, become overly dependent on one person.

Accountability

The plurality and accountability of a local eldership team goes a long way to self-correcting internal blind spots and weaknesses, but not the whole way. A humble and wise eldership team will give a "standing invitation" (more on this below) to one or two trusted Advance leaders to answer, at least in part, the Roman poet, Satires', question, "Quis custodiet ipsos custodiet?" (Who guards the guards?).

SUITABLY GIFTED

There are three challenges in trying to work out who is suitably gifted to lead a movement, and lead within a movement. Firstly, unlike with local elders, the Bible doesn't give a clear list of characteristics for such roles. We presume that, minimally, they should display the same characteristics as local elders. Yet, what about in addition to that? Secondly, the obvious Biblical prototype for movement leadership was the apostle, Paul, and those who helped him. However, while there is much we can imitate from Paul and his friends, there are some things that we cannot. Thirdly, experience shows that the seemingly obvious choice for movement leader (e.g. the man who leads the biggest church in the movement, or the most loved leader in the movement) is often not suitably gifted to lead a movement. How then are we to decide *who* should lead a modern day movement of churches? If churches naturally begin to form behind a certain individual/team, that may well indicate that the individual/team is suitably gifted. Yet, the question remains: is there a Biblical grid to help us discern who should lead a movement?

We believe the most helpful "gift grid" is probably the gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11: apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher. We believe that all these ministries still exist today *in a certain form*, "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...when each part is working properly, [making] the body grow so that it builds itself up in love" (Eph. 4:12-16). It would be poor exegesis to pick and choose which of the gifts in this list are in play today, and overly optimistic to say that the church has reached the place of "until," fully mature and no longer in need of these gifts! Clearly, these gifts will be needed in every generation to build up the body of Christ, until Christ returns.

We believe that these gifts, working together, provide a suitably gifted and balanced team to lead a movement that is devoted to the primary New Testament tasks of planting and strengthening churches. We are not saying that every leadership team in Advance (global, continental, and hub) consist exclusively of people with these gifts, nor that these gifts don't exist outside of our recognized teams. Nevertheless,

broadly speaking, we are saying that we try to develop and deploy Ephesians 4 gifts to lead and influence the movement.

We are careful not to overstate the importance of Ephesians 4 ministries; and we know that many other spiritual gifts are needed in the mix. We are also slow to “label” anyone, as it often takes many years to discern who is gifted in what way. *However, if we disown Ephesians 4 ministries, we are left with the unnerving scenario of having to invent our own extrabiblical specifications and vocabulary for those who serve churches from the “outside,” and help churches partner together.* While there are challenges associated with working out how Ephesians 4 ministries work today, there are *greater* challenges with thinking that we can make extrabiblical decisions about who is gifted to lead movements today.

In view of the contemporary disagreements regarding Ephesians 4 ministries, a few important things need to be said:

- Unlike the original apostles and prophets, Ephesians 4 ministries today do not write Scripture, or lay (or try to re-lay) the foundations of the universal church. Nor do they act with the kind of authority appropriate only for those who were personally commissioned by Christ to shape the original generation of the church. However, similarly to New Testament times, Ephesians 4 gifts are still required to help the church *in each generation* reach *maturity* and be on *mission*. Every new church plant needs to be dynamically founded on the original foundation that was laid by the original generation of Ephesians 4 gifts and the word of God. New churches and their leaders can be significantly helped in this regard when served by the Ephesians 4 gifts. An *apostolic gift* may provide them with fatherly security and wisdom in terms of building; a *prophetic gift* may help them develop a healthy life of the Spirit and provoke them in the purposes of God; an *evangelistic gift* may equip them to better reach the lost; and a *seasoned pastor-teacher* may help care for them, develop them in sound doctrine, and help the local elders mature as local pastor-teachers themselves. It seems rather foolish to imagine that any eldership team, particularly a new one in a new church, can maximize their potential without some outside help from suitably gifted people – this is the power of the body of Christ.
- Since, in certain contexts, some of the Ephesians 4 gifts are more contentious than others, we *adjust our language* to promote unity, while still being faithful to our convictions. We usually opt for generic phrases, such as, “translocal ministry,” rather than always using Ephesians 4 language. If we do refer to a person’s unique area of giftedness, we usually refer to it as an adjective, rather than a noun, e.g. *apostolic*, or *prophetic*, or *evangelistic* ministry.
- Because local elders are the highest human authority in a local church, Ephesians 4 ministries today:
 - (a) Promote *timeless, foundational Biblical doctrine and values*, and leave the local elders to determine how such doctrine and values are expressed in their church.
 - (b) Are *functional, not positional*. The original apostles and prophets had positional authority over all churches (and still do, through the Scripture that some of them wrote). However, such ministries today are only legitimized by actually functioning in a certain church/churches. Therefore, an individual might be considered “apostolic” by a certain church, but not by others.
 - (c) Are *invited* by the local elders, not *imposed* on them.

A STANDING INVITATION

While translocal ministry is invited by partner churches not imposed, partner churches will give the Advance leaders (usually one or two men in particular) a *standing invitation* to speak into their eldership team. This doesn't mean that they will show up unannounced (!), but it does mean that they will lovingly watch your back. This is a joy and a privilege for a local church. Think of when the Galatians drifted into legalism. They were so far into legalism that they didn't even realize it. They were in so much trouble that they didn't even realize they were in trouble. Yet, because they had given Paul a standing invitation, Paul and his team kept a loving eye on them, and got involved as soon as they discerned their drift. The Galatian elders must have slept well at night knowing that someone who loved them had their back. By becoming a partner church, the local elders are issuing this kind of standing invitation to the Advance team.