

# **Leading the Minority Church**

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## Summary

The formation of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) was a triumph in ecclesial leadership. The Joint Commission on Church Union (JCCU), formed in 1957, was significantly catalytic in providing leadership for the union of the Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist churches. The leadership task was far more than a process of “ecclesiastical carpentry”. Central to the work of the JCCU was the sharp focus on “uniting” around the faith of the Church and the Mission of God as articulated in the Basis of Union.

This paper explores the work of the Commission via a document analysis of its reports concerning church union. The analysis points to a range of missional leadership practices that contribute to the understanding of the identity, purpose and future of the Uniting Church.

The thesis also considers various leadership approaches, principles and practices both in various facets of leadership studies and within missional leadership as a subset of this domain. Particular principles and practices are identified with a view to applying them to the formational needs of the Uniting Church’s future.

A synthesis of the research is attempted in the final section of this paper which aims to give insight into the various missional leadership practices that can conceivably shape the identity, purpose and future of the whole interconciliar life of the Uniting Church within the life of Australian society. These practices are informed by the missional leadership practices crucial in the development of the *Basis of Union* and the various principles emerging from various scholarly pursuits in this area.

## Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rajesh' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Signed: .....

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2019

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## Introduction

The formation of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) was a triumph in ecclesial leadership. The Joint Commission on Church Union (JCCU), formed in 1957, was significantly catalytic in providing leadership for the union of the Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist churches. The leadership task was far more than a process of “ecclesiastical carpentry”. Central to the work of the JCCU was the sharp focus on “uniting” around the faith of the Church and the Mission of God.

The work of the JCCU was undertaken during a time of considerable change in the theology and practice of the Mission of God in the Church. Theologians such as Karl Barth along with significant events such as the 1952 International Missionary Conference in Willingen marked a profound shift in the understanding of the *Missio Dei*. This emergent missional theology profoundly influenced and informed the work of the JCCU and subsequently the formation of the UCA.

The UCA emerged as a uniquely missional movement in the ecumenical landscape of Australia. However, over the 42 years of its existence, the UCA has developed amidst internal challenges as well as the buffeting winds of post-modernism and the secularist gales of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia. The UCA, like most mainline denominations, has been declining considerably in contemporary, secularist Australia. Questions of survival and the future of the denomination are constant conversations across all councils of the Church. It is against this backdrop of the challenges to the future shape and direction of the UCA that this research is set. The intent of this research is grounded in the exploration of the influence that the Mission of God has within the life of the UCA, especially as it seeks to be a

missional movement as a minority entity and voice within Australian society. This work will aim to consider anew who the UCA is as a missional movement within this nation. In particular, this research will focus on the need for, and the type of, missional leadership required to further the capacity of the UCA to serve the mission of God as a minority within Australia. To this end the expected outcomes of this research will include the development of a clear understanding of the principles and practices of missional leadership, within the UCA as the people of God who serve the Mission of God. Further to this is the expectation that emerging from this research will be a contribution to the identity, purpose and missional future of the UCA as a minority amidst Australian society.

A range of methodological approaches will be utilised in this research. Initially, a document analysis will be undertaken of the numerous texts and reports generated by the JCCU in the formation of the UCA. This approach will seek to draw out an understanding of the development of the UCA as a missional movement. Following this, a broad literary review of seminal works in the area of leadership studies will be engaged in. This work will be synthesised with a missional leadership approach that is informed by contemporary missiological understandings. The emergent principles and practices of missional leadership will then be considered in light of the work of the JCCU in leading the uniting churches toward union.

## **Chapter 1**

## The Beginning of a Missional Movement

### The Uniting Church in Australia as early expression of a missional movement

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) was inaugurated in 1977 and was heralded as a missional movement that expressed the burgeoning theological shift from the missionary church to the mission of God. The formation of the UCA's *Basis of Union* was the seminal work that encapsulated the emergent missional theology and espoused the primacy of the mission of God over and in the ordering and functioning of the church. The *Basis* celebrated an ecclesial union constituted not merely by legal means but principally through a shared confession of Christ's missional agenda and authority throughout the life of the church. In this way the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) declares "The Church as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit confesses Jesus as Lord over its own life; it also confesses that Jesus is Head over all things, the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity."<sup>1</sup> This confession reflects that the Mission of God begins its distinct purpose in Christ, in whom God has revealed both his love for the world and his authority over it. In covenant relationship, the church is called and equipped to partner in the missional work of God across the globe. While God is unchanging, the state of the UCA and its capacity to serve the mission of God has undergone countless shifts, including a significant decline in membership and affiliation.

For decades, most mainline denominations in Australia have been receiving quantitative data that repeatedly points to declining numbers of people who are engaging in or associating with the church. The Australian Bureau of Statistics data on religious affiliation notes that in 1991 74% of Australians indicated a Christian affiliation. In 2016 this

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<sup>1</sup> Basis of Union, Paragraph 3.

percentage had declined to 52.1%.<sup>2</sup> The narrative for the UCA in these 2016 figures is that “more than 870,000 people – 3.7 per cent of all respondents listed their religious affiliation as Uniting Church. This 2016 figure is down by a total of 195,611 from the 2011 Census.”<sup>3</sup> More sobering are the Census figures from 1991 in which 1,387,700 people noted their religious affiliation with the Uniting Church.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, in the UCA alone the decline has seen 517,700 people cease their affiliation. However, affiliation figures are not the same as those who are in regular weekly attendance within UCA Congregations. In 2013 the National Church Life Survey Research (NCLS), conducted a detailed census of the UCA. The results of this survey indicated that weekly attendance across 2,078 UCA church locations/congregations was 97,200. The report notes that this is a decline of 40% since 1991.<sup>5</sup> The decline in the UCA and other mainline denominations has led to a range of commentary concerning this phenomena including Tom Frame’s thoughts that “until the figures for declining adherence and participation are turned around and some evidence of genuine and sustained increase is presented, there is no alternative but to say that Australians individually and together are losing their commitment to formalised religion and that the kind of people Australians have been and the society they have built will be markedly different in the future.”<sup>6</sup>

The Uniting Church has been completely caught up in this decline and is now firmly entrenched as a church that is a minority within this nation. A minority emerging from declining numbers of people attending worship services and affiliation with the

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<sup>2</sup> “Religion in Australia, 2016 Census Data Summary” [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) accessed October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019

<sup>3</sup> “2016 Census Results” [www.assembly.uca.org.au](http://www.assembly.uca.org.au) accessed 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2019

<sup>4</sup> Year Book Australia, 2002: Religion [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) accessed 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2019

<sup>5</sup> Ruth Powell, Miram Pepper, Nicole Hancock, Sam Sterland and Claudia Mollidor, *2013 Uniting Church Census of Congregations and Ministers*. (Strathfield: NCLS Research 2013), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Tom Frame, *Losing My Religion: Unbelief in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 104.

denomination is a deep concern for the UCA, but it does not alter the purpose of the mission of God nor does it change the requirement of the church to serve God's missional agenda. Missional leadership is an important aspect within the means by which the church serves the mission of God.

There is a missional leadership imperative for the ongoing life of the mainline church, including the UCA which suggests that "Christians and their leaders need to conceive of themselves as a bold minority...Being a self-recognising and self-declaring vigorous, bold, self-confident minority will actually be a liberating experience for Christians."<sup>7</sup> This liberation is deeply intrinsic for the church with respect to its identity, purpose and future in that it potentially releases it from the constraints and pressures of minority status. For the Uniting Church the substance of the faith is of far greater concern than merely surviving through the continuing decline. Furthermore, focusing on the substance of the faith places the mission of God squarely in the frame of the church's purview concerning its identity, purpose and future. This approach helps the UCA to further its life as a missional movement which was fundamental to the approach of the Joint Commission on Church Union (JCCU) when it was tasked with framing the *Basis of Union*.

In what follows, the work of the JCCU will be analysed through engaging with the various reports and texts it produced. This examination will seek to consider the leadership required and demonstrated in the fulfillment of its task of developing the UCA's *Basis of Union*. The aim is to consider what leadership practices and approaches were evident in the work of the JCCU and how these might provide insights into various principles that could be

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<sup>7</sup> Greg Sheridan, *God is Good For You: A Defence of Christianity in Troubled Times* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2018), 322.

applied to missional leadership in the renewing of the UCA as a minority church and voice within Australia.

### **Analysing the Documents of the Joint Commission on Church Union**

The Joint Commission on Church Union commenced its work with a strong commitment to union being built upon the fundamental truths inherent in the substance of the Christian faith and the call of the church to serve the Mission of God. This was a masterstroke of missional leadership. The Commission's starting point allowed it to primarily focus on what would unite the people of God. This served as a bulwark against the inherent points of difference amongst the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist Churches. The Commission was acutely aware that the adherence to denominational polity, theology and practice would not go quietly into the night. This was prevalent, in various ways, across all denominations with one example of note being as follows: "as recently as 1951 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia had withdrawn from union negotiations with the Congregational and Methodist churches saying that...there is an urgent need for the Presbyterian Church of Australia to close its ranks, to avoid the unnecessary dissipation of energy by internal controversy, and, by vigour of our Church extension work, the improved efficiency of our Presbyterian government, and the proclamation of the Christian Gospel with our distinctive theological emphasis, to make our full and proper contribution to the Church catholic."<sup>8</sup>. The Commission was deeply cognisant that these factors had stymied the previous five attempts at church union.

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<sup>8</sup> Andrew Dutney, *Manifesto for Renewal*, fully rev. and exp. ed. (Unley: Mediacom Education, 2016), 25.

The Commission harboured significant concerns regarding the potential for church union to degenerate into a melding together of the numerous theological, doctrinal and ministerial perspectives and approaches shared across each of the denominations. The ecclesiastical retrofitting of what was held in common would have potentially been the easier road to church union. The higher ground was to start at a point that was beyond the attempts at pulling together the best facets of each denomination. Therefore, the convenors of the Commission articulated in the preface of the first report “All the members gave full assent to the view that priority must be given in our discussions to the uncovering of a basis of unity in a commonly held Christian faith, and in a common understanding of what pertains to the true structure of the Church’s life.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, the starting point for the work of the JCCU was a confession that the Church is not its own but rather it is claimed by Christ to serve the Mission of God. Here was the common purpose, the *raison d’être* for the work of church union. This gave the work of the JCCU a clear sense of being submitted to the authority and will of what God was seeking to do as the three denominations gave themselves to the discernment of uniting together. Therefore, from the outset the work of the Commission focused on the fundamentals of the faith of the Church rather than the ecclesial differences in a bold attempt to create a platform for unity.

### **The Faith of the Church**

The commencement of the JCCU’s work was grounded in the primacy of ecclesial unity, while working with an acute awareness of the strengths inherent in the diverse expressions

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<sup>9</sup>The Joint Commission on Church Union, ‘The Faith of the Church, the First Report of the Joint Commission on Church Union of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, the Methodist Church of Australasia, the Presbyterian Church of Australia’ (1959) in *Theology for Pilgrims*, ed. Rob Bos and Geoff Thompson (Sydney: Uniting Church Press, 2008), 54. In this paper reference will continue to be made of the first report of the JCCU as it is found in *Theology for Pilgrims*. As such the shortened footnotes will contain the equivalent references of the first report as found in *Theology for Pilgrims*.

of each of the uniting churches. The work of the JCCU in both its reports highlighted that it “was not simply concerned with the mechanical problem of how to merge three institutions but the existential, missional question of what it means to be the church in the new Australia.”<sup>10</sup> The apparent questions facing the church within the landscape of post war Australian society were not without answers, the content of which strongly affirmed what the three denominations held in common.

In culminating its first report, the Commission projected an assumed set of actions essential for perpetuating and safeguarding the faith of the church that would be formed through union. Central to this assumed future was the development of three statements concerning the faith of the church which would provide a theological robustness to the unity being espoused. The three statements developed by the JCCU were:

1. A statement on “Where the Church’s faith is to be found”
2. A statement of “Our Confession”
3. A statement of the terms in which we receive and proclaim this faith.<sup>11</sup>

The function of these statements served to crystallise much of the Commission’s thinking contained in its first report.

### **A statement on “Where the Church’s faith is to be found”**

In its first report, the JCCU definitively declared where the faith of the Church was to be found, namely “The Church has a faith to affirm only because God has spoken to her; his Word became flesh in Jesus Christ. *The Church’s faith is in Jesus Christ, the Word of God.*”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Dutney, *Manifesto for Renewal*, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Bos and Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 46-47.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

The first report of the Commission pointed to Jesus Christ as being the only basis for unity and for an understanding of how to recast the church in the changing social fabric of Australia. As the church was being shifted to the margins of society, it revealed the inadequacy of denominationalism to ever fully embody the substance of the faith. The Commission was essentially challenging the authority and practice of denominationalism by recasting the authority of Christ within a missional understanding that demanded an ecclesial reframing which church union could accommodate. This bold missional assertion by the Commission was also a willing acceptance of the minority status it might bring to the uniting churches as they existed within a growing secular society. Essentially, the Commission was suggesting that it was valid to be cast as a minority voice within society if the Church was standing firm in its faith in Jesus Christ.

### **A statement of “Our Confession”**

The first report of the JCCU held that the church’s faith in the living God is to be entered into only through Jesus Christ. It proposed that, in the event of union, there be an unequivocal and full statement of where the church’s faith is to be found. With the same intent for unity, the first report called for another statement to be made by the uniting churches that gave one voice to the confession of the church regarding who God is. The truncated confession was suggested as “We confess one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit to whom be glory forever. Amen.”<sup>13</sup> In expounding this confession, the Commission emphasised the “oneness” of God in and through whom the church is able to make its confession.<sup>14</sup> There is

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<sup>13</sup> Bos and Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 54.

<sup>14</sup> The language and focus on the oneness of God has strong resonances with the World Council of Churches Basic Statement which declares: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

a fundamentally trinitarian theology that underpins this confession. It is a basis for understanding the unity within the community of God, the image in which the people of God are called to embody. The emphasis on the oneness of the Trinity generates an understanding that the interpenetration of the three persons leads to unity in which one cannot say to the other that I can be God without you. The inexhaustible basis for unity within the perfect union of the Trinity generated an ecclesial commitment and theological underpinning. Furthermore, it consolidated the work of the Commission in the confessional tradition of the Church. It is from this platform of confession that the church speaks into the wider society with a uniqueness and unity of voice, irrespective of whether it is a minority or majority voice within the national landscape. For the JCCU this was paramount in developing a confessing statement. The missional imperative to bear witness to the gospel was the prevailing concern for the Commission in pointing to the reality that faith was found in Jesus rather than the practices of the church. This served to challenge the church to look beyond doctrinal differences and unite around the confession that each held in common, namely, that the church enters into the life of the Triune God through and in Jesus Christ alone.

### **A statement of the terms in which we receive and proclaim this faith**

The final statement suggested by the JCCU for the church, upon union, was one that sought to offer measures for the safeguarding of the core tenets of the Christian faith. The Commission provided a clear and precise outline of the theological nature and substance of the commitment that the uniting churches would need to make. The terms of these commitments convey an unflinching grip on how the faith of the church is received and by what means it is faithfully and enduringly proclaimed.

In this concluding section of the first report of the Commission, the declaration is made that “the faith of the Church comes to us as Scripture, confession, meditation, proclamation. As we listen to it we hear the voice of believing men<sup>15</sup> (sic) saying Amen to what God has done.”<sup>16</sup> Within these means of receiving the faith of the Church there is an apparent pre-eminence of Scripture both in the ordering of this list and in the reference to Hebrews 12:1-2 which starts this section of the report. This holds for much of the treatment given to Scripture throughout the report.

Furthermore, it is Scripture that provides a foundational reference point for the three statements encapsulating the commitments called for by the Commission. The JCCU proposed that the collective commitment at the point of union needed to be made in faith, in love and in hope. The resonances of 1 Cor. 13:13 are stark and serve to underpin the influence of Scripture in the work of the Commission’s first report. Throughout each statement of commitment there resides a prevailing theme of the Church not being its own but, through grace, it is the people of God who have divinely received the truth of God’s love and hope for all humanity. This provides the church with the posture needed to serve the mission of God, to proclaim the truth of what it has received in order to point people to the fullness of the faith, which is Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it places scripture as the narrative into which the people of God are placed. However, the missional ideal of this approach was still subject to the deeper erring of humanity to fashion the church to reflect human desires and narratives rather than God’s missional purposes. The prevailing concern of the Commission was to keep the substance of the faith and the mission of God always

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<sup>15</sup> The use of gender specific language is a product of its time and is not reflective of the contemporary expression of equality amongst men and women in the life of the UCA.

<sup>16</sup> Bos and Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 58.

before the church as its point of unity. Therefore, the Commission sought to mitigate the numerous erroneous paths that union could take by positing that:

The Church will therefore guard against allowing that which is necessary but secondary to play a dominant part in her life. No system of Church government, no rules or precedents, no system of doctrine or ethics, no technique of evangelism, no tradition of men regarding the ordering of worship, is sufficiently free from error to be permitted to hold anything but a subordinate position in the life of the Christian Church...*We preach not ourselves...but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*<sup>17</sup>

### **Serving the Mission of God**

The faith of the Church provides a fundamental ballast for followers of Christ to understand why and how they serve the mission of God. Therefore, the second report of the JCCU focused intently on the influence of the mission of God upon the nature, function and ordering of the church. A profound reflection of this direction of the report is encapsulated in the statement that proposes “Christians are called out of the world to be God’s people; but the reason for the calling out is the sending forth ‘that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light’ (1 Peter 2:9-10).”<sup>18</sup> Through this understanding of calling out, the JCCU was able to encapsulate the purpose and function of worship, especially the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper. The

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<sup>17</sup> Bos and Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 59-60.

<sup>18</sup> Joint Commission on Church Union, ‘The Church: Its Nature, Function and Ordering: the Second Report of the Joint Commission on Church Union of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, the Methodist Church of Australasia, the Presbyterian Church of Australia’ (1963) in *Theology for Pilgrims*, ed. Rob Bos and Geoff Thompson (Sydney: Uniting Church Press, 2008), 89. In this paper reference will continue to be made of the second report of the JCCU as it is found in *Theology for Pilgrims*. As such the shortened footnotes will contain the equivalent references of the second report as found in *Theology for Pilgrims*.

subsequent sending forth of God's people gave context to the witness and service underpinning the missional endeavour of the 'sent church'. In this integrated dynamic of worship, witness and service the commission sought to frame a missiological basis as the fundamental bearing for the whole purpose of union.

The developing missiology of the time gave great emphasis to the unity inherent in the mission of God through the work of entities such as the International Missionary Council. Central to this work was the view that worship, witness and service were missionally interdependent on each other for the unity of the church to hold together in being the people of God. The trinitarian appeal of the Commission, especially in its first report, provided the theological underpinning that God is one in substance, coessential. Therefore, the trinitarian foundation of the church demands that it also not be divided in bearing the image of God. This led to the Commission positing that the worship, witness and service of the church were integrated, coessential actions substantively necessary for the church to serve God's missional agenda.

Church union was a pursuit of embodying the new missional paradigm which had emerged in much of the global church. The missional practice of the church was being significantly challenged as new theological perspectives were emerging. These missiological developments served to dismantle the church's locus of control over mission. The emergence of the *Missio Dei*, the mission of the Triune God, became the theological catch cry from seminal events of the early 1950's. The post war gatherings of the International Missionary Conference in 1952 at Willingen and the Third World Conference on Faith and Order held at Lund, also in 1952 generated a unified voice in calling forth a new missional endeavour for the church. These events, coupled with the first assembly of the World

Council of Churches in 1948, represented a renewed declaration that the mission of the church was only found within the work and sending forth of the triune God. Therefore, this seismic shift led to four unequivocal missional imperatives for the church: “the church’s mission must be distinguished from God’s mission; God’s mission has priority; it is the mission of the *Triune* God; and God’s mission determines exactly the *what* and *how* of the church’s mission.”<sup>19</sup>

This emergent missional understanding was central to the work of the Commission in both reports. The second report provides clear expression of God’s mission being the preeminent influence on church union. For instance, in the section entitled ‘the time and form of mission’ the servant nature of Christ reflects the unequivocal example for understanding the form that the mission of the church is to follow. In following Christ’s example of service the second report suggested that “the ministry of the Church must be expressed through the whole *laos*, in moving out in service across all the barriers of human life and in the life of service within the structures of daily life.”<sup>20</sup> To serve in this way put an undeniable emphasis on discipleship, to be disciplined followers committed to serving the Mission of God. As such the Commission saw that the ordering of the Church was to be set in ways that facilitated the growth of discipleship which would enhance the capacity of the church to serve God’s mission in Australia and beyond.

Therefore, the missional shift of the global church and the opportunity for church union in Australia to be an early expression of the embodiment of this new missiological agenda gave rise to a range of essential issues emanating from the Commission’s reports. In considering

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation: Leslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 245, iBooks.

<sup>20</sup> Bos and Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 99.

these essential issues, Andrew Dutney, suggests that above all the JCCU was calling for union to be both response and renewal. As response, the JCCU was clearly conveying that “they perceived union to be a participation in the *Missio Dei* in so far as it was an obedient response to God’s call to be a sign of “the reality of His reconciling love” for the world.”<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, as renewal, the reports point to the essential issue that “looking beyond the bounds of the church in itself, the Commission affirmed that the preparations for union “can” be a process in which God renews the church so that it be directed anew towards the world in mission.”<sup>22</sup> The full work of the Commission, including a draft *Basis of Union* as part of the second report, cast the vision of a radically new missional church, the likes of which Australia had not seen in form, function and missional theology.

The draft *Basis of Union* proposed a name for this new missional identity with Uniting Church being preferred over United Church. However, there emerged a degree of contention in drafting a proposed Basis concerning whether the name would be the Uniting Church ‘of’ or ‘in’ Australia. In reflecting on this conundrum Michael Owen surmised that the mission of God was the prevailing sentiment underpinning the use of ‘in’ rather than ‘of’. To this end, Owen mused that “A national church has to own that its place is within the nation and that it is there to serve the nation. But it does not belong to the nation, it belongs to Jesus Christ; and its character is determined, not by national traits or aspirations, but by the call and grace of God.”<sup>23</sup> Ultimately the pursuit of developing a missional church gave rise to a subtle yet significant nod by the Commission to the intent of union being

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<sup>21</sup> Dutney, *Manifesto for Renewal*, 86.

<sup>22</sup> Dutney, *Manifesto for Renewal*, 87.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Owen, *Back to Basics: Studies on the Basis of Union of the Uniting Church in Australia* (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 1996), 40.

generative of a servant people called out and sent forth into Australia to participate in God's missional agenda.

Therefore, the second report provided a foundation for church union to be understood as the work of God in every facet of Australian life. This work of the JCCU was a clarion call to all parties concerned, declaring that the old forms and functions of church would need to be sacrificed so that a thoroughly missional church could emerge across the nation. The missional shape and substance for the uniting churches had been articulated in both reports of the Commission. The missional leadership practices and principles that emerged in and through the development and delivery of these reports, along with the ongoing work of crafting the *Basis of Union* were significant by-products of the process of church union. In continuing the analysis of the documents and work of the JCCU, attention will now turn to the significant missional leadership principles and practices that emerged.

### **Missional Leadership practices and principles emerging from the work of the JCCU**

The various documents produced by the JCCU provide insight into the missional leadership inherent both within the substance of the documents and the processes surrounding their development. The following areas will be considered in relation to the missional leadership practices and principles evident in the activity of the JCCU:

- Common Purpose
- Shared Leadership
- Transformative Leadership

#### **Common Purpose**

The Commission provided significant leadership in fixing the ecclesial bearings of church union to the calling forth of a new missional people in Australia. In doing so the JCCU demonstrated the absolute importance of *Common Purpose* in the leadership task. The Commission sought to lead in such a way as to avoid church union being an inconsequential amalgamation of blended Christendom practices and theology. To transgress down this path would only make the church less focused on the Mission of God. Reflecting on this point Michael Owen suggested that, “the great temptation would be for union to make us all far more church-centred than we already were...to find its true unity and identity, the Church has to look away from itself to Jesus Christ, its Lord.”<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the “why?” of church union, the purpose that all involved could hold in common, was fixed in the authority, reign and future of Christ, the head of the Church. In this regard the common purpose of church union was described as the “readiness to go forward together in sole loyalty to Christ the living Head of the Church, open to constant reform and seeking a wider unity under his Word, acknowledging in faith that the kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and looking with hope to that hour at which it will be manifest and he shall reign for ever and ever.”<sup>25</sup> The leadership of the JCCU in holding this common purpose throughout the process gave rise to the dual practice of remaining fixed on Jesus Christ and flexible in listening and reframing matters concerning the ordering and function of the church. To this end, the missional purpose, grounded in Christ was the common point underpinning the later work of the church in developing its constitution. This enlightens the understanding that the “Purposes” of the UCA Constitution, as outlined in

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<sup>24</sup> Owen, *Back to Basics*, 55.

<sup>25</sup> Bos and Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 166.

paragraph 4<sup>26</sup> of this document, are more concerned with what the church does as an expression of the missional basis of “why” it exists. Therefore, this informs missional leadership practice by pointing to the principle that “why” the church exists is the fundamental basis from which effective leadership emerges, rather than the primacy of “what” the church does. The JCCU persistently referred the reason for church union back to the mission of God. Subsequently, this generated a common purpose within the life of the Uniting Church that grounded the diverse expression of its worship, witness and service in the unity of being a missional movement.

The JCCU led from the point of a common missional purpose which negated its need to rely on any sense of positional authority in influencing the pathway to church union. As such the JCCU sought to exercise shared, collaborative leadership around the expression and articulation within the *Basis of Union* of the UCA as a missional movement.

### **Shared leadership**

Shared leadership was a hallmark of the approach taken by the JCCU in developing, presenting, reviewing and reframing the *Basis of Union*. Furthermore, the composition of the Commission reflected a leadership approach that was firstly collaborative rather than positional. To this end, no single person was positioned as the leader of the whole process, such that a particular individual had an inordinate influence on the outcome. Paramount in the practice of this shared leadership was the flexibility of the actions taken by the

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<sup>26</sup> The UCA states its purposes clearly in paragraph 4 of its Constitution which outlines the following: provide for the worship of God, proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, promote Christian fellowship, nurture believers in the Christian faith, engage in mission, assist in human development and toward the improvement of human relationships, meet human need through charitable and other services and do such other things as may be required in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Commission as a result of listening to what the church was saying concerning the development of a new missional expression. The shared leadership exercised by the Commission gave its members a posture of serving the uniting churches in their pursuit of union. This gave them ears to hear the church's comments on issues such as the role of the laity and clergy, doctrinal standards, pressure to develop a Constitution and the cultural differences within and between the various uniting churches. Also, the shared leadership allowed for a collaborative endeavour that saw the Commissions work persevere through the years it took to draft and redraft the *Basis of Union*.

A significant issue raised by the uniting churches in relation to the draft *Basis of Union* related to the divisive nature of the episcopal polity espoused by the Commission. Concerns and questions were raised about the Concordat with the Church of South India, the place of Bishops and the practical understanding of Presbyters. There was significant concern that this approach to church government would lead to a diminishing of lay ministry in the church through the exalting of a more pronounced responsibility for clergy. In the Congregational context this had become a significant concern, reflected at the time in comments made by a Congregational member of the Commission, Maynard Davies, who stated "Our people in Australia are in general not worried either with the proposed Concordat or with the Bishop-in-Presbytery. But they *are* worried because the Basis seems to point to a clerically dominated Church."<sup>27</sup> The ordering and function of the laity and clergy became a significant area that the Commission listened to and engaged with. The result of genuinely hearing the voice of the church allowed for a profound demonstration of shared leadership on behalf of the JCCU as it redrafted the basis with a far more presbyteral

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<sup>27</sup> Dutney, *Manifesto for Renewal*, 122.

polity. The shared leadership of the Commission was apparent given that it listened with a desire to serve the church and then acted accordingly. It did not set itself over and above the church with a positional agenda that had the potential to perpetuate a given perspective which in turn would have obstructed the path toward union. The Commission shared leadership with other councils of the uniting churches and in so doing demonstrated a shared, collaborative approach to leadership.

The response by the uniting churches to the section of the basis concerning doctrinal standards was significantly prudent and demonstrated the importance of the collaborative process of church union. In the draft basis, the declaration was made, concerning doctrinal standards that “The Uniting Church, in unity with the Church throughout the ages, confesses the catholic faith of the ancient Church as set forth in the *Apostles’ Creed*, the *Nicene Creed* (Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan) and the *Chalcedonian Decree*, and accepts them as authoritative statements of the faith, and as safeguards to the right understanding thereof.”<sup>28</sup> The basis goes on to further couch the doctrinal standards in the Reformation witness articulated in the various confessions of the uniting churches. In keeping with the fixed vision of Christ as central to church union, the basis drew the various confessional documents together with the proclamation that “In particular the Uniting Church cherishes the emphasis which these documents place upon the centrality of the person of Christ in the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation).”<sup>29</sup> However, the acknowledgement of the commonly held doctrinal positions of the various confessing documents carried a distinct aroma of doctrinal carpentry in the pursuit of ecclesial unity. This was born out in the comments surrounding this issue which, for some, were calling for a unique framing of a “subordinate standard” for

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<sup>28</sup> Bos and Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 167.

<sup>29</sup> Bos and Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 168.

the Uniting Church. Much had been made in the work of the Commission about the faith of the church being missionally expressed in a new and unique way within Australia.

Therefore, while the Commission fixed this missional endeavour in Jesus Christ, the call for a subordinate standard sought a much deeper approach to the confessional and reformed position of the church. The Confessing Act, at the end of the first draft of the basis, was closer to a creedal redaction than a subordinate standard for the church. During this time, a criticism of the absence of a subordinate standard, noted by Dutney, came from Rev. J.H. Gowdie, who posited that "Great care should therefore have been taken, in setting out doctrinal standards, to see that every vital evangelical principle restored through the Reformation was given clear expression...[and] to see that no opening was left for our return to erroneous doctrines and wrong practices...Such care was not taken."<sup>30</sup> These developments provided the commission with much to hear about the direction in which the church was seeking to go. Once again, the JCCU listened and acted in a collaborative fashion which led to stronger and clearer Reformed Christological references in the redraft of the basis.

The flexibility of the Commission's shared leadership was evident in the inclusion of a section in the initial draft of the basis concerning the Constitution and Interim Constitution. This reference was seen by many as an unnecessary fixture within the proposed basis and was subsequently rejected by the uniting churches. However, it was an important piece of collaborative leadership as its inclusion was an acknowledgement by the Commission that certain elements within the uniting churches were primarily concerned with the development of a Constitution as the primary reference point for union. The Commission

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<sup>30</sup> Dutney, *Manifesto for Renewal*, 95.

did not acquiesce to this approach, nor did they doggedly dismiss the importance of the development of a Constitution in the formation of the Uniting Church. Rather, the collaborative leadership approach is evident in the JCCU seeking the mind of the uniting churches as to where its basis for unity rested. It was evident that the Commission prioritised the missional imperatives of the proposed *Basis of Union* over any attempt to base church union upon the codifying of the ecclesial common ground in a Constitution. To this end the introduction to the second report, the Commission unequivocally prioritises the Basis over the Constitution in stating “This vote on the *Basis of Union* alone will be the decisive act determining whether or not the Churches will enter into union with each other.”<sup>31</sup> Although the Basis would undergo extensive redrafting it was the primary means by which the Commission provided collaborative leadership that was both fixed and flexible. Fixed in terms of the common purpose being anchored in the mission of God and flexible in allowing the church to discern together, irrespective of the position of the JCCU. In this there is a missional leadership approach that provides space, beyond positional authority, for the authority of Christ to be exercised in leading the pilgrim people of God into church union.

The shared leadership task was one of discernment which effectively is a practice that allows God the space to lead. As such it is a sharing in the leadership that God is exercising. To this end the JCCU wrote in its second report that “the basic conviction that has informed the work of the Commission is that we are required to place ourselves afresh under God’s Word and ask the question: ‘What is God’s will for us now?’ If we had simply asked the question, ‘What is the least troublesome way to bring the present three churches together?’

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<sup>31</sup> Bos and Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 73.

the answer might have been different.”<sup>32</sup> The work of seeking God’s will prevailed when the Commission reconvened in November 1967 to revisit and redraft the *Basis of Union*. The redrafting of the basis demonstrates the collaborative approach of the JCCU to listen to the church and to share in the leadership that God was providing in paving a way toward church union. This process not only demonstrated shared leadership but also transformative leadership.

### **Transformative Leadership**

The Commission had already eschewed a transactional approach whereby ‘ecclesiastical carpentry’ had been rejected as a basis for church union. Instead the Commission had essentially committed to a transformative leadership task in which church union would have a missional basis that all three denominations, and potentially others, could unite around. The undertaking of this work was transformative in itself, especially in the drafting and redrafting of the basis. A pivotal moment in this regard was the redrafting of the *Basis of Union* which began at the meeting of the Commission at Ormond College on 27th-30th November 1967.

A key act of transformational leadership was to ensure that in the redrafting of the basis, the substance of God’s transformative, missional work remained at the core of the process. The task of leadership was to continue to point more clearly and relevantly in the basis redraft to who and how the gospel of the missional God transforms rather than how the structure of the three denominations will be transformed. Therefore, the leadership of the Commission was evident as it pressed on with a renewed commitment to a Christological focus in the process of church union. This is highlighted in the minutes of this meeting

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<sup>32</sup> Bos and Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 72.

which, in relation to the rewriting of the Basis, declare “We need to make it clear that the Gospel – What God has said and done for human beings in Jesus Christ – has priority over scripture, creed and confession.”<sup>33</sup> This commitment to the gospel informed a more robust articulation of the doctrinal standards that numerous members in the uniting churches were seeking. This in turn gave rise to the third and fourth paragraphs of the UCA’s *Basis of Union* concerning the centrality of Jesus Christ in the life of the Church. In considering paragraph 3, Geoff Thompson recalls that “according to Davis McCaughey it ‘is the most fundamental Paragraph in the whole *Basis*’. D’Arcy Wood describes it as the ‘basis of the *Basis*’. Michael Owen relates how this paragraph emerged from what was ‘the most important single decision in the work of the Commission’, namely <sup>34</sup>the decision to include a ‘separate paragraph on the one Lord Jesus Christ [which would] have a controlling position and function in the whole’.” Therefore, the primary transformational leadership work of the Commission, in redrafting the basis, was to consolidate the purpose of church union within that which transforms the life of the church and the whole of creation, namely the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Commission led the direction of church union deeper into the gospel of Christ through following the missional heart of God. However, there were also aspects of the redrafted basis that transformed the ecclesial approach to union.

Throughout the changes within the church during the 1960’s the leadership of the Commission proved adaptable enough to develop a Basis of Union that bore witness to its claim that it would listen to what the church was saying. Undoubtedly, the leadership of the Commission was transformed by the listening that it humbly engaged in. The move to a far

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<sup>33</sup> Owen, *Back to Basics*, 51.

<sup>34</sup> Geoff Thompson, *Disturbing Much Disturbing Many: Theology Provoked by the Basis of Union* (Northcote: Uniting Academic Press 2016), 29.

more presbyteral polity went a significant way to assuaging Presbyterian and Methodist concerns with respect to the place of elders and lay ministry, especially Lay Preachers. The Congregationalists were able to locate the heartbeat of their ecclesial life in the section of the Basis concerned with the “Government in the church” which stated “The Congregation is the embodiment in one place of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, worshipping, witnessing and serving as a fellowship of the Spirit in Christ.”<sup>35</sup>

The redrafting of the Basis of Union was not merely an inclusivist exercise in keeping the various churches happy. Rather it was a leadership approach that sought to transform the ecclesial structures of three denominations into one through developing a subordinate standard for a missional church to embrace and submit to. In completing the redrafted Basis of Union by the end of 1968 it was subsequently approved and became the bedrock on which the Uniting Church in Australia was launched in 1977.

The work of the JCCU in developing the *Basis of Union* provides key missional leadership principles and practices concerning the importance of common purpose, shared leadership and transformational leadership which emerged from the path to church union. These facets provide a lens through which to consider missional leadership in the contemporary UCA context. However, much has changed for the UCA after 42 years of union. Although what remains is that it is still essentially a missional movement in which missional leadership must be exercised. The nature of missional leadership will now be considered firstly

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<sup>35</sup> Bos and Thompson, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 202.

through a broad reflection on leadership studies. Through this consideration of leadership, the place of missional leadership will be located and deliberated upon.

## **Chapter 2**

### **A broad consideration of Leadership**

Leadership is an inexhaustible concept that has been repeatedly explored and examined. Over the centuries those who have been esteemed to, or accidentally thrust into, positions of leadership have been the subject of analysis. However, over the last two centuries the study of leadership has delved deeper than merely considering what leading from a position involves. The depth of leadership study over the twentieth and twenty-first century has focused on the leader as person and the leadership process involving leaders and followers. Furthermore, the prescriptive practices of leadership espoused by both scholars and practitioners alike have contributed to the rise of an industry that is fuelled by books, conferences and consultancy. However, the momentum of this industry has been met in recent times with certain scholarship that raises significant questions about the overarching paradigm being proliferated by many of these leadership resources. Therefore, this section will focus on leadership as it pertains to position, person, process and paradigm.

#### **The Inextricable Link Between the Leadership Position and the Person of the Leader**

History is replete with writings that outline the principles and practices of those people, primarily men, that were positioned as leaders. The approach of *Positional Leadership* has its roots in antiquity with Bernard M. Bass commenting that “Written principles of leadership go back nearly as far as the emergence of civilization, which shaped its leaders as

much as it was shaped by them.”<sup>36</sup> The principles and practices of actual and mythical leaders have predominantly influenced the understanding of leadership right through until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In “The Bass Handbook of Leadership”, Bass gives considerable attention to the impact of positional leadership in the past and even into the present. Whether the leadership inspiration is taken from writings concerning Egyptian Pharaohs, Biblical Patriarchs, Greek and Roman leaders or the influential Chinese voices of Confucius and Lao-tzu, one common denominator prevails, namely leadership is a position that a person is exalted to in order to be the leader. From this position, the leader is often tasked with emulating certain standards for the benefit of civilisation. Bass highlights numerous examples of this including reference to the fact that “Greek philosophers, such as Plato, in the *Republic*, looked at the requirements for the ideal leader of the ideal state. Plato’s philosopher-king was to be the most important element of good government, educated to rule with order and reason.”<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, Bass, like most scholars considering positional leadership, notes that Machiavelli, in *The Prince*, provides leadership practices that some continue to adhere to today. The work of Machiavelli suggests that “leaders needed steadiness, firmness, and concern for the maintenance of authority, power and order in government. It was best if these objectives could be accomplished by gaining the esteem of the populace; but if they could not, then craft, deceit, threats, treachery, and violence were required.”<sup>38</sup>

The fundamental emphasis, throughout history, on positional leadership gave rise to theoretical understandings in the nineteenth century such as the prevailing *Great Man*

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<sup>36</sup> Bernard M. Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research and Managerial Applications* Fourth Ed. (New York: Free Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>37</sup> Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership*, 5

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

*Theory*. This perspective was postulated in 1841 by Thomas Carlyle in his work entitled “On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History.” Reflecting upon Carlyle’s work, Heifetz suggests that “Perhaps the first theory of leadership – and one that continues to be entrenched in American culture – emerged from the nineteenth century notion that history is the story of great men and their impact on society. (Women were not even considered candidates for greatness.)”<sup>39</sup> Synonymous with the *Great Man Theory*, and equally as erroneous, is the notion of “Heroic Leadership”. This approach to leadership espouses that “the leader as hero or great man (or woman) is one who exhibits extraordinary courage, firmness or greatness of soul, in the course of some journey or enterprise.”<sup>40</sup> In providing this outline of heroic leadership Stephanie Jones is quick to pick up on John Adair’s perspective that people extol the leader as hero because it is an innate quality of being human to admire and worship those who have achieved greatness. However, in his work *Great Leaders* Adair suggests that people “can even make a fairly ordinary leader into a hero simply because they need a hero to worship. An ambitious and unscrupulous leader, who discovers that he or she has some magnetic power, can capitalize on this aspect of human nature.”<sup>41</sup>

Central to both these articulations of leadership is the *Trait Approach* which has been an enduring concern in the study of leadership. This approach emphasised that leaders were born with a set of innate traits that made them great. However, despite a great deal of study, no such set of traits has ever been agreed upon. The difficulty of the trait approach is

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<sup>39</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1994), 16.

<sup>40</sup> Stephanie Jones “Heroic Leadership” in Antonio Marturano and Jonathan Gosling Eds. *Leadership: the Key Concepts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 74.

<sup>41</sup> John Adair, *Great Leaders* (Guildford: Talbot Adair Press, 1989), 16

that it gave no credence to understanding contexts and the place of followers within the study of leadership.

Therefore, leadership that is dependent on a single person who leads others by virtue of the position they occupy generates significant limitations in the understanding and practice of what being a leader is. Primary among these limitations is the inability to provide a common, overarching perspective of what healthy and productive leadership looks like.

The study of leadership progressed, during the twentieth century, from the limitations posed by the *trait approach*. The breadth of leadership studies included the situation or context in which leadership was exercised and also those who were following the leader.

This expanded the possibility of what effective leadership looked like. In their work entitled *Leadership in the Australian Context* Dalglish and Evans suggest that “We talk about good leaders, bad leaders and great leaders, so it has become their *capacity* to fulfil this role well that is the subject of the study of leadership. In today’s world, when the term leadership is used it often refers to the effectiveness of leaders rather than simply to their position.”<sup>42</sup>

The move to consider effective leadership in terms of the engagement of the leader with their context gave rise to a *Skills Approach* to leadership. Pivotal in the development of this approach was the work of Robert Katz whose work in the Harvard Business Review, entitled “Skills of an Effective Administrator”<sup>43</sup> outlined three leadership skills that operated with different emphasis depending on what type of leadership was required. The three skills were identified as technical (task related skills), human (people skills) and conceptual (abstract thinking skills). Therefore, effective leadership was measured by the capacity of

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<sup>42</sup> Carol Dalglish and Peter Evans, *Leadership in the Australian Context: Case Studies in Leadership* (Prahan: Tilde University Press, 2007), 1

<sup>43</sup> Robert Katz <https://hbr.org/1974/09/skills-of-an-effective-administrator> accessed 30th September 2019

leaders to develop and apply the necessary skills at the relevant level within an organisation.

A significant development in this approach was the acknowledgement of leaders as managers.

The *Style Approach* progressed leadership studies into the space of understanding how leaders engage with “followers”. Central to the style approach is a focus on the leaders “task behaviours” (doing) and “relationship behaviours” (being). Essentially, this approach suggests that “task behaviours facilitate goal accomplishment: They help group members to achieve their objectives. Relationship behaviours help subordinates feel comfortable with themselves, with each other, and with the situation in which they find themselves.”<sup>44</sup> Of utmost importance in this approach is the emphasis that is placed on the role of influence. The notion of influence has become synonymous with leadership. The *Style Approach* marked a significant shift from power, exercised through the position of a leader, to that of influence generated through the applied synergy of task and relationship behaviour of the leader/manager. This approach was pivotal in furthering the concept of the leader as manager which emerged from the *Skills Approach*. Furthermore, this approach gave considerable attention and emphasis to the role and relationship of followers with respect to leaders. Therefore, what emerged during this period was the perspective that the key areas of leadership studies were broadly focused on the leader, the context and those deemed as followers. The synergy, machinations and point of emphasis of these various components launched a plethora of theories and approaches that fragmented leadership studies into a multiplicity of specific areas, each of which purported to convey what effective leadership was.

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* sixth edition (London: Sage Publishing, 2012), 75.

## Leadership as the process of leader and follower

An emphasis on leaders, followers and contexts gave rise to the theory of *Situational Leadership*. The move toward Situational Leadership emerged as a reaction to the studies of trait theory which failed to deliver one consistent group of traits that could form the basis of effective leadership. The primary focus of Situational Leadership, as developed by Hersey and Blanchard, is on the influence of the leader's style upon the capacity of followers to fulfil their required tasks. However, this approach acknowledged that there is differentiation required in the leader's style given that all followers have differing capacities. Essentially this approach "demands that leaders match their style to the competence and commitment of the subordinates. Effective leaders are those who can recognize what employees need and then adapt their own style to meet those needs."<sup>45</sup> While other leadership theories developed out of, and in distinction to, situational leadership, such as Contingency Theory and Path-Goal Theory, one of the most significant developments in leadership studies came through the work of James McGregor Burns' approach to Transformational Leadership.

The notion of "influence" was pivotal in leadership studies to the point that *Transactional Leadership*, especially in the political domain, became a clear expression of the reciprocal reality that "leaders not only influence followers but are under their influence as well. A leader earns influence by adjusting to the expectations of followers."<sup>46</sup> However, the shift in Burns' approach to Leadership Studies came with identifying purpose, rather than influence, as the essential variable. In this regard, Burns defined leadership in the following

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<sup>45</sup> Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 100

<sup>46</sup> Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 17

terms “Some define leadership as leaders making followers do what *followers* would not otherwise do, or as leaders making followers do what *leaders* want them to do; I define leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – *of both leaders and followers*. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivations.”<sup>47</sup> Prior to Burns’ proposition of Transformational Leadership, effective leadership was essentially reduced to the capacity of the leader to exercise authority, influence, coercion, power and control over their followers. While leadership studies had led to a more progressively sophisticated approach to this practice, the theory was still beholden to a relational dynamic in which the leader was the causal agent in what was described as leadership. In large part this was due to leadership being studied primarily within the business world. The work of Burns moved the focus beyond this realm, moving it especially into the political space. This generated a deeply humanising impact on understanding leadership in validating the fundamental human equality within the leadership dynamic of leader and follower.

In furthering the work of Transformational Leadership, Bass and Riggio, sought to work toward both a descriptive and prescriptive approach that aimed at providing a clear practical basis for the effective application of transformational leadership. They provided the following definition “Transformational leadership involves inspiring followers to commit to a shared vision and goals for an organization or unit, challenging them to be innovative problem solvers, and developing followers’ leadership capacity via coaching, mentoring, and

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<sup>47</sup> James MacGregor Burns *Leadership* (New York: Harper Collins, 1978), 19.

provision of both challenge and support.”<sup>48</sup> An immediate question that this definition renders is what does effective leadership look like in terms of this approach. Clearly, some of the greatest tyrants in history could fit the definition of transformational leader. Transformational leadership relies on the leader and followers sharing in the enhancement their lives and their present context. It is a leadership that calls people, leaders and followers alike, to something more, a life as yet unknown, but knowable in the vision of beneficence and betterment that they hold in common. However, the complication of purpose prevails because of the bias that underpins the approach and posture of this concept. For instance, Burns’ approach was heavily influenced by the psychology of people such as Maslow while Bass and Riggio were also proponents of a scholarly pursuit in this field, but with a further interest in the realms of Sociology. While Transformational leadership moved the field of study into deeper consideration about the profoundly human need for leaders and followers to share a common purpose, it shone a light on the reality that the motives and values that drive the grand “why?” of purpose are very difficult to coalesce.

The motives and values of people are expressed with great diversity and uniqueness, especially in a post-modern, individualistic western society. Yet a simplistic enunciation concerning the bias and purpose of humanity could be that people either seek to serve or be served. In this regard, the virtue of Burns’ approach to Transformational leadership could be understood in terms of leaders seeking to serve alongside followers in the transformation of contexts. In a similar way, Robert Greenleaf articulated the concept and practice of Servant Leadership. Written from the perspective of a practitioner, Greenleaf

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<sup>48</sup> Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio *Transformational Leadership* second edition (New York: Psychology Press, 2006), 4

was an AT&T Executive, the approach of Servant Leadership opportunistically filled in some of the questions raised by the scholarly work of Burns. Greenleaf's book was not written in response to Burns but in outlining Servant Leadership a meta narrative of purpose was shared in which both leaders and followers could inhabit, irrespective of the context. Central to the notion of servant leadership was Greenleaf's prophetic belief that "a new moral principle is emerging, which holds that the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader."<sup>49</sup> For Greenleaf the leader as servant is the higher moral principle and purpose which interweaves the fabric of the leader and follower relationship from which they can act together. The concept of Servant Leadership provides a prescriptive approach for those in a relational dynamic in which they are required to lead. Whether this is the result of a position of authority or a relationship filled with responsibilities Greenleaf's work was seminal in broadening the relational basis of leadership through the common purpose of serving others.

The work of Greenleaf exemplified the fundamental importance of leadership being much more than the individual leader. This notion has filled the basic building blocks of many approaches to leadership including that of Peter Drucker who suggests, "The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say 'I'. And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say 'I'. They don't *think* 'I'. They think 'team'. They understand their job to be to make the team function."<sup>50</sup> However, the wider context in which teams, comprised of leaders and followers, exist can prevail significantly on the function and

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<sup>49</sup> Robert K. Greenleaf *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 24

<sup>50</sup> Peter Drucker *Managing the non-profit Organization: Practices and Principles* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1992), 14

practices of a team. In their work entitled “Reviewing Leadership” Robert Banks and Bernice Ledbetter highlight certain conditions in which the function of leader, within a team dynamic or otherwise, must come to the fore. They identify that such occasions occur in times of crisis, widespread uncertainty and rapid change and also when particular leaders fail or fall from grace. In these times leaders must be inwardly present within the organisation and outward facing, capable of publicly representing the entity. It is in such times that the common purpose of the organisation can be challenged within the internal operations and the public perception and expectation. Leaders are essential in these times to exercise leadership that holds that common purpose before everyone to remind the organisation and public what the core reason is for the existence of the entity. It is exactly for reasons such as this that proponents of leaderless organizations, such as Jeffrey Nielsen in “The Myth of Leadership”, will always struggle to ground such theories within the practical rigours of organisational life.

The progression of leadership studies, even to the extent where some propose models of leaderless organisations, has largely operated within a paradigm that has placed functional outcomes above formational needs. In terms of formational needs, the basic presupposition is the need for leaders, followers and their contexts to be formed in ways that are life giving and beneficial to all concerned. Whereas functional outcomes have a greater concern with the product, results and benefits of the entity which leaders, followers and the context contribute to. The shift in the leadership paradigm from functional to formative is an important consideration for the future shape of leadership studies.

### **A Shift in the Leadership Paradigm**

As a theory, Leadership has moved from fundamentally being the domain of a person who is in the position of leader to being the prerogative, equally held by leaders and followers, to enhance and even transform their context through what they do. However, in practice, so many organisations, both for profit and not for profit, are still structured in hierarchical ways that rely heavily on Managers commanding and controlling the system. In lamenting this approach Hilarie Owen writes “we build organizations in fixed structures controlled by ‘managers’. Even when we restructure, the fixed pattern of structures and processes remain. We are still seeing organizations in the old paradigm. A huge shift is required in our understanding of the world and how we as humans relate to it and express our leadership.”<sup>51</sup> Fundamental in this shift is not the perspective or definition around leader or manager but rather the paradigm in which they are held. The industrial paradigm, with its differing shaped structures (e.g. hierarchical, flat, circular, decentralised, globalised) will always corral leaders and managers to be functionaries within positions carrying responsibilities geared toward the functional outcomes of the organisation. This structure demarcates clearly who is a leader, who is a follower and what the goal of the organisation is. Within this paradigm the crass ideal is that the purpose of the organisation is grounded in the fundamental output which it is designed for, such as making money or winning wars. Returning to Machiavelli or Plato we can see that the old paradigm has not shifted far from that which they espoused. The old paradigm they conceived is still apparent in the creating of systems that exercise power through leadership that is deemed effective if the command and control of the entity produces beneficial outcomes for the organisation and its authority

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<sup>51</sup> Hilarie Owen *New Thinking on Leadership: A Global Perspective* (London: Kogan Page, 2012), 164

figures. The new paradigm flips this purview such that the transformation, wellbeing and quality of the lives of followers and leaders is what the organisation serves.

The new paradigm that informs leadership needs to be grounded in the purpose of elevating the formational needs of people to be unique members who belong to life giving communities, the purpose of which extend beyond functional outcomes. Margaret Wheatley emphasises this in that “the call of purpose attracts individuals but does not require them to shed their uniqueness. Staying centred on what the work is together, rather than on single identities, transforms the tension of belonging and individuality into energetic and resilient communities.”<sup>52</sup>

The pragmatics of the new paradigm prioritise the organic, living system of humanity in order for it to then lead to benefits for the industrial demands of economic structures. In practical terms, Simon Sinek, in his book *Leaders Eat Last* suggests that “We’re built to work together. We are, at a deeply ingrained and biological level, social machines. And when we work to help each other, our bodies reward us for our effort so that we will continue to do it.”<sup>53</sup> In furthering the practical demands of this new paradigm, Sinek grounds the approach as follows, “Human being have thrived for fifty thousand years not because we are driven to serve ourselves, but because we are inspired to serve others...All we need are leaders to give us a good reason to commit ourselves to each other.”<sup>54</sup> This then points to a key question as to how can leaders communicate this reason within a new paradigm.

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<sup>52</sup> Margaret J. Wheatley *Finding our Way: Leadership for an Uncertain Time* (Oakland: Berrett-Koehler, 2007), 50

<sup>53</sup> Simon Sinek *Leaders Eat Last* (London: Penguin, 2014), 80 iBook

<sup>54</sup> Sinek, *Leaders Eat Last*, 452 iBook

A fundamental principle within this approach is to utilise story or narrative as a galvanising means for people to gather around a common purpose. Therefore, the narrative shifts from what the organisation exists for (functional outcomes) to that which people exist for (formational needs). To this end we can consider the approach of Howard Gardner who suggests “I believe that most of the stories that leaders tell are created in response to the pervasive human need to understand better oneself, the groups that exist in and beyond one’s culture, and issues of value and meaning.”<sup>55</sup> The challenge of leadership is for each person in the community or organisation to find space to tell the story and be shaped by the story of others. This allows for an emergent narrative of the transformation and vitality that comes from the valuing and sharing of life lived in serving the other. Such an output of an organisation or community will have a far more enduring impact and benefit than any economic measure propounded by the old paradigm.

The old and new paradigm are not the domain of one discipline of scholarship or practice. While much has been studied and practiced concerning leadership and management within the business world there has also been considerable interdisciplinary work done across sectors such as health, education, politics and theology. Missional Leadership within the theological context is a subset of the overall leadership studies domain. A distinctive of Christian Missional Leadership is the application of theological resources to the articulation and understanding of this discipline. Therefore, Missional Leadership, as understood in the theological landscape of leadership studies requires particular attention.

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<sup>55</sup> Howard Gardner *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 48

## Chapter 3

### Missional Leadership

The consideration of Missional Leadership requires, in the first instance, a contextual and theological explanation of Mission. From this basis emerges a pivot for understanding the most effective means by which the integration of leadership can contribute to the outworking of Mission. This consideration will then provide an opportunity to explore certain principles and practices of Missional Leadership.

Mission is a concept that is not the specific domain or practice of a given field of study or theoretical discipline. It is a notion that can denote a journey into space or any number of endeavours undertaken here on earth. The word mission simply means “to send”, the basis of this definition being grounded in the Latin verb *mitto*. Granted, Missional Leadership is a concept that could then be applied across many different disciplines and undertakings.

However, the Christian context frames mission in a theological sense. This causes the narrative, account and experience of God to be central to an understanding of mission that emerges.

A theological approach to the mission of God ushers forth a range of definitions on the subject. A succinct definition is offered by Michael Goheen who suggests that “Mission is the communication of the gospel. Mission is no longer primarily understood as the geographical expansion of Christianity, but rather as the task given to God’s people everywhere to communicate the good news not only with their words but also with their lives and deeds. Mission is witness in life, word and deed. Putting ‘life’ before ‘word’ and ‘deed’ is intentional: the gospel is first of all communicated in the lives of believers, both in

their communal life together and as they are scattered in the world.”<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Christopher Wright offers the following definition, “Fundamentally, our mission (if it is biblically informed and validated) means our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation and command, in God’s own mission within the history of God’s world for the redemption of God’s creation.”<sup>57</sup> David Bosch also suggests a singular understanding of the Mission of God as “God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God’s involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate.”<sup>58</sup> A central theological caveat writ large through each of these definitions is that the church finds its missional life within the broader life of the missional God. Therefore, the mission of God informs the missional life of the church. Central to the mission of God, and subsequently the mission of the Church, is the focus on making disciples. This is inherent in each of the definitions already offered and is reiterated in other understandings of mission such as that offered by Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss who see mission as being “the sending activity of God with the purpose of reconciling to himself and bringing into his kingdom fallen men and women from every people, nation, and tongue.”<sup>59</sup> This reconciling work of God, in which the church faithfully and willingly participates, is articulated within paragraph 3 of the *Basis of Union* which posits “that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation. The Church’s call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building

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<sup>56</sup> Michael Goheen *Introducing Christian Mission today: Scripture, History and Issues* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2014), 26

<sup>57</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 22-23

<sup>58</sup> David J. Bosch *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 10

<sup>59</sup> Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), xv

up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself.”<sup>60</sup> Therefore, understanding discipleship now becomes a key theological basis on which to explore the mission of God.

Discipleship is grounded in the meaning to ‘follow after’. This ensures that disciples of Christ are called to ‘follow after’ a missional God. As such, “this mission-first agenda is the chief marker of discipleship in today’s world and...makes clear that all mission should have discipleship as its intended (even if indirect) outcome.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, it is discipleship that is the central focus of God’s mission. Furthermore, discipleship is fundamentally informed by the Great Commission of Jesus, articulated in Mt 28:18-20. What is evident in this text is that “All authority was given to Jesus. He commanded his disciples to go and make disciples. Disciples are not merely converts but also doers, learners, students, Christ followers, or better yet ‘apprentices of Jesus.’”<sup>62</sup> Therefore, making disciples is central to the missional action of Jesus. The Church participates in this missional action as a discipling community, grounded in the reality that “the mission of the church – your church, my church, the church in Appalachia, the church in Azerbaijan, the church anywhere – is to make disciples of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit to the glory of God the Father.”<sup>63</sup> However, it is necessary to explore the broader missional context in which disciple making occurs so as not to frame the mission of God or subsequently the church, as being an individualistic, systematic

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<sup>60</sup> For a more detailed exploration of the Mission of God, as understood in the UCA, it is important to engage with the paper *Towards a Theology Relating to Mission* written by the Rev. Dr. Chris Walker.

<sup>61</sup> Tim Dakin ‘Discipleship: Marked for Mission’ in Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross (eds.) *Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 176

<sup>62</sup> Jim Putman and Bobby William Harrington *Discipleship: Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 43

<sup>63</sup> Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, *What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission* (Wheaton: Good News/Crossway, 2011), 187 iBooks

process of discipleship. Making disciples, and building up the body of Christ, is always part of the broader mission of God, the reign of God.

The Mission of God frames the place and purpose of discipleship, as it does the Kingdom of God in which the church is called to be an alternative community, a discipling community. Authentic discipleship, in following after the way of Jesus, demonstrates a clear disregard for self-interest and an exalting of the new community consisting disciples who have embraced a different way of life within the social collective called the church. In this regard, Stanley Hauerwas suggests that “we are not Christians because of what we believe, but because we have been called to be disciples of Jesus. To become a disciple is not a matter of a new or changed self-understanding, but rather to become part of a different community with a different set of practices.”<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, it is a community with a different history and future, a different narrative in which God precedes and prevails over and beyond humanity. This history is written within the Biblical narrative which “sees the history of the nations and the history of nature within the large framework of God’s history – the carrying forward to its completion of the gracious purpose that has its source in the love of the Father for the Son in the unity of the Spirit.”<sup>65</sup> Here in this different community, with its unique identity, purpose and future emerges an understanding of Missional Leadership for it frames the context in which the leader and follower dynamic is situated

God’s missional agenda informs the identity, purpose and future of the church as a discipling community which provides the fundamental context for the missional dynamic of

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<sup>64</sup> Stanley Hauerwas *After Christendom?* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 107

<sup>65</sup> Lesslie Newbigin *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: W.M. Eerdmans, 1995), 31

leader and follower to flourish. However, this paradigm faces certain challenges in moving away from the significant influence of leadership practices and principles that have shaped the church. In this regard Roxburgh and Romanuk suggest that “Modern frameworks have formed the imagination of today’s church leadership. This is why leadership is viewed as shaping individual spirituality, as forming a congregation within unexamined norms for health borrowed from psychology and family therapy, as growing a congregation in size or developing a strategic plan.”<sup>66</sup> A strident example of this is the positional leadership, akin to the great man theory, thrust upon Ministers, primarily men, of large churches who lead more like CEO’s governed by a Board. It is an often cited example that creates leadership practices that can disempower an every member ministry of the church. However, it is precisely the missional leadership task to participate in the work of the Holy Spirit to empower every member ministry within a discipling community. This then moves beyond a leadership approach that is grounded in a positional, command and control paradigm. Rather, it is a liberating leadership leap into a paradigm of submission to and collaboration with God. In this regard, Hastings reflects that “The modern world has told us to trust in our techniques, to take control in order to achieve success. However, in the church the opposite is true: the church can only be the church when it *submits* control to the Spirit. This is what the kingdom of God is about – submission to God’s perfect reign. And this is the only position from where the church can truly represent the reign of God. Therefore, the church must confirm that in submission to the Holy Spirit the forms of the church match its essence.”<sup>67</sup> The mission of God, as the essence of the Church, ushers forth a discipling

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<sup>66</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk *The Missional Leader: Equipping your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 122

<sup>67</sup> Ross Hastings *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2012), 89

community that is essentially a Holy Spirit community in which all disciples are called and gifted to serve God's missional agenda. In this way the church bears the image of the Trinitarian God as Miroslav Volf explains, "The symmetrical reciprocity of the relations of the trinitarian persons finds its correspondence in the image of the church in which *all* members serve one another with their specific gifts of the Spirit in imitation of the Lord and through the power of the Father. Like the divine persons, they all stand in a relation of mutual giving and receiving."<sup>68</sup> This then informs missional leadership as being empowered by the Spirit for the task of developing and sustaining a discipling community of the Spirit. Specific focus needs to be given to the practices of missional leadership, that are paramount in sharing in the work of the Spirit to develop discipling communities in which every member serves the mission of God.

### **Missional Leadership Practices**

Missional Leadership practices are geared toward the development and expression of gathered and scattered discipling communities in which followers of Christ seek to serve the Mission of God. It is the intent of this section to suggest three indispensable elements of Missional Leadership practices which are (1) Common Purpose, (2) Biblical Narrative and (3) Shared Leadership.

### **Common Purpose**

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<sup>68</sup> Miroslav Volf, *After our Likeness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 219

The shift in leadership thinking, generated by Burns' Transformational Leadership approach, positioned "Common Purpose" over and above the notion of "influence". The practice of missional leadership needs to be grounded in common purpose rather than the capacity of the leader to influence followers. Too often influence can be misconstrued or accurately conceived as manipulation or coercion by a person in a position of power. As such the missional leadership approach posits that the Mission of God is the fundamental basis for informing why the church acts. In considering purpose, with respect to Congregations, Craig van Gelder suggests the following "Spirit-led Congregations do not start from scratch in trying to figure out their purpose. God has already made it clear what congregations are to be and to do. They are to be a community of God's people called, gathered and sent to bear witness to the redemptive reign of God as they seek to participate in God's mission in the world."<sup>69</sup> For the leadership task it is important to make the connection between why the church exists and how this informs what it does. Common purpose can lead to common practices, particularly in what the church does in making disciples and growing discipling communities. Within the Anglican Church the Five Marks of Mission give rise to practical expressions of the common purpose of the church to serve the mission of God. The five marks of mission are:

1. To Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To Teach, Baptise and Nurture New Believers
3. To Respond to Human Need by Loving Service
4. To Seek to Transform Unjust Structures of Society

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<sup>69</sup> Craig van Gelder *The Ministry of the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 146

5. To Strive to Safeguard the Integrity of Creation and Sustain and Renew the Life of the Earth<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, the United Methodist Church identifies within its Constitution a set of “purposes” which express the tangible actions of the church in fulfilling its purpose to serve the mission of God. These purposes are:

- provide for the worship of God,
- proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ,
- promote Christian fellowship,
- nurture believers in the Christian faith,
- engage in mission,
- assist in human development and toward the improvement of human relationships,
- meet human need through charitable and other services and
- do such other things as may be required in obedience to the Holy Spirit.<sup>71</sup>

Therefore, in a practical sense, common purpose needs to always inform what the church does and how. This informs the leadership task such that innovations, practices and reviews can always be considered against the mission of God. Thus, it ensures that leadership is exercised with the ‘why’ prevailing upon the ‘what’ within the life of the church.

### **The paramount importance of a biblical narrative**

A necessary leadership task is to acknowledge and inform the human need for a personal narrative, a story about the community they inhabit and that of the cultures beyond them.

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<sup>70</sup> Cathy Ross, “Taonga” in Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross eds. *Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books 2008), p. xiv

<sup>71</sup> UCA Constitution, Paragraph 4

Furthermore, narrative speaks into the innate issues of value and meaning. Missional leaders need a narrative that informs these deep human needs existent in all people. To this end the biblical narrative is essential for missional leadership. Yet, in a contemporary, postmodern world riddled with aversion to metanarratives, the leadership task is not to shy away from the biblical narrative in deference to cultural relevance. Rather, exercising missional leadership requires a doubling down in understanding and communicating the biblical narrative through a deep missional hermeneutic. In support of this position, Ross Hastings suggests “the nature of God’s relationality (one in which persons and communion are eternally equiprimal) leads to just such a metanarrative, one that makes sense of each human’s story within the human community in Christ, within the metanarrative of the gospel.”<sup>72</sup> The biblical narrative affords people the opportunity to locate themselves within the relational reach of God in a way where personal identity is not subsumed but rather elucidated through being caught up in a grander story. This is reiterated by Richard Bauckham who points out that “if the Bible offers a metanarrative, a story of all stories, then we should all be able to place our own stories within that grand narrative and find our own perception and experience of the world transformed by that connexion.”<sup>73</sup>

The biblical narrative frames a missional paradigm for both the discipling community and the disciples within it. Thus, an essential task of leadership is to teach and preach out of this missional reading of scripture. Mission defines who the people of God are called to be. In this way, the community of Christ can locate themselves within the biblical story past, present and future. Furthermore, the biblical narrative is crucial in differentiating the Christ community. As an essential point of difference, it is important for missional leadership to

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<sup>72</sup> Ross Hastings *Missional God, Missional Church: Hope for Re-Evangelizing the West*, 89

<sup>73</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), p. 12

ensure that, wherever possible, the biblical narrative is shared respectfully and contextually beyond the immediate activities of the church to safeguard it from an insular, potentially exclusivist culture. To this end a vital leadership endeavour is the formation of a discipling community in which the biblical narrative shapes the lives of all involved. In considering this Michael Goheen posits that “what is here meant by ‘formation for mission’ is not an equipping to carry out various evangelistic and outreach activities; rather, the vocation of God’s people is to be a distinctive people for the sake of the world. God works first of all *in* his people and only thereafter *through* his people, for the sake of the nations.”<sup>74</sup> Blending this vocational understanding of the church with a missional hermeneutic informs the practice of how God uses the Bible to work in and through his people. In furthering this thought Darrell Guder points out “This biblical formation of the church requires a missional hermeneutic that constantly asks, ‘How did this written testimony form and equip God’s people for their missional vocation then, and how does it do so today?’”<sup>75</sup> Therefore, the missional hermeneutic provides a posture toward scripture in which discipleship, the nature of God and the church as an alternative, missional community can be theologically explored through a metanarrative that provides constant and surprising practical possibilities for the fulfilment of God’s Mission.

## **Shared and Transformational Leadership**

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<sup>74</sup> Michael Goheen ‘A History and Introduction to a Missional Reading of the Bible’ in Michael Goheen (Ed) *Reading the Bible Missionally* (Grand Rapids: W.M. Eerdmans, 2016), 26

<sup>75</sup> Darrell Guder, ‘From Mission and Theology to Missional Theology,’ in *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 24.1 (2003), 48

Missional Leadership within a discipling, Spirit-led community requires a shared leadership approach. A false dichotomy is established when positional leadership is the dominant model through which the community is shaped as the church serving the mission of God. Leading from a position can create stereotypical models and practices of leadership such as the Minister being an entrepreneur or visionary leader. This approach subsequently frames congregation members as followers of the Minister's lead while also exalting the organisation's survival above the organic, living system that is the discipling community. As a result, the expression of discipleship as every member ministry in which all serve the mission of God can be diminished. With a vociferous and robust voice Frank Viola decries this position by declaring that "very little of what is practiced in the modern institutional church has its roots in the New Testament. Instead human-invented practices that were spawned centuries ago have both shaped and redefined the church. Such practices undermine the headship of Christ, hamper the every-member functioning of Christ's body, violate New Testament theology, and disaffirm the fellowship of the triune God...Yet despite this fact, many of these practices are justified by Christians even though they lack biblical merit."<sup>76</sup> Perhaps of greatest concern is that leadership becomes the domain of a select few while many are relegated to the role of followers.

Missional Leadership requires shared leadership that promotes every member ministry that is gifted and directed by the Spirit of God. In support of this claim is the suggestion by Hastings that "Most critical to the effectiveness of the church on mission by the Spirit is that it stays true to its nature as the community of the Spirit, with *all* of the charismata at work

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<sup>76</sup> Frank Viola *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook 2008), 93 iBooks.

in every member ministry, in a community that is organism first and organization second.”<sup>77</sup>

This approach is predominant because it is informed by the biblical narrative, rather than the broader canon of leadership studies. It addresses Viola’s deep concern for a leadership practice that promotes the headship of Christ and is generated and informed by New Testament, missional theology. The biblical narrative reiterates this in the Commissioning by Jesus of the disciples in Mt. 28:18-20 and Jn. 20:21. This was not a commissioning of a select few alone. This can be seen in Lesslie Newbigin’s missional hermeneutical approach to Jn. 20:21 which Michael Goheen analyses in the following way, “Newbigin begins with the basic insight that in John 20 Jesus speaks these words *both* to the first leaders *and* to the first members of the church.”<sup>78</sup> The duality of this position is that the church is sent, including its first members commissioned by Jesus. However, the first leaders also model the need to enable others within the church to follow after Jesus. To this end Goheen continues on saying “the boundary is fluid between leadership and other members. Leaders lead and equip so that all may follow and so that others are ready to lead and equip others to follow – and so on. It is multiplication of discipleship. Discipleship and leadership, then, go together.”<sup>79</sup> Therefore, exponential discipleship is the shared leadership task which will at once require leading and following.

The ferment and formation of this leader/follower dynamic of discipleship principally informs the leadership task of those set aside by the church. If a Minister or Lay leader is to undertake one chief task above all else what is it? Once again we turn to Goheen’s articulation of Newbigin’s wisdom on the matter. Goheen notes that “two operative words

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<sup>77</sup> Hastings p. 296

<sup>78</sup> Michael Goheen *The Church and Its Vocation: Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology*, 278 iBooks

<sup>79</sup> Goheen p. 279 iBooks

keep appearing in Newbigin's discussion of ministerial leadership: 'lead' and 'equip'. What is distinctive is the way he relates the two: leaders are those who lead, first, by following hard after Jesus and, second, in the process, they equip others to follow after."<sup>80</sup> This understanding provides a robust platform on which to build practical leadership tasks for equipping people as disciples.

Shared leadership, in the dynamic of disciple as leader/follower, utilising charisms in relational spaces as empowered by the Spirit of the Missional God, requires an understanding of how people lead, particularly those set aside to do so.

In one sense shared leadership, as a basis for Missional leadership ensures that all can engage specifically where they are at, either within the gathered or scattered life of the church, including the workplace, schools, universities and families. What then are some key leadership practices that can be applied across these contexts? An indispensable reference worthy of consideration here is that of James Kouzes and Barry Posner from their book "Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge." The research driven work of Kouzes and Posner distils five practices of effective leadership. They are categorised as:

1. Model the Way
2. Inspire a Shared Vision
3. Challenge the Process
4. Enable Others to Act
5. Encourage the Heart<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Goheen p. 280 iBooks

<sup>81</sup> James Kouzes and Barry Posner *Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 2

A reframing of these practices in light of what has been considered thus far points to an expansion of shared leadership to that of transformational leadership. The collective or shared leadership task, within a discipling community, has transformational connotations for the leader. This can be seen in the following leadership practices, drawing on Kouzes and Posner:

**Model the Way** – lead as a disciple by first following hard after Jesus, meaning be transformed by Christ as this is the fundamental way in which a discipling culture is developed.

**Inspire a Shared Vision** – The purpose of the Mission of God is always fundamentally concerned with the multiplication of disciples who serve God's purposes. This is concerned with the lives of others being transformed and needs to be the constant vision amidst the myriad of distractions competing for coverage.

**Challenge the Process** – Do whatever is required to subvert the organisation and institution of the church in deference to it serving the missional agenda of developing thriving, transformative discipling communities driven by the culture of God's reign. Safeguard against task driven busyness that diminishes the time for and quality of relationships both within the Christian community and beyond. A primary leadership task is to equip people to recover the quality of relationships, with God and others, caused by such things as overworking, lifestyle choices and habits. In this regard the transformative work is undertaken within the structures and polity of the discipling community.

**Enable Others to Act** – Lead by equipping others to follow after Christ in which the charisms and fruit of the Spirit strengthen the substance of the community of Christ. Everyone has a place in which to collaborate as the Spirit empowers and calls people forth. Therefore, the

leadership task is to help find that place, to give permission for collaborations beyond the command and control of the given leader so long as the purpose of exponential discipleship is clearly in view. Essential in this endeavour is the leader's task of sharing power, building trust and building teams that thrive through people working together. The transformative leadership task is the training and equipping of people that they might share in God's work of transforming the lives of those beyond the discipling community through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Encourage the Heart – Share the metanarrative of scripture and the way in which the individual and communal story fits within that. This leadership task transforms individual and societal narratives through incorporating them into the God's story that shapes identity, meaning and hope, now and into the future.

While these shared and transformative leadership practices have general application in many different contexts, specific missional practices in Congregations help to consider the expression in a gathered context.

The work of Craig van Gelder provides an overview of these practices which allow for an integration of shared and transformational leadership. In his book "The Ministry of the Missional Church" van Gelder highlights that the core missional practices emerge out of the purpose of discipleship which is an indispensable starting point for the Mission of God. In considering missional practices van Gelder comments "interestingly, many congregations define their purpose around the things they do such as worship or educating or witnessing, and thereby miss a deeper understanding regarding why God has called them into existence." Therefore, the missional purpose of developing and sustaining thriving

discipling communities informs a congregation's missional practices. These missional practices, as outlined by van Gelder are as follows:

1. Worship (which includes Word and Sacrament ministry)
2. Education/Discipleship
3. Care/Fellowship
4. Service
5. Witness<sup>82</sup>

Each of these practices become transformational because of the way that each carries within them God's good news. Each of these practices provide a variety of expressions for the church to live out God's story through these ways of being the church. For instance, with regard to the practice of worship it can be understood that "worship proclaims, enacts, and sings God's story. Worship is not a program. Nor is worship about me. Worship is a narrative – God's narrative of the world from its beginning to its end."<sup>83</sup> The leadership task is to ensure that each of these practices are filled with the missional purpose of discovering and speaking to God's story in contextual ways.

Therefore, across all contexts the expressions will vary but the substance of who is being worshipped remains. This points to the imperative of practices being infused by missional substance with the expression and formation of discipleship being paramount. In this way "missional practices and formation are not a matter of learning new skills but rather recovering ways of life that once were at the heart of Christianity."<sup>84</sup> Therefore, it is vital that the missional leadership task within a congregation context, as in a scattered context, is

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<sup>82</sup> Craig van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church*, 147

<sup>83</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Ancient – Future Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 41 iBooks.

<sup>84</sup> Roxburgh and Romanuk, *The Missional Leader*, 169

a deeply formative undertaking equipping and enabling people to express the substance of mission through the practices of discipleship.

The practices relating to common purpose, biblical narrative, shared and transformative leadership provide a means of understanding the missional leadership task as it relates to focusing the discipling community on the enduring substantive essence of its life, namely the mission of God. As the Uniting Church in Australia continues to explore ways in which it can be renewed, these practices can be confidently integrated and contextualised as the basis for a missional movement. It is toward the practices of missional leadership within the contemporary life of the Uniting Church that the direction now turns.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Missional Leadership practices in the contemporary life of the Uniting Church**

The principles and practices of Missional Leadership have and continue to inform the life of the Uniting Church. Inherent within the work of the JCCU in developing the *Basis of Union* are crucial insights into effective missional leadership practices. Furthermore, the developments in scholarly considerations within the missional leadership landscape has given rise to significant shifts in understanding principles of leading that are more particular to the task of the church serving the mission of God. These sources will be used to explore the practical application of missional leadership principles within the identity, purpose and future of the UCA.

## Identity

The UCA is not defined by the declining numbers of people who are affiliated with or worship in a Uniting Church congregation. Nor is the UCA identified by being a minority within Australian society. The missional perspective is such that the identity of the UCA is forged by and within the biblical narrative of God's story. Therefore, a fundamental missional leadership task within the UCA is to ground the identity of the whole interconciliar life of the church within the good news of God's story. This means the whole church knowing it, growing in it, communicating it, living in it. Any leadership position or task involves the practice of modelling the way<sup>85</sup> in which the biblical narrative is forming and reforming the life of a disciple. This is not particular to individuals or certain aspects of the UCA's life but is rather a calling across every part of the church. For in every facet of the life of the church there is occasion for the expression of worship, education, care, service and witness.<sup>86</sup> A crucial missional leadership practice is to ensure that the good news of God's story is the prevailing substance of each of these activities which are essential in forming and reforming the identity of the UCA for they are the activities that carry the narrative. This consistency of substance, expressed with considerable diversity, consolidates the identity of the UCA as a people located within God's story. To this end the *Basis of Union* articulates this by saying, "The Church lives between the time of Christ's death and resurrection and the final consummation of all things which he will bring; she is a pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> As per Kouzes and Posner's leadership practices

<sup>86</sup> This harks back to Craig van Gelder's focal points for mission in a Congregation but here it is broadened to the whole interconciliar life of the UCA

<sup>87</sup> Basis of Union, Paragraph 3

Therefore, a significant missional leadership endeavour would be to re-educate the UCA across its whole life as to who it is as informed by the biblical narrative that articulates an identity of being a pilgrim people located within the unfolding narrative of God's eschatological work and reign. Furthermore, in this task it would be imperative to ensure that the biblical narrative is explored through a missional hermeneutic so as to accurately see, through the eyes of those who developed the basis, who the UCA is as a missional movement. To engage in this leadership task is to commit to prioritising the constant formation of disciples and discipling communities in God's story rather than firstly focusing on functional outcomes of doing church. This allows leaders to generate a deeper and broader sense of value and meaning and to explore the breadth of God's story expressed in different cultures, all of which ties into the identity of the UCA.

The JCCU grounded the *Basis of Union* in the substance of the Christian faith which finds its expression in the biblical narrative. It refused to find any other focus for church union. This commitment is expressed in that the UCA "acknowledges that the Church is able to live and endure through the changes of history only because her Lord comes, addresses, and deals with men (sic) in and through the news of his completed work."<sup>88</sup> This news is heard in the biblical narrative, therefore a practical consideration must be how this news of the completed work of Christ is being heard, especially within the meetings of the Church's councils in ways that allows the Lord to address and deal with the people of God. A significant missional leadership task would be to let this imperative shape agendas, inform the prophetic voice and draw forth a continual renewal of a covenant commitment from the church to God.

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<sup>88</sup> Basis of Union, Paragraph 4

## Purpose

Reiterating and maintaining a common purpose is a fundamental missional leadership task within the life of the UCA. The *Basis of Union* says “in this union these churches commit their members to acknowledge one another in love and joy as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, to hear anew the commission of the Risen Lord to make disciples of all nations, and daily to seek to obey his will.”<sup>89</sup> Herein is a clear purpose to co-mission, share in the missional task of Christ in making disciples. Therefore, consolidating this purpose across the life of the whole church is a fundamental missional leadership task. Then, emerging from this clearly stated purpose is the need for a whole of church approach to resource, educate and equip the people of God within the UCA regarding what this purpose means, how it informs the strategic planning undertaken by various councils of the church and what is practically involved in fulfilling this purpose as a missional movement. There are two essential facets to this worthy of further exploration, namely the interconciliar expression and the prioritising of an every member ministry approach.

Alignment of this purpose across every council of the church is fundamental to furthering trust within the life of the UCA. Trust is an essential component in developing unity and directly meets the formational need of the church to be uniting. An essential leadership task is to build trust across all councils of the church that emerges from a unity of common purpose. This trust is fundamental for the UCA to live out its life as a movement in which Councils “give heed to other councils of the Church, so that the whole body of believers may be united by mutual submission in the service of the Gospel.”<sup>90</sup> The development and living

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<sup>89</sup> Basis of Union, Paragraph 1

<sup>90</sup> Basis of Union, Paragraph 15

out of trusted relationships grounded in the common purpose to make disciples can galvanise the Congregation-Presbytery relationship across the UCA. A missional leadership task in a Congregation is to communicate, resource, educate and form discipling communities to embody the purpose of disciple making within their contexts as “the embodiment in one place of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping, witnessing and serving as a fellowship in the Spirit of Christ.”<sup>91</sup> This also empowers Presbyteries lead through providing oversight of Congregations and ministry agents in ways that directly relate refer to the primary purpose of disciple making and developing as discipling communities. As such the missional leadership of the Presbytery then has a clear reference point beyond Congregational sustainability or property viability by which to consider the future of Congregations.

Every member ministry is a vital aspect in the church fulfilling its common purpose to co-mission with Christ in making disciples. The *Basis of Union* states that “the Uniting Church...acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of his Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ.”<sup>92</sup> Therefore, this approach draws on the practices of shared leadership. A vital skill in shared leadership as demonstrated by the JCCU was that of listening to what God was saying in and through others in the life of the church. As a leadership practice this is fundamental, especially to ensure that those who are in, what can be deemed leadership positions, can lead from the purpose of the church rather than their position in it. Positional leadership places unhealthy expectations on ministry agents in the UCA and can negate the calling of all disciples to serve the mission

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<sup>91</sup> Basis of Union, Paragraph 15

<sup>92</sup> Basis of Union, Paragraph 13

of God. Furthermore, a difficulty with positional leadership is that it can lead to ministry practices that are too concerned with functional outcomes from programs and activities within the church. In this way leaders view followers as useful based on their engagement in achieving the functional outcomes. The worth of a person can then be naturally considered in light of their usefulness or otherwise. This utilitarian perspective can contribute to shallow cultures within discipling communities where worth is limited to what people do within the life of the Congregation. Leading from a position inevitably drifts in this direction as this model of leadership and its variants all emerged from a business environment in which functional outcomes were expected from leaders and followers. Within the church context it is erroneous, especially in forming an understanding of a discipling community being a place in which all people have worth that is generated by and established in God's perspective. The church serves God's mission, the church is empowered by God's Spirit through giftings that allow for engagement in corresponding co-missional activities which disciples share in with Christ. Therefore, the common purpose of the whole people of God serving the mission of God involves all people whose worth is already established, not in how useful they are to God, but rather because they share in God's life through a covenant relationship. The shared leadership task then is grounded in the intent of empowering others to act. It requires leadership that genuinely proceeds with the other in mind and the humble recognition by all that God gifts and sets apart some to lead in certain ways. This is not merit based but grace based as God's will plays out in the church. The fundamental shared leadership task is to ground the discipling community within the mission of God and resource, equip and empower people to discover what the Spirit has gifted them to do. Furthermore, shared leadership requires the development or furthering of missional opportunities within the life of the church to serve in areas that are

aligned with their giftings. Within this task the leadership skill of reviewing is essential to constantly be considering what opportunities need to be kept, be stopped or be started in order to share in what God is doing through the development or cessation of various gifts within the Congregation. Essentially, this is a leadership approach that meets the formational needs of all people within the church to explore and enact the Spiritual gifts that they have as disciples. This creates a culture in which leaders perpetuate grace, humility and belonging that has much greater depth and meaning than a utilitarian driven community in which usefulness determines worth. This is a discipling event that contributes to the fulfilment of the common purpose of the UCA and creates a clear focus for what the church needs to invest in resourcing through such events as non-accredited short courses and seminars that explore discernment and spiritual gifts within the missional framework of the church.

Constant articulation of and alignment with the common purpose of the UCA as a missional movement that shares with Christ the endeavour of making disciples and discipling communities provides leaders with the essential tasks of building trust and empowering every member ministry across the life of the church.

## **Future**

The future of the Uniting Church is framed within a biblical narrative in which a pilgrim people are journeying toward a promised eschatological end. This visionary perspective can provide an assured and exciting future. However, the realities of financial challenges, extensive property portfolios requiring significant maintenance and declining membership are some factors that can diminish the purview of this vision. Into the future, a fundamental leadership task is to develop and communicate a shared vision of the eschatological future

of the church as shaped by the biblical narrative. This vision, as it emerges out of the common purpose of the church, generates a transformational approach to leadership in which change is viewed and communicated as essential for the pilgrim people of God. The vision of the UCA's future as a missional movement can be seen as involving investment in contextual expressions of discipling communities. This requires leadership across numerous councils of the church that develop and deliver, as a priority, various missional models of Church Planting and Congregation Revitalisation for the sake of making disciples. This might lead to changes in the use of property and the allocation of funding. Furthermore, it will require a shift in the formational requirements of people, lay and ordained, who share in ministry within these contexts. New Missional developments such as these will always have validity in the vision of the UCA's future. As such, they will continually provide a challenge to the people and processes of the church. However, this approach is not the vision the church needs as such innovations are too narrow and extant to drive the vision of the UCA's future. The same can be said about a vision for the UCA that is developed through the restructuring of the denomination.

Challenging the process is a key missional leadership task which can be evidenced within attempts to restructure the UCA in the hope that it will generate a new vision for the future. There is merit in considering whether, after 42 years, the various aspects of the interconciliar structure best serve the missional imperative of the UCA. The lived reality of the government of the church has moved significantly from the original intent of what some involved in the JCCU imagined. Davis McCaughey, a key member of the JCCU, expressed his desire that the key councils within the life of the UCA be congregations and presbyteries. This underscored his intent that the missional movement of the church be incarnated

through local and regional expressions. To this end the Assembly was viewed as being of less importance and the Synod was seen as having even less importance again<sup>93</sup>.

In large part this reflects a focus on the missional traction of the UCA being most keenly gained through Congregations and the relevant episcopal oversight exercised by the Presbytery. However, it also points to thinking that was a product of its time. For instance, the companion vision in broader Australian society can be seen in the approach of the federal government under Gough Whitlam who sought to divest government responsibility along a more regional and local line. The casualty in this proposed approach would clearly be the states. Whitlam did not succeed in this endeavour, nor did McCaughey's preference. The legislative undergirding of Property Trusts in each Synod, the influence and difference of Capital cities across the various states and the overwhelming "tribalism" of the states within a federated nation ensured that Synods (and states) were deeply entrenched in the interconciliar life of the UCA. The point being that the future shape of the government of the church is bound by certain legal and governance requirements that are part of our time in contemporary Australia. Furthermore, the place of a national voice and platform from the Assembly has considerable value in addressing particular concerns and issues that arise within a nationwide purview. As such these facets are fixed, which leads to the question of what areas of polity need to be flexible in continuing to refine the structure and resource allocation of the church in its pursuit to be effective into the future as a missional movement.

Leadership conversations concerning ecclesial restructuring are consistent themes, especially when declining membership informs the discussion. Clearly, polity cannot be an

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<sup>93</sup> Taken from a lecture delivered in 2011 by Rev. Dr. D'Acry Wood to the Port Phillip West Presbytery

impediment to the capacity of the church to serve the mission of God. Yet, the UCA is still young and a key leadership task into the future could be to educate people in how the governance and regulatory life of the church works in order for people to be more informed in how and why to participate in it, rather than seeking to restructure it. Restructuring always requires an assessment as to whether the future shape will be considerably better than the present. It is costly and time consuming. Certain councils of the church might restructure, as some Synods have. However, has the interconciliar life of the church ever fully galvanised together with the common purpose and intent of working collectively to express the mission of God across Australia with the intent of making disciples? What if the future of the Uniting Church was filled with hearts that were captured by this vision of aligning and uniting together to serve the mission of God across this diverse nation?

Missional leadership requires vision, the capturing of hearts to engage in endeavours that are filled with purpose and the perspective of contributing to something that is bigger than the individual and beneficial for many. The future of the UCA, is best considered through the bold suggestion that the most important action to move into is for the whole interconciliar life of the church to align with why the church exists and authentically be who the church is. The whole missional movement of the UCA serving the mission of God is a renewed vision that captures hearts and the making of disciples and discipling communities provides the perspective for all to find value and meaning within this proposed future. This approach meets the formational needs of the church to see its future beyond functional changes, such as restructuring or church planting. Indeed, restructuring or church planting might emerge from the formational needs but it is not the primary concern. Therefore, the change inherent in this is not functional but rather transformational in terms of the vision

and perspective that people see which engages them fully within the missional endeavours of the UCA. The intent of this future vision is to genuinely be the Uniting Church that those framing the *Basis of Union*, and those voting on church union imagined it could be.

## **Conclusion**

There have been a range of missional leadership practices and principles considered including the centrality of common purpose, locating the church within the biblical narrative and leading from this place through shared leadership and transformational leadership. These have helped to ground the identity, purpose and future of the Uniting Church within the Mission of God. Furthermore, these missional leadership practices and principles have sought to inform the formational needs of the UCA's life rather than the functional outcomes. The emergent missional leadership task across the whole life of the UCA is that of serving the Mission of God in making disciples and discipling communities. This focus provides for a future that is not dependent on being a minority or majority presence in Australian society. Rather it is completely dependent on following after the missional God who seeks to reach all people in this nation and draw them into his life.

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