Equipping the Whole People of God for the Gathered Life of the Church

R. Paul Stevens

LE-RCCG Equipping the SaintsA
The “Clerical translation

“[God] gave...pastors and teachers;

for the perfecting of the saints,[the fatal comma]
for the work of the ministry,
for the edifying of the body of Christ...” (KJV)

The New International Version

“[God] gave...pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...”
1. We don’t “have” a ministry - God ministers through us

2. The church doesn’t have a minister - It is ministry and mission

3. The main ministry of the laity is not in the church but in the world

4. The purpose of church leaders is not to do their ministry with excellence and competence but to release all the saints for ministry

5. The goal of equipping is not to release individual gifts but to bring the church to corporate/systemic maturity in Christ
The Church is a Rhythm of Gathering and Dispersion

“Church-goer is a vulgar ignorant term and should never be used. You cannot ‘go’ to church; you are the church wherever you go.” Elton Trueblood
Equipping for the Gathered Community

• Pastors and Caregivers*
• A Choir of Preachers*
• Worship leaders*
• Small Group Leaders*
• Men and Women in Full Partnership **
• Family Ministry
  – *see The Equipper’s Guide to Every-Member Ministry
  – ** see Liberating the Laity

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Equipping for the Gathered Community

- Pastors and Caregivers
- A Choir of Preachers
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- Family Ministry

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Equipping Pastors and Care-Givers

• In the early church “laypersons” participated in the celebration of the sacraments, conducted worship (p.55 *Equippers*), were active in church discipline and confession, cast out demons and renounced Satan’s works.

• The pastor is not omnicompetent and not omnipresent.

• Identifying and equipping “amateur” pastors who care “for love.”
Equipping Pastors and Care-Givers

• Start with the heart.
• Develop an equipping group
• Model care-giving in the Sunday service (prayer teams in the communion service)
• Publically commission pastors and care-givers
• Gail congregational ownership
  – John R. Mott: “I would rather train ten persons to do the pastoral work than to do the work of ten pastors.”
Equipping for the Gathered Community

- Pastors and Caregivers
- A Choir of Preachers
- Worship leaders
- Small Group Leaders
- Men and Women in Full Partnership
- Family Ministry

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Equipping a Choir of Preachers

• Why train lay preachers? Biblically we have no option: Acts 2:14-18 “The one great preachers in history, I would contend, is the church. And the first business of the individual preacher is to enable the church to preach” (P.T. Forsyth)

• A Prophets’ company: working with the text in advance; giving people experience in appropriate settings, learning to say one thing well; giving one another feedback (including the pastor)
Equipping for the Gathered Community

- Pastors and Caregivers
- A Choir of Preachers
- Worship leaders
- Small Group Leaders
- Men and Women in Full Partnership
- Family Ministry

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Equipping Worship Leaders

• An alternative to the “performance” based worship service (consumerism)! And the “praise and preaching” minimalism of much evangelical worship.

• Under the New Covenant, instead of being a representative or vicarial priest, the worship leader is a servant priest dedicated to evoking the corporate praise of the rest of the priests.
Equipping Worship Leaders

- **The giftedness factor**
- **The personality factor** (a good preacher – expressive, exhortatory, exciting and wordy - may make a poor worship leader!)
- **The equipping environment** – participatory worship (“The more we are to congregational participation the stronger and more discerning is the leadership that is needed.”)

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Equipping Worship Leaders

- Corporate worship is not the collection of individualized worship
- Take a thematic approach related to the Scripture preached (the integrated curriculum is most helpful to this).
- Elements: Praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin and absolution, intercession, hearing Scripture read, offering, eucharist.
Equipping for the Gathered Community

- Leadership
- Pastors and Caregivers
- A Choir of Preachers
- Worship leaders
- Small Group Leaders (both for gathered life and dispersed)
- Men and Women in Full Partnership
- Family Ministry

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Theological Rationale

• 1. The Church as the body of Christ
The Church is the Body of Christ

“Now you are the body Of Christ, and each one Of you is a part of it.”
1 Cor 12:27

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“It is impossible to conceive of a Christian who is not a member of the Church, which is related to Christ as in him and as his body....Individual Christians consequently do not exist.”

• Ernest Best
• “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body” (1 Cor 12:1).
The church is the Body of Christ

*Organism
*Interdependent members
*Systems
*Wholism- the whole is more than the sum of the parts
*Diversity

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Linear causation – not usually
The way organizations operate
Multiple causation
Systems causation
Quality of Community Life ~ Systemic factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unity</th>
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- **Melting Pot**: Unity through diversity
- **Seed Package**: Bouquet

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Personal experience in Community
~ Systemic factors

DIVERSITY (Personal Significance)

High

Quit & Stay
political jockeying for position

Alienated
Quit & leave

Aligned & integrated life

Crash & burn out

UNITY

Low

Community

High

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Theological Rationale

• 1. The Church as the body of Christ
• 2. Holy Spirit Giftedness of All Members
Spirit Gifts – An Ad Hoc List

- Wisdom
- Knowledge
- Faith
- Gifts of healing
- Working of miracles
- Prophecy
- Distinguishing between spirits
Spirit Gifts – An Ad Hoc List

• Various kinds of tongues
• Interpretation of tongues
• Apostles
• Teachers
• Helpers
• Administrators
• Giving
• service
SPIRITUAL GIFT MYTHS

Don Williams, adapted

1. You get a particular spiritual gift when you become a Christian (an ability transplant)
2. You have to discover your spiritual gift
3. Exercising your spiritual gift is critical to your personal fulfillment
4. All the gifts are created equal and you can ask for any you desire
5. The gift is in you rather than in your functioning in the body
GIFT DISCOVERY

1. **MOTIVATION** (What do you **want** to do?)
   Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Cor. 2:16; 1Th. 4:3; 2 Cor. 5:16-18

2. **EXPERIMENTATION** (What am I **trying** to do to serve people?)
   Col. 3:16; Rom. 12:8

3. **IDENTIFICATION** (How do others **understand** God to be working in my life)
   1Tim. 2:7; 1 Tim. 4:11-16

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Each person is one fraction of the image of Christ; together we can show the pure white light of Christ to the world.
The Overlap of Gifts and Talents

Spirit-Empowerments

Anointed Talents

God-Given Abilities

Usually Temporal or Contextual

Speaking, Giving, Administering, Teaching – Rom 12

Usually Permanent

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Theological Rationale

1. The Church as the body of Christ
2. Holy Spirit Giftedness of All Members
3. Ministry Belongs to the Whole People of God- the priesthood, prophethood and princely rule of all believers

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Equipping Questions

• Who is the minister of the church?
• Is what I am doing making people dependent on me or on God?
• Are we bringing in the church or the kingdom?
• Do I act as though one “cannot go to church; one is the church wherever you go” (Trueblood)?
Equipping Questions

• Are we encouraging unity through diversity or unity through uniformity?
• Is our primary equipping challenge not facilitating the growth of individual Christians but the body to systemic maturity?
• Is maturity both individually and corporately my goal?
• Are we encouraging a spirituality for everyday life?