

Mt Hawthorn Community Church Discussion Guide

What does leadership & eldership look like in a “Church as a community” Church???

Introduction *Last year as a church community we did some thinking about who and how we wanted to be as a church. We looked at some material from Dave Andrews. One of these frameworks outlined 3 different models underlying how people think about and ‘do’ church.*

Many of us found it helpful to see ourselves and think about our ongoing development in terms of the community development model.

Some of us also found the article called “**How to tell if your church is healthy (even though it looks sick)**” by Gil Cann helpful. Some of the key quotes from this article included:

*What is the true indicator of health in a church? Paul describes a healthy church in Eph 4 v 11- 16. Your church is healthy, irrespective of all else, when **'each part is working properly'**. Is this our priority? **What are the signs? a) when the daily sphere of influence of every member is known, acknowledged and taken seriously, and b) when every gift and every ministry of every member has been identified, developed, and fully employed.***

... Most churches, including many regarded as successful, are by these criteria in very poor health indeed. The ministry of a church is not primarily what the minister does, nor is it mainly the church's organised programs. The primary ministry of a church is twofold:

First, the total effect of every attitude, word and action of every member in every situation in which they find themselves on every day of every week. Second, the effect of every member's God given gifts employed both within and beyond the congregation.

Seen like this, every church has a twenty- four- hours- a- day, seven- days- a week ministry! Yet despite all this, I am continually meeting Christians whose pastors and church leaders show little interest, in terms of active support, in what their members do day by day.

Even a small church already has, potentially, a vastly wider ministry than it imagines. Because of the many different spheres of influence of its members, through their workplace, study, neighbourhood, recreational and community involvement, every church has an influence far more extensive and diverse than any program could ever provide.

The first need is for a better way to identify members' ministries. *The best way is to encourage them to put into words the things they feel most strongly burdened or concerned about; the issues, causes or needs that, to them personally, matter more than anything else in the world.*

(The) second need is for local church leaders to see themselves not as 'employers' but as facilitators. *Even churches positive about member's gifts still work on the 'situations vacant' approach. I have actually heard pastors say - 'I am sure you will find a place to use your gifts among the many programs run by our church!' No doubt this will be true for some. But it seems that many churches' primary concern is not the facilitating of members' gifts but the staffing of existing programs.*

Given some of these ideas, the Elders have begun to ask themselves some questions about the role of the elders and of leadership generally in our community. For example:

- If, we see ourselves more as a community than an institution, what does this mean for the way leadership in general operates in our church? And in particular, what does it mean for the way the Elders operate?
- What expectations do we all carry about leadership in the church that are shaped more by our past experience of church than they are by an understanding of church as a community?
- So what – what difference might this make etc?

What follows are some questions the elders invite you to think about and discuss in home groups. We would like you to feedback your thoughts (both individually and as groups) to the elders as we continue on our journey together.

1. 1. Review the material and discussions about the church and community from last year.

- *What did you find most useful from the material and the discussions that came from that? Why?*
- *What difference has it made to you personally or others in our church community? Give examples. Be as specific as possible.*

1. 2. What does this mean for how we think about leadership in the church?

- *Think about the 3 models in Dave's model. For each of these think about the models of leadership that go with this kind of approach to church:*
 - ♣ *What is the purpose of leadership in this model?*
 - ♣ *Who leads? Who follows? Who decides what? Where does power sit?*
 - ♣ *What are the pluses and minuses of leadership in this model?*
- *At Mt Hawthorn we seem to be saying that we are/want to be more a community than an institution (Gil Cann's model also seems more like the community model).*
 - ♣ *What expectations do we all carry about leadership in the church that are shaped more by our past experience of church than they are by an understanding of church as a community?*
 - ♣ *If we want to be a community, what does this mean for the way leadership in general operates in our church? Who is responsible for exercising leadership – what does this mean, what does this look like in practice?*
 - ♣ *What implications does this have for what is or might be expected of the Elders?*