



1. THE MINISTRY 'TRI-CYCLE'

COMMUNITY, CAUSE, and CORPORATION

Finding a meaningful, balanced approach to church leadership.

Rev. Tim Beadle

Leading with confidence and effectiveness is a tough challenge for the leader of the local church. The magnitude of the task at hand is amplified by the constant change that is going on around us. Effectiveness in goal setting is no longer realized by aiming at a fixed focal point on the horizon. Remember in the past when we took the Ready – Aim – Fire approach to strategic planning? Now it is more realistic to strive for a Ready – Fire – Steer approach! Because of this I am always looking for effective 'paradigms' that make sense in my leadership. A few summers ago my wife Heather returned from a team-building seminar and shared with me an approach to ministry providing a framework that has empowered my focus and approach to leadership. You can read more about this model in *Metachurch – Preparing Your Church for The Future*.

Since navigating ministry through the maze of change is inevitable, you are wise to choose a ministry vehicle you can rely on to give a well balance approach to leading with confidence and compassion while maintaining conviction.

The ministry model shared with me enlightened me in identifying three 'approaches' or 'spheres' of ministry life that never go away. Unless you embrace, respect and employ all three in creative tension, you are only setting up your leadership experience for a rocky ride into all that awaits in the future.

Speaking of rides, do you realize a tricycle has a major advantage over a bicycle? You may not travel as quickly in getting where you want to go, but at least when you stop peddling a 'trike,' it doesn't tip over! Its three-wheeled design provides a well balanced foundation that allows you to rest along the way without the fear of falling over.

To lead a church successfully I'd encourage you to choose to ride a 'trike' rather than a 'bike' in your approach to leadership. By riding a trike, I mean you commit yourself to a meaningful well-balanced vehicle or approach to ministry. One that doesn't find you falling over when ministry momentum slows down along the way. You accomplish this by identifying three foundational principles. I call these the ministry pulse cycles of **COMMUNITY, CAUSE, and CORPORATION**. All three biblical ministry areas must be cared for continually to ensure you avoid the pitfalls that are lying just around the corner in your leadership road map.

COMMUNITY relates to the 'family' aspect of church life and ministry. (see Acts 2:42 and Romans 8:15-16) Its core value is one of unconditional love and the roles we assume in relation to each other are similar to those in a family... father, mother,

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brother, sisters, parents and children. The reality in a family and church members is that in such a 'community,' the 'weakest' member gets most of the attention because the level of their ability to look after themselves has yet to be developed. As church leaders, ponder this and realize its reality. What type of people is most demanding in your church family!! Just as families grow through birth, adoption or marriage, there are very few restrictions in a church community as to those who can identify with your family. In a healthy family you never stop being part of one, and similarly in the church there rarely comes a day when a person, despite being inactive for years is not welcomed back into the fold with welcoming arms. The reward for being part of a family is that you gain a sense of belonging, and that's what keeps you coming back!

CAUSE relates to the purpose for which we believe we exist in the church. (See Matt 16:18/28:19) A word picture of being a 'soldier of an army' is used throughout Scripture in this regard. Its core conviction is one of 'winning the war' and the roles we assume in relation to each other are those of an 'army' with ranks like positions and chains of authority and appointments. The key person in an Army is obviously the one who is most committed to help win the war, and those who embrace the ministry of an Army enter into its ranks through recruitment and enrollment. In such an Army, soldiers retire from active service or else are 'released' if their service doesn't maintain a certain level of commitment or decorum.

In essence, the 'cause' is a focus on carrying out the great commission, while 'community' would stress more the 'great commandment' to love God and others as you love yourself.

CORPORATION relates to the 'organizational reality' of church life and ministry. (See Matt 25:14-30/1 Cor. 14:40) Here the essence is that of running the 'business' of church matters and related functional structures. Effectiveness is the goal and those with strong analytical skills and business acumen are most important because they are most productive. In this pulse of church life organizational matters are entrusted to qualified leaders. Church leaders dread the day these 'workers' retire because they are hard to replace. The payback of running an effective church for leadership is that everything falls neatly on an organization chart!

When you spend time becoming familiar with these three 'pulses' or 'cycles' of church life you soon realize the importance of keeping all three in motion at the same time. You can't work on one to the neglect of another. A juggler of three balls only touches one ball at any time, but he is constantly aware and senses

where the other two balls are at all times in the juggling experience. Church leaders have to become proficient at juggling!

To complicate matters, very few leaders are proficient in excelling in all three-ministry areas. Your spiritual gifts and natural abilities will find you favouring one or two over the other. The wise leader however will gain the wisdom (probably from past frustration and failure) to learn to give balanced attention to each of the three pulses of church life. Surrounding yourself with other leaders with different 'ministry' passions or bents is the key. This allows you to gain a well rounded perspective.

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If you don't give 'even wear' in your 'tricycled' approach to ministry, the results can be disastrous. Predictable outcomes will reveal themselves over the course of time. If you stress COMMUNITY AND CAUSE but don't attend to the organizational CORPORATE issues.... **CHAOS** in ministry will be the result. Many churches always seem to be in a state of chaos! Why is that? The Lord has entrusted many new community people into their church families over the years. In turn, leaders have spent much time 'adopting' them into their church family (community). By not counting the organizational cost on church structures through continually adding more people, leaders have become drained and sometimes drop out through lack of support or encouragement. This is the outcome of neglecting 'corporate' issues.

If you focus on CAUSE and CORPORATION at the expense of COMMUNITY your church ends up like a **CLINIC**. In this ministry setting there is a reason the church exists and everything is neatly placed on an organizational chart but love does not freely flow and the sense of family quickly evaporates. In this setting the destination is the goal and people become secondary to the fulfillment of the 'cause.' Church families like this die a slow and painful death because of, what I call, the hardening of the 'categories.'

What happens when you wed COMMUNITY AND CORPORATION but ignore the CAUSE? Your local social **CLUB** is the outcome. Members simply meet to enjoy themselves and ignore the needs of those outside the walls of their clubhouse.

The outcomes are predictable. A **CLINIC is COLD**, a **CLUB is CLOSED** to all but its members, and **CHAOS is CRIPPLING** to leadership effectiveness. These are the destinations we travel towards in our leadership unless we attend to COMMUNITY, CAUSE and CORPORATION with care and interest.

As I have watched the dynamics of this principle at work in church life over the past few years it has become a wonderful accountability tool.

Employ this approach in your leadership and it works like this: every decision made on the board or at the leadership team level needs to flow through the 'tri-

cycles' of ministry life. For example, if you are planning to commence an ALPHA program, realize in terms of **COMMUNITY**, Alpha will offer wonderful fellowship around the supper table, providing opportunities for those who attend to connect with church members informally. In terms of **CAUSE**, Alpha helps attendees understand what faith in Jesus Christ is all about and sets them on the pathway of discipleship! **CORPORATE** matters related to Alpha will involve who is recruiting and training leaders, setting up facilities and cooking the meals!

I challenge you to choose any area of church life and 'tri-cycle' it. I have yet to find one through which this three-fold approach does not provide focus and momentum that will carry you to greater ministry effectiveness.

You can also use the tri-cycles of ministry to identify where people in church will best serve the Lord. Each ministry 'cycle' or focus appeals to specific types of people.

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COMMUNITY appeals to those with compassionate, mercy based gifts of encouragement and hospitality. These people should be the greeters on the church door every Sunday! Those gifted in the **CAUSE** area will be your teachers, preachers, prayer warrior types who are constantly striving for souls and discipleship making amongst the membership.

Those with the gift of organization, administration, etc. will round out the ranks in terms of your **CORPORATE** ministry needs.

I challenge you to commit yourself to this 'tri-cycled' approach of leadership. For some it will mean you need to slow down and get the feel of riding with three wheels under you! For others you need to get back to basics and realize the 'training wheels' you have employed to add support to your current vehicle of choice is not going to provide a long term solution to the stress of ministry in your life at this time.

Most importantly, stop peddling long enough to realize you need everyone God has placed around you as part of a ministry and mission **T.E.A.M., where you, 'Together Experience A Ministry.'**

As for me... some may think after 20 years of ministry, that I'm slowing down... but I haven't. I'm just enjoying my tri-cycle approach a great deal more!