

doughnut adjust your set!



Launching a series on the basics of leadership development, John Dunnett introduces a revolutionary concept: doughnuts are good for your health!

You put the phone down wondering: ‘What have I said yes to?’ It’s one thing to be involved the church’s weekly prayer ministry. But it seems a totally different matter to take responsibility for leading the whole of this aspect of your church’s work.

Or imagine this. The new vicar has asked you, as a church council member, to make suggestions for potential members of a new leadership team. Whom should you recommend?

Alternatively: you have just started as incumbent of a parish that has so many pressing issues that you feel completely stuck. Where do you begin to address the many concerns facing you?

These differing scenarios have something in common. Each typifies a situation in

which there is a need for a clear understanding of both the nature of leadership – and of the role of the leader.

I’m sure that hundreds of such situations arise weekly in churches throughout the UK and Ireland – and in all of them this ‘leadership understanding’ is crucial for the healthy growth and development of each.

Working model

Here at CPAS we have developed a diagrammatic model of healthy leadership. We believe that it can help individuals and churches to be clear about what leadership provides in the life of a church. It’s also a model that can be used to ask the question: ‘How are we doing?’

And, because of its shape (and the fact that its richest aspect is in the middle!), we call it our leadership ‘doughnut’.

Framing the model is a commitment to Bible teaching and prayerful dependence on the Spirit that permeates everything. These are vitally important factors in healthy Christian leadership. The Bible informs our understanding of what it means to be a Christian community. The Spirit empowers us to be that community.

In my previous role as an incumbent, and in my current role as general director of CPAS, I have come across many churches with a strong commitment to preaching and teaching – and to the challenge of the gospel. But for all that, in some of them, there is an apparent lack of leadership.

In my view this lack of ‘leadership focus’ can limit a church’s ability to reach its potential – and to respond fully to God’s call upon it.

I’m reminded of a sporting analogy: it’s not too difficult for the members of a football team to have a profound understanding of ‘the beautiful game’ – but that doesn’t really count for much if they can’t actually play as a team and lack any sense of strategy.

So, with this in mind, let’s take an introductory look at the doughnut’s main segments.

It’s based on the premise that certain aspects are essential to good leadership, identifying seven main areas. Don’t panic, an individual leader can’t possibly take on all of these aspects – but we are convinced that a church that has been led well will be enabled in all of these





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aspects of leadership. These responsibilities (or ‘competencies’) can be shared.

Growing in Christ-likeness

This is at the heart of our understanding of Christian leadership. It's as much about *who* you are as it is about *what* you do. In short, it's about character. Christian leadership is based on the example of Jesus, the leader who stunned his disciples when he donned a towel, poured water and knelt to wash their feet.

Good leaders are secure in their identity in Christ – and this is worked out day by day in their personal lives, in their ‘self-management’ and in their relationships with others.

Discerning direction

I'm convinced that the first responsibility of leadership is to enable a church to discover and understand a God-given vision. According to American church-growth expert Bill Hybels, vision is ‘a picture of the future that produces passion in people’. Every church needs this. A church without a vision is like an orchestra without a score.

Leadership is about going somewhere, and the ‘sense of direction’ should be clear and compelling. Before working out the direction to follow, a church needs to be clear about its mission, identity and values. And as they move on to discern God's vision for them, they will need to remember that the best way to achieve ownership of vision is through involvement in the process of discovering the vision.

Enabling action

Some label this very practical area of work as ‘putting the wheels on the bus.’ Change is often painful and rarely ‘conflict free’ and, naturally, vision is best implemented through careful, step-by-step planning. Changes to structures, systems and processes are also changes to people – hence the need for careful management of change, possibly involving the skills of problem-solving and change-management.

Building teams

The New Testament pattern of church leadership offers a bracing challenge to individualistic notions. It's based on teamwork, which, of course, is about much more than collecting individuals together.

Building strong teams will involve allocating roles to people according to their gifts – and passions! Training and development will play a part as well as ensuring, as much as possible, that everyone is aware of their contribution to the big picture

Developing leaders

Leaders develop new leaders for today and for the future. Wherever there's good leadership, there will be a strong feeling for the concept of vocation, in its widest sense. People will be helped to discover their calling and to become aware of their talents, spiritual gifts, passions, temperament. There will be a church culture in which people's worth is acknowledged through ‘investing’ in them via training that develops them in a Christ-centred leadership. Such leadership is exercised for the benefit of others, to enable the church to function well so that it will be a blessing to the whole community.

Facilitating communication

History will decide on the effectiveness – or otherwise – of the presidency of Barack Obama. But the vast majority of commentators agree that his outstanding ability as a communicator was a major contributor to the success of his 2008 campaign.

Good communication is an essential ingredient of effective leadership – and it begins with active listening and the asking of good questions. The development of skills and attitudes will play a part, but these won't be meaningful unless based firmly on Christlike character. Jesus, after all, is the *evangel*, the good news – he is the communication!

Nurturing people

It's impossible to overemphasise the fact that leadership is about people. I'm sure we've all had experience of leadership which, for whatever reason, seems to have forgotten about this relational aspect! Good leadership nurtures people, bringing out the best in them, helping them to realise their potential.

A doughnut taster

In coming issues of *CL* we shall focus more closely on each of these various ‘segments’ or functions of leadership. Meanwhile, why not devote some time to pondering the following questions from the leadership doughnut?

- Which of the responsibilities listed here is particularly appropriate to the leadership role that you currently carry?
- Which of these areas are already well developed in your church?
- Which in your view need further development?