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Leading the Multiethnic Church: Help from New Metaphors and The Leadership Challenge

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LEADING THE MULTIETHNIC CHURCH: HELP FROM NEW
METAPHORS AND *THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE*

Elizabeth Childs Drury

abstract

Success in leading the multiethnic church (MEC) eludes assessment because of the variety of congregational configurations and the unique intercultural environment. This article describes how leadership in one MEC harmonizes with and differs from basic cultural standards as expressed in James Kouzes and Barry Posner's *The Leadership Challenge*. It follows an earlier case study (published in the Summer 2010 issue) about weaknesses that emerged at a DC-area MEC when Dan, the beloved pastor, resigned. Three new categories describe designs: the mall, the cinema, and the blend. Six new metaphors describe relationships among different cultural groups: renters, investors, neighbors, coworkers, siblings, and patients. A figure illustrates these metaphors according to varying degrees of familiarity and collaboration, showing that relationships can be characterized most strongly by unity, apathy, dependency, or schism. Case study examples demonstrate the feel-good neighbor relationship to be the most unstable. MEC needs press modifications onto Kouzes and Posner's principles: pastors must a) diminish themselves to increase the modeling visibility of others; b) facilitate interdependence through collaboration; c) expose ethnocentrism and coach toward mutuality; d) ensure rotation of responsibility and team ownership of accountability; and e) build familiarity and trust within a committed team, with healthy sibling relationships as the ideal metaphor.

Whether in churches or in fast food restaurants, human relationships require management, and they press people into choices between culturally-acceptable standards and better ways. Two millennia ago, for example, when Pharisees attempted to trick Jesus by asking whether a man could lawfully divorce his wife, Jesus acknowledged a cultural standard—one which was necessary for managing fallen, sinful people—but insisted on a better way.[1]

This article describes how leadership in one multiethnic church (MEC) measures up not to divine standards but to basic, popularly-accepted cultural standards as expressed in James Kouzes and Barry Posner's *The Leadership Challenge*. This article follows an earlier case study about weaknesses that emerged at a DC-area MEC when Dan, the beloved pastor, resigned in order to relaunch a troubled church in the rural Midwest.[2] As he looked ahead to his new task with multiethnic aspirations, he found these principles to be helpful in considering his own leadership strengths and weaknesses. New metaphors and many specific examples add clarity to a basic question: How well does Dan's MEC leadership design reflect business-world common sense? The previous case study, ongoing dialogue with Dan, and personal experience in MEC lay leadership inform my perspective.

This non-spiritualized look at leadership through the simplest of lenses is useful for two reasons. First, success in leading a multiethnic church is hard to measure. The proposed metaphors are intended to aid assessment by making differently-structured MECs easier to compare. Second, considering basic leadership standards—rather than the divine or the erudite—makes sense because no one has proposed an alternative. In fact, the most finely-tuned Western leadership matrices may hinder rather than help the MEC pastor, who must learn the leadership and followership preferences of the other-culture pastors on the team. The metaphors and the principles of Kouzes and Posner present finite tools for at least starting the discussion. The previous article identified four dilemmas facing Dan's MEC during the pastoral transition—ownership, identity, cohesion, and mission—and suggested corrections from cross-cultural, church-planting literature.[3] These dilemmas could be turned into evaluative questions. But since the previous article contended that MEC literature should tie itself increasingly to the wisdom of other fields, popular leadership literature can provide the lens this time.

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[1] "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning." Matthew 19:8, NIV

[2] Drury, "Leadership Transfer Awakens Dormant Dilemmas in a Multiethnic Church."

[3] Ibid.

sorting apples and oranges through better metaphors

As mentioned previously, success in MEC leadership is difficult to assess because the variety of designs complicates comparison. Metaphors about both overall design and intercultural relationships may help.

Jerry Appleby briefly mentions a helpful sociological distinction between centrifugal and centripetal tendencies among ethnic groups. When applied to the multicongregational MEC, the former pushes outward toward ethnic homogeneity in multiple congregations, and the latter draws inward toward one heterogeneous congregation.[4] Although this distinction is helpful in describing the social undercurrents within a church or the leaders' aspirations for a church's future, more static—and pedestrian—metaphors may be more helpful for describing immediate design: the mall, the cinema, and the blend. Some MECs are mall churches: multiple congregations of distinct homogenous groups meeting separately at one facility. Others are cinema churches: multiple ethnicities worshiping together as one heterogeneous group. Diverse groups meet together in the same room and watch the same movie, sometimes with the assistance of subtitles or translation. If the cinema-going crowd grows large enough, the same movie may play at several show times throughout the day. Still others—*blended* MECs—are clusters of both homogenous and heterogeneous congregations. The church in the case study that informs this article is a blended one: multiple homogenous ethnic groups meet in separate congregations throughout the week. The original congregation alone is multicultural, with equal numbers of Caucasians and Sierra Leoneans, plus small clusters of others (recently, for example, from Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Ecuador, Mexico, and the Philippines).

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Adding to the complexity of comparison is the fact that even when the types are similar, great variation separates them regarding the degree to which the diverse members interact, share resources, and partner in mission. How do multiple congregations associate with one another?

- as isolated *renters*, like separate vendors at a flea market?
- as like-minded but impersonal *investors*, like partners in a salon?
- as occasionally-hospitable *neighbors*, who feel good about one another and the neighborhood but pursue separate personal goals?
- as cooperative *coworkers*, who collaborate on joint projects but keep a safe interpersonal distance and protect resources?
- or as loving *siblings*, committed to the family relationship through thick and thin, around the dinner table?

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[4] Appleby, *The Church Is in a Stew*, 60.

These metaphors describe five increasing levels of interdependence and mutuality, and where a church finds itself along the continuum may change with experience and circumstance.

Even if perfect comparisons could be found, by what criteria would the churches' health be evaluated? Numbers deceive. Mall churches can easily attract new congregations—if the price is right—who remain strangers and outsiders (like renters or investors). Cinema churches can attract people for whom socioeconomic similarity renders ethnicity insignificant (like neighbors, perhaps in an affluent part of town). In both cases, churches grow numerically and call themselves multiethnic but never tackle ethnocentrism and division.

Brief examples illustrate the five metaphors and show how they can frame comparisons. Although these examples describe the relationships between separate homogenous congregations within mall or blended MECs, the metaphors also apply to the various groups comprising heterogeneous congregations within cinemas and blends.

Renters. A once-thriving church which has dwindled over the past two decades cannot support itself with only twenty-five members. It survives on the income generated by the six other churches who rent space at the facility. That the other churches affiliate with other denominations or hold to drastically different doctrines is insignificant to the host church as long as the rent is paid, and the facilities are maintained. Members of the separate congregations do not interact with one another at all.

Investors. A Hispanic congregation chooses to rent space from a large Caucasian church with attractive property within the same denomination. Members from the separate congregations do not interact, but everyone is satisfied with the arrangement as long as a) the two groups separately continue upholding and promoting—through signage, for example—the same doctrinal standards, and b) they both honor the contract by maintaining the property, honoring the facility-use schedule, and paying the bills.

Neighborhood. A mostly-Caucasian congregation wishes to model a robust welcome to the diverse neighbors living nearby. They invite a Filipino congregation and a Hispanic congregation to join, and they insist on doctrinal agreement, a sharing of expenses and labor, and participation in joint fellowship activities. Despite the feel-good atmosphere evidenced by friendly waves and hugs, neither interpersonal familiarity nor trust flow deeply enough for relationships to withstand conflict.

Coworkers. Relationships in the above example move toward greater collaboration when the senior pastor announces an expensive, labor-intensive

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summer outreach event. The pastors receive their assignments, collaborate on the details, and relay the instructions to their congregations. Each is careful to show support (and to avoid embarrassment or reprimand) by making sure the people do their parts, and each monitors resources to be sure that contributions are equitable.

Siblings. This metaphor is a gloss and an ideal. It assumes both the frame of reference of a healthy family rather than a dysfunctional one, and rules of interaction that are more egalitarian (like a US family) than hierarchical (like a Korean family). The ideal derives from Jesus' description of the perfected church: "And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God."[5] This banquet imagery suggests a permanent and comfortably familiar fellowship of diverse members around a nourishing table, and not many churches achieve the goal in the here and now—and certainly not all the time. An example may be a church in which five distinct ethnic groups enjoy friendship and trust with one another and jointly own the facility, the expenses, and the ministries.

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One other metaphor, somewhat separate from the five on the continuum, describes a planned, temporary arrangement embraced by some MECs. A *patient* relationship exists in an established church which has brought other congregations under its umbrella with the stated purpose of nurturing them spiritually, coaching them professionally, and/or sheltering them financially for a set period until they can be launched into the community as individual churches.

Figure 1 summarizes the metaphors and shows how varying degrees of familiarity and collaboration characterize relationships. Familiarity connotes
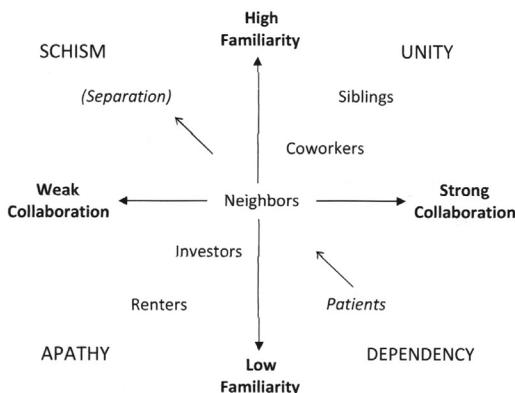
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5 Luke 13:29, NASB.

Figure 1
Familiarity and collaboration characterize relationships between ethnic groups in the MEC.

understanding and may result in friendship or trust. Collaboration includes both working together and sharing resources. Relationships may most strongly reflect unity, apathy, or dependency, or they may dissolve into schism.

The figure reflects four main assumptions. First, it assumes generalized norms: for example, coworkers in this figure are generalized as being in the unity quadrant (upper right), even though not all office environments involve workers in joint activity or foster communication. Likewise, investors in some circumstances may know one another very well but refrain from collaboration. Second, it assumes that when all is going well, a two-way causal relationship exists between familiarity and collaboration. The more often groups collaborate, the better they get to know one another; and the better they know one another, the more likely they may be to work together. Third, it assumes that separation occurs either as a *patient* group moves toward independence, or as any group begins to think grudgingly of the others, "The more we get to know them, the less we like them," eventually leaving the arrangement altogether.

Most importantly, the figure reflects the assumption that neighbor relationships are the most dynamic in the MEC. The dilemmas that emerged at the church in the previous case study reflect this volatility. Like the members at Dan's church, neighbors value image and stability. They are committed enough to maintain a pleasant environment—but not committed enough to become deeply familiar, to persist through the challenges of working together on a sustained basis, or to merge resources. A change in the neighborhood, like the transition to a new pastor, can dissolve their relationships altogether (schism), or it can prompt self-protecting strategies of withdrawal (apathy).

Ideally, neighbors will learn to work together and will develop friendships and understanding, thus moving into the mutuality of the unity quadrant. However, if they agree to work together on short-term, obligatory, or showpiece projects without making an effort to understand one another, the relationship moves into the quadrant of dependency or paternalism. Conversely, if they begin to develop relationships but continue to hold their own resources or control tightly, questions arise about the depth of their commitment (thus hinting at the possibility of schism).

The previous case study and the following integration of Kouzes and Posner's leadership principles demonstrate that relationships in Dan's DC-area church most clearly reflect the *neighbor* metaphor, with some overlap into *coworkers*. The *sibling* ideal remains distant, despite the best effort. What leadership changes could make these relationships more trusting and familiar?

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Kouzes and Posner recommend five central leadership commitments and ten specific habits that accompany them. What do each of these suggest about Dan's past MEC leadership, and what corrections might each imply about his approach to his new assignment?

a caveat

Kouzes and Posner write to individuals who expressly aim to be good leaders, but the leadership challenge facing the MEC is more complex, since the best MEC pastors will seek to minimize their own centrality from the start. Mark DeYmaz encourages MEC pastors to advance leaders of multiple ethnicities into visible roles of influence,[6] and the case study informing this article shows how the idea of distributed power harmonizes with cross-cultural church-planting literature, particularly with the facilitative approach of Tom Steffen.[7] A multicongregational MEC that has been designed around a single pastor—no matter how talented or trustworthy that person is—has a precarious identity and existence, since a pastoral change can upset the delicate intercultural balance that makes the church what it is. At his new church, Dan must be a good leader, but the uncertainties that emerged at his DC-area church testify to the necessity of a facilitative (rather than pioneering) mentality.[8] He should do as much as possible to diminish his centrality as leader and to diffuse power and ownership to others. Kouzes and Posner's five principles may be modified to suggest how he can achieve this out-of-the-spotlight aim.

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model the way

The first principle, *Model the Way*, says that leaders clarify values and set the example.[9] At the DC-area church, Dan succeeded unquestionably in Kouzes and Posner's leader-centric approach. Dan served breakfast at his home every two months to the pastors and pastoral trainees of all congregations. At these meetings, he asked each person to share "blessings and burdens" with the group, who would then pray together. He knew the names and needs of each pastor's family members, visited their congregations and services without understanding the languages, and openly rejoiced as he recounted each person's faith story.

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[6] DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multiethnic Church*, 70.

[7] Steffen, *Beyond Pioneer Church Multiplication*, forthcoming. Expected late 2010 through Wipf and Stock.

[8] Facilitator/pioneer distinction made by Steffen, Ibid.; See also Rundle and Steffen, *Great Commission Companies*.

[9] Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*, 45, 73.

Pastors and church members saw him clean the church, trim limbs from trees, paint on work days, give rides to people who needed transportation, accompany immigrants to the DMV or to obtain legal help, and visit with suffering people from all congregations. He inspired pastors and members through his ready knowledge of the Word and humble pursuit of holiness. One Sierra Leonean woman said, "Pastor Dan led me to the Lord, and he always reminds me that I can do it." His Bible, stained and softened over many years, is immediately recognizable as his, with more notes in the margins and curled-up sticky notes protruding around the edges than printed text itself (hyperbolically speaking, of course). He has been known for reminding people that God loves to show His glory in their surrendered limitations. Dan "modeled the way" to live as a trustworthy, loving, servant-hearted Christian.

Ironically, Dan's success demonstrates the need for MECs to resist the false security of depending on a central leader. With such an inspiring and understanding man at the hub of relationships and activities, no congregation needed to cooperate with anyone else on a sustained basis. In a traditional monocultural church, Dan's success would be applauded as an ideal. When Dan left for a new task, though, dilemmas of ownership, identity, cohesion, and mission revealed that he had not clarified the value essential to the MEC: interdependence. Why do the multiple congregations and ethnicities need one another? One Sierra Leonean leader told the assistant pastor during the transition, "We're nervous. We don't know what to expect. What if the new pastor does not want us?" To her, ethnic acceptance depended not upon her fellow brothers and sisters in the church but upon the disposition and will of the new pastor. In terms of the five metaphors, siblings generally do not doubt the strength and permanence of relationships; others do. The dilemmas at Dan's church suggest that members saw one another as neighbors who could move away if the neighborhood changed and who saw little need to pursue intercultural friendships or joint productive activity. If mutuality and intercultural acceptance are goals of the MEC, then they must be enacted by everyone, not just the senior pastor.

Also included in this first principle is the idea that "we reproduce [and attract] what we are,"[10] rather than what we want to be. An active organizer not wanting to waste time, Dan quickly gathered a team in his new assignment for prayer and leadership support, but this eye-opening principle implies that having a core of enthusiastic, mature believers is not enough. Dan now faces the delicate task of redesigning this core team according to the end vision of a healthy multiethnic

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[10] Maxwell in Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections*, 47.

body. Are the leaders all Caucasian? Middle-class? Similar in education, age, marital status, or gender? If he wants his church to become a body that embraces diversity, his core team must itself be uncomfortably diverse. Building such a team will require determination and resourcefulness, since finding diverse others to cooperate in ministry is more difficult than it seems. DeYmaz recommends that pioneering pastors build relationships with pastors or community members of other ethnicities or socioeconomic groups. These relationships can yield not only insight and sensitivity, but also referrals for new hires and even temporary team members who can serve as consultants until a more permanent team is formed.[11] Modeling the way toward interdependence means making leaders of other ethnicities visible and active in joint mission.

inspire a shared vision

The second principle, *Inspire a Shared Vision*, says that leaders envision the future and enlist others.[12] At Dan's new church, he has already done both. Dan has attracted a swell of newcomers by inviting them to join him in something he has characterized as completely new and important: helping the community to heal— both people who were hurt through past, public failures of the church and struggling immigrants and minorities who have only known separation. "The community desperately needs this church to turn its reputation around," he said, "because it has become a symbol of disgrace." Dan has done what McAllister-Wilson suggests: getting to know the people and the times so that he can articulate a vision that reflects what people deeply want to be. "Vision isn't everything," McAllister-Wilson says, "but it's the beginning of everything."[13]

Another directive implied by the *Inspire a Shared Vision* principle is to lean on the strength of group vision—to "fish with a net," not with a hook;[14] or to develop a choir, rather than a collection of soloists.[15] Although Dan's direct relationships with pastors and congregations at the DC church were extremely successful, the relationships among the various pastors and between the congregations were considerably less strong, a reality that strained the development of shared vision. Joint activities, though well-attended and celebratory in spirit, were infrequent, required collaborative planning among only a few people, and provided little opportunity for building familiarity. Without exception, Dan himself planned (or sparked the planning of) collaborative efforts: combined celebration meals,

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[11] DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multiethnic Church*, 75.
[12] Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*, 103, 130.
[13] McAllister-Wilson in Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections*, 56.
[14] Ibid., 57.
[15] Ibid., 58.

occasional worship services, Christmas caroling events, and public outreach efforts like an annual summer festival for the community. Initiation, communication, vision, and planning flowed out from Dan, from his team of Anglo pastors, and from his secretary, and Dan instructed the other pastors to participate. Intercultural team synergy was not a fully-flourishing strength at the leadership level. Again, *neighbor* relationships provide the fitting metaphor, since members maintained an open and accepting feeling toward one another but lacked shared mission or relationship. If Dan were to follow Kouzes and Posner's advice, he would create space for relationships of trust to develop not just with but among his leaders and their congregations.

Finally, inspiring a shared vision in an MEC requires a facilitative posture for the senior pastor. Despite the leaders' commitment to overcoming division, long-standing hurts like colonialism, paternalism, discrimination, and racism confound the popular wisdom of casting vision. The wise MEC senior pastor will facilitate rather than cast, helping a team of equal contributors to discover and articulate vision and to establish a missional plan for themselves. This pastor/facilitator will keep the wheel turning as the group makes progress, rather than being at the hub of it.

challenge the process

The third principle, *Challenge the Process*, says that leaders should "seek innovative ways to change, grow, and improve,"[16] and that they should be willing to experiment and take risks.[17] The innate tendency toward ethnocentrism presents one of the greatest obstacles to growth and change in becoming a healthy MEC, inhibiting both familiarity and collaboration.

Worldview thinkers have attempted to illustrate the complexity of worldview by showing levels of cultural and self awareness as moving from subconscious assumptions, to values, to beliefs, and finally to behaviors.[18] In an MEC which has grown beyond disconnected renter and investor relationships, members may initially be willing and even enthusiastic to wrestle constructively with differences at the level of behavior, since acceptance of diverse worship styles, clothing, and music can make a very visible and affirming (if not misleading) statement that a group is willing to sacrifice personal preference in order to accommodate others. This willingness may be spiritualized as honoring others above oneself and may be perceived as being complete.

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[16] Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections*, 22.

[17] Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*, 188.

[18] Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 33, 316.

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But just as often happens in feel-good *neighbor* relationships—in which small talk about lawn care is required but religion and politics are taboo—differences in belief are at best ignored and at worst rejected outright as unbiblical. For example, Caucasians at the DC-area church may instantly doubt the spiritual footing of anyone seeking answers about ancestor veneration or cultural identification with Muslims. Differences in values are even less often understood. At the same church after Dan left, an intercultural disagreement about how children should treat the church facility (and how parents should correct them) received no resolution but only frustration and indignation on all sides. One Sierra Leonean insisted in a board meeting, "They need to be taught *the biblical way* to raise children!" It seems churches wrestle and persevere in conflict only with the most surface-level differences, and challenging the process often does not go very deep.

How can Dan's new church prepare for understanding the differences that will inevitably arise? What can they learn about ethnocentrism, communication, and contextualization? As time goes on, how can Dan maintain a learning climate in which, as Lencioni says, humility and pain tolerance characterize the leaders' commitment?[19] An educational plan for leaders may help.[20]

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enable others to act

The fourth principle, *Enable Others to Act*, says that leaders should foster collaboration and strengthen others by sharing power and accomplishment.[21] Despite his difficulties in fostering collaboration among diverse congregations, as mentioned above, Dan demonstrated at the church near DC his concern for building trust and sharing power. After inviting pastors into the organization, Dan kept his hands off the reins and assumed that each would lead his individual congregation appropriately without intervention or supervision. He frequently restrained the administrative board from overriding the decisions or rescinding the freedoms of other congregations. Pastors would tell him as much or as little as they wanted, and they often shared with him points of celebration, difficulty, or resource-related need. Dan said,

> There have been times when things probably could have run a little smoother if I would have stepped in, but I've usually tried to stay back so that they can do it their way. I don't want them to feel like I'm trying to control them. A few times, looking back, I see that I really should have stepped in, but still, I think it's better to risk a problem that way than to dominate.

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[19] Lencioni in Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections*, 71.

[20] Drury, "Confounded by Culture?"

[21] Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*, 221, 248.

Dan's hands-off approach may be one reason that these pastors seemed so contented and trusting of him. He had magnificently enabled them to act.

According to Kouzes and Posner, however, strengthening others also requires challenging, correcting, and developing the performance and character of each team member.[22] The wide freedom Dan allowed may have contributed to much of the separateness between the various congregations and pastors, as well as to areas of unacknowledged incompatibility and ministry weakness. Some congregations, for example, provided no Christian education for children, no activities for youth, and no adult education classes other than weekly worship services. The five metaphors suggest different approaches to correcting such problems. Had a *sibling* relationship prevailed, fellow pastors would have kept one another accountable, openly rebuking and encouraging one another about upholding common goals. *Coworkers* would have followed official channels of complaint, counting on Dan to enforce corrections. Dissatisfied *investors* may have simply sought new partners, and *renters* would have likely been completely ignorant about what the others were doing, as long as conditions remained workable for them. Dan's hands-off approach to keeping others accountable reflects the metaphor in the middle: a polite *neighborly* relationship. Although he may have felt dissatisfied—like a fastidiously neat neighbor annoyed by someone else's unkempt lawn—he remained unmoved to force a correction.

As Dan looks ahead in his planning at the new church, how can he organize the team so that all members continuously interact, collaborate, and build trusting relationships with one another? Beginning with a diverse team, he could rotate responsibility for organizing fellowship and team-building events. He could insist that the members from high-power-distance contexts do most of the talking.[23] Resisting the urge to plan and initiate specific ministries himself (or with Caucasian leadership), he can depend on the diverse team to do so, and he can work to create an atmosphere in which all ethnic groups expect to support the initiatives of any other group.

For example, instead of him suggesting that the church deliver hot meals to Hispanic migrant workers, Dan could enlist a Hispanic pastor as a full member of the leadership team and ask him/her to facilitate an appropriate outreach to a needy Hispanic group. A healthy team—what Lingenfelter[24] calls a community of trust—will be able to engage with the Hispanic pastor's ideas in a push-and-pull process of refinement without domination. The Hispanic pastor may suggest that

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[22] Ortberg in Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections*, 85.
[23] Rawson, *Contextualizing the Relationship Dimension*, 344.
[24] Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*.

the church instead assist the workers with preparing their immigration documentation. The team may press the pastor to consider how the church can also address the workers' spiritual needs, and the Hispanic pastor will bear the burden of overseeing the strategizing of that aspect of the plan. Eventually, all teammates will know how to mobilize their constituency in support of the Hispanic pastor's refined plans. In such a scenario, Dan ensures that some kind of ministry happens, but beyond that start, he relinquishes vision and control to the team. The major advantages of this sharing of power are: a) that the final product will likely be more culturally appropriate than Dan's own plan, b) that the Hispanic pastor feels trusted and empowered (a message of dignity and value that will filter through the entire congregation), and c) that the team becomes stronger through synergy and shared vision. As Monte Campbell says, "Power sharing can be dangerous" because it makes the leader vulnerable. "The time might come when they don't agree with me and the direction that we need to go."[25] The team ownership of the work that results from this vulnerability, however, far outweighs the risk.

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encourage the heart

Although the fifth principle, *Encourage the Heart*, says that leaders should recognize individual contributions and celebrate values and victories,[26] a diverse core team will help Dan to apply this generally good idea in culturally acceptable ways. What happens when an authority figure like Dan praises a young Korean pastor-in-training more effusively than he does the older Korean pastor, or when a young child from an animist-background family is praised publicly? What happens when a highly-performing individual in an egalitarian culture consistently receives public recognition? In contrast, what happens in American culture when the group, or only the leader, receives praise for a single individual's enormous effort? Praise and recognition can backfire when group and status dynamics are not understood. In a healthy, power-sharing environment, Dan and the team can trust one another to deliver praise to their own constituency in appropriate, meaningful, and non-harmful ways. As Blanchard says, the best praise and encouragement may be success itself, since helping people to succeed provides a much longer-lasting encouragement than a leader's praise.[27] Of the five metaphors, only sibling relationships provide both the familiarity to anticipate differences and the trust, born of commitment, to work through misunderstandings.

[25] Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections*, 29.

[26] Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*, 279, 307.

[27] Blanchard in Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections*, 110.

The application of Kouzes and Posner's leadership principles to the MEC can be summarized as follows:

1. To Model the Way, MEC pastors must diminish themselves in order to increase the modeling visibility of other leaders.
2. To Inspire a Shared Vision, MEC pastors must facilitate interdependence through collaboration.
3. To Challenge the Process, MEC pastors must expose ethnocentrism and coach members toward mutuality.
4. To Enable Others to Act, MEC pastors must ensure both a rotation of responsibility and team ownership of the accountability process.
5. To Encourage the Heart, MEC pastors must build familiarity and trust within a committed team, with healthy sibling relationships as the ideal metaphor.

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John Maxwell says that "you never truly know the potential of a person's leadership or giftedness until they lead people who don't have to follow"[28]—and, it should be added as affirmation of Dan's example, until that leader shows his or her humility and pain tolerance in persisting to build a diverse team.

conclusion

In *The Leadership Challenge*, Kouzes and Posner offer basic, culturally-acceptable principles for leading people. The church could consider these to be helpful guides, modifying them somewhat for the unique needs of the MEC. If the church follows such principles only to manage others rather than to live in genuine kingdom fellowship with them, Jesus might well ask, "What credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that."[29]

It is true. Consider the metaphors. Even sinners rent space to other groups when they stand to receive additional income, or increased community visibility, or—dare anyone admit—denominational applause for doing so. Even sinners invest with like-minded people in order to advance their own interests and maximize resources. Even sinners live in self-interested cordiality toward fellow neighbors on the same cul de sac. Even sinners extend professional courtesy around conference tables at the office in order to pursue collaborative projects assigned by the boss. Jesus called His disciples, though, to do better: to love, do good towards, bless, and pray for, even their enemies.[30]

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[28] Maxwell in Kouzes and Posner, *Christian Reflections*, x.
[29] Luke 6:33, NIV.
[30] Luke 6:37.

Sometimes, the best an MEC can do is to survive on renter or investor relationships, and even these must be managed nobly. This arrangement can serve only as a minimum standard, one which is necessary for managing sinful, fallen, ethnocentric, and territorial people. The best way for the MEC is to stretch and grow toward the mutuality, familiarity, and trust of siblings gathered around a nourishing table.

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