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## THE ROLE OF THE ECCLESIAL LEADERS IN SHAPING THE FUTURE CHURCH

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Through Biblical imagery or metaphor, the church is described as a social institution, and like all other organizations, has a purpose in achieving its vision, mission, values, goals, and beliefs. The church's purpose is met through the use of human beings, which is a complex system that is made up of several components that interrelate and interconnect with the other like parts of a human body. One part of the system cannot function without the other. The role of the future leader is to know this complex system and how it must function in the future to progress forward. Leaders must challenge present organizational and leadership structures of faith communities with purpose for growth, change, and production in the church. The trend of culture, immigration, inculturation, migration, and mutuality are discussed. It is shown that systems theory can be applied within the church to achieve its mission in preparation for the future.

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The world has changed, is constantly changing, and will continue to change. Change is inevitable and occurs throughout facets or cycles of life and is a necessary component for life. This life includes humans and nature. For example, life develops through change. A seed is planted inside of the ground, begins to grow, takes root, bursts out of the ground, and continues to grow into a flower; a child is conceived through fertilization of the egg by the seed (sperm), then the child grows inside of the womb, is born, and continues to grow. With these two examples, if growth stops, something is wrong. The plant or flower may need more soil or water, need to be replanted, or even pruned. For the child, the milk formula may need to change, the child may need more vitamins, have a medical condition that requires treatment by a doctor, or may have some social development problem that contributes to nongrowth. The

analogy described can be applied to the church. Continual change in growth is an important ingredient to shaping the future of the church; therefore, the role of the ecclesial leader is an important one. The ecclesial leader must encourage and allow for change to take place, thus not stopping or staunching growth in the church. This can become a daunting task, however, necessary for ecclesial leaders to design structure, and challenge organizational and leadership structures of faith communities with purpose for growth, change, and production in the church.

The Lord God Almighty wants the church to progress forward in doing his will. After the flood account, the people that were born from Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gn 10:1) were of all one language and speech (Gn 11:1). Everyone could communicate with the other, therefore was of the same culture; however, as they traveled from the east they decided to stop progressing forward (v. 2) but instead to build a city and tower that would reach the heavens and to make a name for themselves so that they would not be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth (v. 4). Their actions resulted in them not doing the will of God as commanded to Noah and his sons after the flood. Genesis 9 states, "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (v. 1), and, "As for you, be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it" (v. 7).<sup>1</sup> Their disobedient actions landed them into a state of confusion. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit confused their language and speech (v. 9), thus there was a break in communication that caused individuals to band together or attach to those who were common to them in dialect. People had no choice but to scatter abroad in the earth with one another (v. 9) to progress forward in bringing about change. Differences in culture and nations of the world began. The purpose of this article is to describe my own understanding of the role of the ecclesial leader to shape the future of the church by design, and to challenge organizational and leadership structures of faith communities through planning and preparation. A few questions arise that should be addressed: Can one challenge the design and organizational leadership structures of the church? Are there repercussions for challenging structures in particular faith communities? What is the risk for challenging design and organizational leadership structures?

## I. THE CHURCH ORGANIZATION DESCRIBED

Before one answers these questions, let's first define what the church organization is. Is it different from any other type of organization or institution? The church has been described heavily using theological images over the past decades.<sup>2</sup> Minear<sup>3</sup> described the church using ninety-six different metaphors. Dulles described the church using several models or metaphors—institution, mystical communion, sacrament, herald, servant—and explained that the Bible speaks entirely through

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture references are from the New American Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Floyd Bantz, "Old Roles, But New Routines: A Biblical Theological Rationale for Executive Leadership," *Brethren Life and Thought*, no. 27 (1982): 142.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 1960).

images that are metaphorical<sup>4</sup> which plays a prominent role in contemporary ecclesiology.<sup>5</sup> Driver<sup>6</sup> described the church using twelve Biblical images: the way; sojourners; the poor; the kingdom of God; new creation; new humanity; the people of God; the family of God; the Shepherd and the flock; salt, light and a city; a spiritual house; and a witnessing community. Dulles further stated that images are immensely important for the life of the church—for its preaching, its liturgy, and its general *spirit de corps*,<sup>7</sup> and Driver<sup>8</sup> contends that the life and mission of the church must have adequate images to capture and inspire its imagination. Similarly, Bradley<sup>9</sup> believes that the church must explore Biblical images of the church in order to understand its identity. Although the church has been described using several different metaphors or models from a Biblical perspective in theological terms, Bantz stated that one has ignored the basic nature of the church.<sup>10</sup> The idea is that the church in basic terms is just like any other organization or institution in that a group of people gather together having things in common to meet some specific purpose. Banks<sup>11</sup> states that an organization's structure is composed, constructed, and assembled together by particular components that make up the organization, thus giving one understanding and purpose to its existence. These components are vision, mission, values, goals, and beliefs. In other words, all organizational types should possess these elements.

The church can also be described as a social institution which is just like other institutions. Bantz further stated:

An institution is any gathering of persons who have accepted a common purpose, a common discipline to guide the pursuit of that purpose, to the end that each involved person reaches higher fulfillment of that purpose through serving and being served by the common venture, than would be achieved alone or in a less committed relationship.<sup>12</sup>

The emphasis placed here is that like all institutions, the church consists of human beings, thus having a language of their own, an organizational pattern, decision-making process, and political structure made up of people that identify with the each other, choose leaders, grant authority, and influence community<sup>13</sup> like all other institutions. In more simplistic terms, the church exhibits the same characteristics as other institutions. Institutions are important in impacting the lives of individuals through the leadership of their leaders. Therefore, leadership is an important factor for the future church in

<sup>4</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Image Books, 2002), 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>6</sup> John Driver, *Images of the Church in Mission* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Driver, *Images of the Church*.

<sup>9</sup> Phillip Bradley, "Planning for the Future: The Church as a Social System," *Brethren Life and Thought*, no. 27 (1982): 213-222.

<sup>10</sup> Bantz, "Old Roles," 142.

<sup>11</sup> Tonya Banks, "The Link Between Theological Emphasis and the Organizational Structure of Faith Communities Within an Ecclesial Context: The Church," *The Ooze*, <http://theooze.com/church/the-link-between-theological-emphasis-and-the-organizational-structure-of-faith-communities-within-an-ecclesial-context-the-church-by-tonya-banks/>.

<sup>12</sup> Bantz, "Old Roles," 142.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 142.

preparing for turbulent change. Such change includes technological advancements, political change, and inventing new ways for meeting the demands of the future church due to social change.

## II. MOVING AWAY FROM TRADITION TO A CHURCH INSIDE OUT

Leaders should be prepared to fight against tradition and the status quo which may include getting rid of particular organizational structures and old ways of doing things. Tradition is good, however may not be good enough to accommodate change in society and the church. Bradley posits that the church only gives attention to its internal life and structures when planning for the future; however, it is imperative to also give attention to outside environmental factors that affect radical changes in society, lifestyles, values, and lives of people<sup>14</sup>. The idea that Bradley presents is that the outside environment transmits signals to the church, thus calling for change. Future leaders of the church must be sensitive to environmental factors that may impact the church. This allows for finding opportunities and threats, thus knowing which are best for implementation in the church.

Berquist and Karr suggest that the future church must be conceived, birthed, and conceptualized through interior design.<sup>15</sup> The idea is that as a designer, the design starts from the inside then evolves or is manifested on the outside. Similarly, Duraisingham states that there is a “call to a fundamental reorientation of the church to be church inside out.”<sup>16</sup> Berquist and Karr state that the church, like other organizations, keeps with the status quo or the familiar when improving or trying to fix things using an outer perspective, such as adding or getting rid of existing programs or methodologies.<sup>17</sup> The idea presented is that the future church should be designed and realigned from the inside out, thus speaking to the future. This calls for a new level of thinking when it comes to understanding the church. Berquist and Karr hint that the church must try various avenues or methods in accomplishing its purpose, including those things that have not been tried before. As an example, Jesus radically changed the church, thus irritating the religious leaders of that day with his inside-out ideas which included the teaching that to be rich you must be poor; to be first, you must be last; to live, you must first die; to gain, you must lose; and it is by giving that you receive.<sup>18</sup> Jesus Christ brought about changes in the church which broke down traditional barriers. Jesus stated in Matthew 16:18, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” Jesus implemented change to tradition to help with building his church. If Jesus had to break down barriers in the church during the era when he walked in physical form on the earth, then leaders of the church should accept new ideas, models, and methods, thus implementing changes in

<sup>14</sup> Bradley, “Planning for the Future,” 219.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Bergquist and Allan Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out: A Guide for Designers, Refiners, and Re-aligners* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Duraisingham, “From Church-Shaped Mission to Mission-Shaped Church,” *Anglican Theological Review*, no. 92 (2010): 9.

<sup>17</sup> Bergquist and Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

preparation for the future church. Therefore, one can challenge the design and organizational leadership structures of the church; however, there may be repercussions and risks. Jesus challenged the status quo which led him to his death, but he came alive again so that humans would have everlasting life. He took the risk and repercussions so that one could receive salvation. It was worth it all to restore mankind back to the Father. There was victory over death and hell. Therefore, leaders within the church should adapt, challenge present and traditional structures and procedures, and also take risks in making necessary changes to save one's soul.

### III. CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP STYLE TO THINKING CREATIVELY

Kincaid<sup>19</sup> stated that Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky<sup>20</sup> hint that organizations make modifications to address problems with the organization's present understanding of structures and procedures without considering the new, thus are not willing to adapt, challenge, or take a risk to think of something new to implement. A leader for the future church may need to change their leadership style and methods to reach the people of the church and community. For example, adaptive leadership allows for the breaking away of predictable patterns that are informed by outdated assumptions, and allows leaders to think creatively. This form of leadership also seeks to increase an organization's capacity to thrive by aligning the organization with its core values and purposes.<sup>21</sup> In the Old Testament, leadership was autocratic<sup>22</sup> or like a dictatorship; it was a pattern followed by priests, prophets, and kings. However, in the New Testament, or for the first-century church, this pattern changed. Thomas<sup>23</sup> reveals that participatory leadership emerged and Nilsson<sup>24</sup> shows that leadership structure varied in the church, therefore implying that there was no standard or static form of leadership to be followed. Implementation of a leadership style or form depended upon the situation or needs of the New Testament church. Similarly, Wright<sup>25</sup> stated that in the early church, different times, different places, and different authors showed different patterns of structure and leadership that continued to evolve as the needs of the New Testament church grew and changed. Acts 6 reveals democratic leadership; Acts 13 shows theocratic leadership; 1 Corinthians 12-14 shows charismatic leadership; and 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, 1 Titus, and 2 Titus reveal institutionalized leadership.<sup>26</sup> These scriptures reveal that leadership types or styles for the church changed based on its needs,

<sup>19</sup> William B. Kincaid, "The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World, Review," *Christian Century*, no. 127 (2010).

<sup>20</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 40.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph C. Thomas, "New Testament Basis for Group Decision Making," *Regent University Center for Leadership Studies*, [http://www.jctnet.us/MOL/LEAD605/Papers/ThomasJMRRangeBP\\$2.pdf](http://www.jctnet.us/MOL/LEAD605/Papers/ThomasJMRRangeBP$2.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Nils-Olov Nilsson, "The Debate on Women's Ministry in the Swedish Pentecostal Movement: Summary and Analysis," *The Journal of the Society for the Pentecostal Studies*, no. 22 (2000).

<sup>25</sup> J. Robert Wright, "Ordination in the Ecumenical Movement," *Review and Expositor*, no. 78 (1981): 498.

<sup>26</sup> Nilsson, "The Debate on Women's Ministry," 74-75.

therefore leaders must adapt in addressing the needs of the future church in times of trend and change so that the church may continually grow and expand. It must be mentioned that this growth can be both natural and spiritual; however, the spiritual should be sought first. Matthew 6:33 states, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." The leader for the future church must also seek God first in preparation for the future church.

### III. CULTURAL TREND

There have been trends in culture, migration, immigration, inculturation, and mutuality, just to name a few that must be addressed in the future church by its leaders. Questions that arise are: How will the church handle these trends? How have these trends impacted the church? What does it say about mission for the church? Bergquist and Karr<sup>27</sup> analogize the church using four of Morgan's<sup>28</sup> metaphors: organizations as machines, organisms, brains, and cultures. The church is described as bureaucratic, goal oriented, and predictable; it is committed to growth and reproduction for survival.<sup>29</sup> The church provides information and is a learning environment through its preaching, teaching, seminary training, and discipleship programs.<sup>30</sup> Those that are culture based follow beliefs, rules, norms, and traditions, thus determining if one is considered an insider or outsider<sup>31</sup> of the group or church. Of these metaphors, culture seems to be the most influential trend in the church that leaders must be aware of and able to adapt to in order to fulfill the needs of the future church. Migration, immigration, inculturation, and mutuality are part of culture in that they are interrelated or build upon the other.

#### *Culture*

The culture of any organization can be described like a religion<sup>32</sup> in that there are a set of common beliefs, customs, and values that are shared among members, as well as groups of an organization which describe the way things are and why things are the way they are. This culture definition sounds much like the definition or implication presented by Bantz<sup>33</sup> and Banks.<sup>34</sup> The idea is that organizations and institutions are all alike in that they have the same characteristics to meet its purpose. The culture of an organization is actions, ways of thinking, practices, stories, and artifacts that characterize a particular organization.<sup>35</sup> With culture, there are varying views that one should consider. These are the practical, interpretive, critical, and postmodern views. Cultures that are built upon the principles of ideology, indoctrination, tightness of fit, and

<sup>27</sup> Bergquist and Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out*.

<sup>28</sup> Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Bergquist and Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out*, 169.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>32</sup> Eric M. Eisenburg, H. L. Goodall, and Anglea Trethewey, *Organizational Communication: Balancing Creativity and Constraint* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> Bantz, "Old Roles."

<sup>34</sup> Banks, "The Link Between Theological Emphasis."

<sup>35</sup> Eisenburg et al., *Organizational Communication*, 127.

elitism are effective and strong<sup>36</sup> which involves shaping the behavior of the employees or members to achieve success. According to the practical view, there is increase in employee or member satisfaction and employee or member commitment to help build strong relationships. The interpretive view of culture states that it is the employees of the organization that shape the organization, not the managers or leaders. The idea is that the culture emerges in the symbolism or discourse of everyday organizational life with the focus on how people communicate and create meaning in dialogue to understanding culture.<sup>37</sup> The final view, critical and postmodern, is focused on challenges to power relationships and the status quo<sup>38</sup> which calls for a change in addressing needs for the church.

For the future leader, culture will play an important role in understanding and addressing the needs of the church. Romo<sup>39</sup> describes the Christian church as a modern tower of Babel in that it is a pluralistic society dispersed across the entire continent. America is made up of various ethnic and cultural groups. These groups can be identified as American Indians, Arabs, Europeans, Hispanics, African Americans, Immigrants and Refugees, and Internationals. Romo makes it clear that ethnicity, culture, and language are trends that have influenced the church and states, "With the increase of mobility and technology, the world continues to shrink. Ours is a global community; in a sense, we live in a global village."<sup>40</sup> The idea presented here is that the church must accept diversity, thus not trying to Americanize people in the church. The focus should be on evangelizing, thus sharing the gospel within the context the people know. The church should have flexible infrastructures designed to provide ministry and witness to America's mission field<sup>41</sup> by positively responding to the opportunity to imbue the American mosaic with the redeeming love of Jesus Christ.<sup>42</sup>

### *Migration and Immigration*

Migration and immigration, which stem from culture, are also important for the leader to be aware of in meeting the needs for the future church. Migration is seen as a trend that will influence, shape, and challenge organizational and leadership structures of the global church or future church. Huffard states that Christianity is a "migrating religion"<sup>43</sup> in that the religion is not enslaved to one geographical, ethnic, or cultural center.<sup>44</sup> Huffard believes that the future—the next Christendom—depends on migration. The point being made is that future church growth will be based on immigrants. Huffard identified that the shifts to Christianity began in Acts 8:4 as the

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>38</sup> Einsenburg et al., *Organizational Communication*, 143.

<sup>39</sup> Oscar Romo, "Ethnic Southern Baptists: Context, Trends, Contributions," *Baptist History and Heritage*, no. 18 (1983): 3.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>43</sup> Everett Huffard, "When Scholarship Goes South: Biblical Scholarship and Global Trends," *Restoration Quarterly*, no. 48 (2006): 66.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 66.

gospel was preached by the disciples everywhere they went. Then, migration became a major factor in the emergence of Islamic age (750-1750 A.D.), followed by Christianity as it emerged again as a dominant religious force in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. After this, over 50 million Europeans migrated overseas between 1815-1915.<sup>45</sup> Shifts have been identified to go from Hebrew to Greek, Greek to Latin, then Latin to German to other European languages. Individuals migrate from other countries for various reasons or factors to gain a better life. Kling<sup>46</sup> refers to these factors as “push” (famine, natural catastrophes, war, oppression, and poverty in their home countries) and “pull” (food, peace, liberty, and prosperity elsewhere). The globalization of the immigration trend comes with another’s culture, philosophy, and their needs. In simpler terms, one has arrived into a new environmental setting that is different from where one came from. The question arises: How does the church or how can the church accommodate new arrivals with various diversities?

### *Migration, Immigration, Mutuality, and Missions*

To help with answering this question, Johnson states, “The contemporary experience of living and acting across cultural borders means both the loss of traditional meanings, and the creation of new symbolic expressions, thus reconstructing feelings of belonging”<sup>47</sup> and that people are not buying what the traditional church is selling.<sup>48</sup> Kling explains that an Ireland pastor studied and learned about the culture of immigrants, such as sociology, religious history, demographics, philosophy, economics, and missiology to gain a current understanding of complex issues<sup>49</sup> which helped with knowing how to minister and address the needs of immigrants in their church. Leaders of the future church can use such an example to help them prepare to minister to those of different cultures in a changing society.

Johnson identifies trends that have impacted missions around the world. These are identified as the shifting of Christianity to the global south which is due to what has already been described as migration and increasing proximity of once distant peoples. Christians have maintained limited contact with Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists,<sup>50</sup> for example. Johnson points out that Christianity has become Westernized, and that there is a lack of witnessing the gospel of Jesus Christ to other faith communities because of non-relationships. The migration trend has occurred due to globalization, an economic phenomenon<sup>51</sup> which is defined by Steger as a “multidimensional set of social processes” including economic, political, cultural, technological, and ecological

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>46</sup> Fritz Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters. 7 Global Currents That Will Propel the Future Church* (Colorado Springs: David Cook, 2010), 94.

<sup>47</sup> Todd Johnson, “Globalization, Christian Identity, and Frontier Missions,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, no. 27 (2010): 167.

<sup>48</sup> Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters*, 91.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>50</sup> Johnson, “Globalization,” 165.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 166.



processes that “resists being confined to any thematic framework.”<sup>52</sup> The idea is that complexity of globalization impacts Christian identity and missions in the world by establishing relationships with others of diverse ethnicities, languages, denominations, practices, theologies, and creeds. However, Kling states that “organizations” that seek to practice mutuality must do more than merely establish token partnerships or hire employees,<sup>53</sup> but they must take measures to solve. In other words, the future leader of the church must share the gospel of Jesus Christ with other faith communities that are diverse from us and find ways to establish loving relationships with one another.

In addition, there is concern that leaders leave their own countries to pursue positions of ministry in the West, thus leaving a lack of leadership back home. Neill<sup>54</sup> reports that the future role of expatriate missionaries is to drain away church leadership from the third-world churches to positions in the West. The complaint is that the center of control in third-world churches has changed to indigenous leaders in that people leave to go to America, thus becoming Westernized. This implies that there is a call of leaders to remain within their own countries, thus providing the needed training and education for missions. Neill states that the essential task of missions is to proclaim the gospel to those who have never heard it before. The idea presented here is that some leaders may need to stay home or within their own countries to witness the gospel of Jesus Christ. To take this further, one should handle matters at home then expand abroad. For example, Jesus’ mission was to preach the gospel to the Jews and not the Gentiles. It was not yet time for him to preach or heal the Gentiles. For example, a woman from Canaan came crying to Jesus for help (Mt 15: 22). In Matthew 15:24, Jesus states that he was sent to the lost sheep of Israel. However, the woman came and worshipped him and asked for help again (Mt 15:25). Jesus was marveled at her faith and delivered the woman’s daughter (Mt 15:28). Although it was not yet time for deliverance to come to the Canaanites, Jesus still provided deliverance because of faith. After the day of Pentecost, there was an opportunity to move abroad to preaching and ministering to all humankind. Acts 1:8 states, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” This very scripture catapulted the opportunity to world missions including all nationalities.

### *Inculturation, Mutuality, and Missions*

Inculturation is another element that is closely associated with culture and missions. Those that are on the mission field, who witness and travel to other parts of the world to minister Jesus Christ, require a set of skills. Smith says that inculturation is required and states, “When we speak of the inculturation of missionaries, we speak of ourselves, the strangers, the visitors, the religious people at the service of men and women of another culture with the task to adapt ourselves to render ourselves sensitive to the values, priorities, wishes, ways of conduct, of communication, of relating to

<sup>52</sup> Manfred Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003). Preface.

<sup>53</sup> Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters*, 83.

<sup>54</sup> S. Neil, “Mission in the 1980s,” *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research*, no. 3 (1979): Abstract.

others".<sup>55</sup> Basically, Smith is saying that one needs to respect another's culture. The skills that are mentioned are that the missionary must have respect, love, and language. Another example comes from a paper prepared by Smith<sup>56</sup> from the Mission Committee of the Conference of Major Superior Men Religious and the Global Ministry Committee of Leadership Conference of Women Religious. This paper discusses personal missionary experiences and was presented to the United States Catholic Mission Council. It states, "Within this basic Christian hope, our own central hope as missionary religious is that we, as a missioned church, will respond creatively and enthusiastically to the growing awareness of other cultures, within and outside the United States, of the needs of other peoples and of how much we have to receive from them."<sup>57</sup> The implication here is that culture is important to learn for missions. Things are performed differently in the present day. Smith stated this better: "The present is structured differently and faces us with new challenges to inter-cultural sensitivity, to our own humility and ultimately to a renewal in our self-understanding as a church and mission."<sup>58</sup> Thus, in embracing "unity in diversity," for a more thoroughly incarnated faith, one is not liable to be labeled "western" or "imported."<sup>59</sup> Smith also mentions mutuality of missions, a trend also identified by Kling,<sup>60</sup> which calls for accepting another's culture, providing justice in inter-community relations, and a sense of receptiveness.<sup>61</sup> Again, the role of the future leader is to embrace cultural differences and diversities to progress in change of the church, thus not stopping growth but producing progressive life in achieving the mission of the church.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Through the use of Biblical imagery or metaphor, the church has been described as a social institution, and like other organizations has a purpose in achieving its vision, mission, values, goals, and beliefs. The church can be considered a complex social system that is composed of many interrelated subsystems or components. This system can be equated to the body of Christ as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27. Therefore, the church is the body of Christ where each individual member is simultaneously viewed as a member of the body,<sup>62</sup> or each individual church itself is part of several super-systems such as denominations and religious groups, communities, nations, and subsystems such as administrative substructure, committees, deacons, church program organizations, and other groups.<sup>63</sup> Bradley<sup>64</sup> describes the church as a social system that exists among other systems that affect

<sup>55</sup> Simon Smith, "The Future of Mission," *AFER* 27, no. 1 (1985): 23.

<sup>56</sup> Simon Smith, "Hopes and Concerns for Missions," *International Review of Mission*, no. 66 (1977).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>60</sup> Kling, *The Meeting of the Waters*.

<sup>61</sup> Smith, "Hopes and Concerns for Missions," 157.

<sup>62</sup> Bradley, "Planning for the Future," 217.

<sup>63</sup> Allen Graves, "Gaines S. Dobbins: Mr. Church Administration," *Review & Expositor*, no. 75 (1978): 393.

<sup>64</sup> Bradley, "Planning for the Future."

one's life. Bradley<sup>65</sup> and Graves<sup>66</sup> show that systems theory can be applied in the church to understand how the church should function. The focus is to discern and examine both internal and external factors that influence change so that one can be prepared for it. Bradley<sup>67</sup> and Graves<sup>68</sup> also share that one must understand the Biblical images of the church as described in scripture to understand who we are as a church. Utilizing the systems theory can help with understanding and planning for the future church. According to systems theory, the church is viewed as a human that has multiple parts that interrelate with the other. The human is considered the whole system with many parts. The goal of the systems theory includes discerning both inner as well as outer environments that influence the system, thus understanding the organizational structure, roles within the system, and its relationship to the environment,<sup>69</sup> and therefore identifying any emerging problems or opportunities. Using this theory, leaders of the future will be able to diagnose their surroundings and be able to prepare for the future in the midst of a rapidly changing world.

Change is inevitable and the future leaders must seek God's will and plan for the future. Change should not be a surprise, but should be seen as opportunity to do something different from the norm. Graves<sup>70</sup> believes that one should approach change without surprise, apathy, weariness, or indifference, but with enthusiasm and zest. Cultural shifts of change have occurred throughout Biblical and Christian history which should not at all be a surprise to the church. Diversity began when the tower of Babel fell and everyone's language was confused. Several nationalities emerged, thus causing rapid change in society. Leadership will make the difference in making an impact for the future church. Leaders will be challenged to think creatively, thus adopting new ways of doing things in the church.

Although the church has been analogized to any other institution or organization in having the same traits or characteristics in reaching purpose, there is yet a distinguishing factor. Bantz states, "The church is the communal event of the presence of God in Jesus Christ in the world and that church exists in a heavenly-worldly intertersection. The church by its inquiry, witness, and commitment becomes the body of Christ in the world, the continuing Incarnation,"<sup>71</sup> thus implying that the church is also divine. In simpler terms, people make up the body of Christ who God uses to make his presence known or visible to the world through sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church is a living body—the body of Christ—living and functioning among the systems within its environment. God is the ultimate leader that uses humans in the church to fulfill his mission, goals, and tasks for the furthering of his kingdom. It is the church institution that proclaims the salvation of Jesus Christ and that we come from God, find meaning in life by being Jesus Christ's disciples, find purpose in his service, and are

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Graves, "Gaines S. Dobbins."

<sup>67</sup> Bradley, "Planning for the Future."

<sup>68</sup> Graves, "Gaines S. Dobbins."

<sup>69</sup> Bradley, "Planning for the Future," 221.

<sup>70</sup> Graves, "Gaines S. Dobbins," 384.

<sup>71</sup> Bantz, "Old Roles," 144.

destined to be in his presence permanently.<sup>72</sup> Although they live in a rapidly changing environment, leaders of the future church are required to be prepared to adapt to changes that arise through culture, migration, immigration, inculturation, and mutuality with the sole purpose of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ so that one might be saved, disciplined, find their purpose for doing service for Jesus Christ while on earth, and reach the eschatological future. As Christians, our destiny is to complete the mission of Jesus Christ while on earth, thus transitioning to the heavenly church (1 Cor 15:24-26, 28) where life is filled with blessing as described in Revelation 21. The church as we know it will come to an end when Christ returns. His kingdom will be revealed in all its glory. Amen.

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### About the Author

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 144.