

+reactivating the missional church



THE FORGOTTEN WAYS

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foreword by leonard sweet

A Stroke of (Apostolic) Genius

Missional church requires a missional ministry and leadership system. For the most part, the Christendom church obscured the need for a full-fledged missional leadership system, because the self-understanding of the church became fundamentally nonmissional. Because all citizens were deemed to be Christians, all that was really needed were the pastoral and teaching ministries to care for and teach the congregation. These were eventually instituted as offices in the church and became the principal metaphors for church leadership. The net effect is that the whole system weighted itself in favor of maintenance and pastoral care and that these became hegemonic in practice,³⁵ and therefore both fragmented and distorted the total mission and ministry of the church in favor of only part of its calling.

A direct consequence of this was that the apostolic, the prophetic, and the evangelistic ministries and leadership styles were marginalized and effectively “exiled” from the church’s official ministry and leadership. This is not to say that these ministries have totally disappeared. Far from it: many within current and historical church life have exercised these ministries without specifically being tagged “apostles” or “prophets,” but by and large these lacked formal legitimacy and recognition, and they have tended to be exercised outside of the context of the local church, denominational systems, and seminaries.³⁶ This “exiling” in part gave rise to the development of parachurch agencies and missional orders, each with a somewhat atomized ministry focus. For example, the Navigators arose out of a calling to evangelize and disciple people outside the church structures because the church was not effective (or interested?) in doing so. The Sojourners emerged to represent the social justice concerns that the church by and large ignores. World Vision as an aid and development agency is yet another example. But in these were generally initiated and maintained the apostolic/prophetic/evangelistic (APE)-type leadership styles. This divorce of APE from the pastoral/teaching/didactic (PTD) has been disastrous for the local church and has damaged the cause of Christ and his mission.³⁷

35. A hegemony is a form of monopolizing leadership or dominance, especially by one state, ideology, or social group over others.

36. As Addison says. “If the thesis of this paper is correct, the gift of apostle has functioned in every age of the church, at times without recognition. The gift is given by the risen Lord, regardless of the titles we use for our church leaders and regardless of denominational polity and structures. Church history is full of examples of those who have exercised an apostolic ministry without ever receiving the title or acknowledgement. Our challenge is not to reinvent apostolic ministry, it is to recognize and release those who are already functioning as apostles.” The same is certainly true for all APEPT ministries. S. Addison, *A Basis for the Continuing Ministry*, 198.

37. In chapter 10 of *The Shaping of Things to Come*, we argued the case for the recognition of these vital ministries from both a biblical-theological and a sociological-organizational perspective. I refer the reader to that book for a more thorough exploration of this topic.

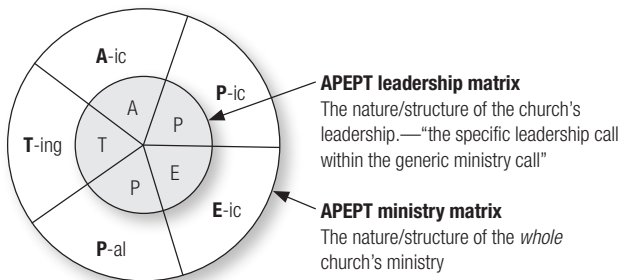
	Definition	Focus/Core Tasks	Impact When in Sync with Other Ministries	Impact When Monopolizing
Apostolic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> essentially the steward of the DNA of the church as the "sent ones" apostolic ministry and leadership ensures that Christianity is faithfully transmitted from one context to another context and from one era to another era 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extending Christianity guarding and embedding DNA of the church both theologically and missionally establishing the church in new contexts "founding" the other ministries (A→PEPT) development of leaders and leadership systems strategic missional perspective translocal networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> healthy manifestation of Apostolic Genius extension of the faith authentic Christianity missional mode of church is fostered healthy translocal networking growth of church and movement pioneering mission experimentation with new forms of (incarnational) church manifestations of APEPT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tendency to autocratic styles of leadership lots of wounded people in the organization due to task and future orientation of the apostle lots of challenge and change, not enough healthy transition—this requires the pastoral and teaching function
Prophetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> essentially the person who has an ear toward God, acts as the mouth of God, and therefore speaks for God—often in tension with dominant consciousness truth-teller to the believer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discerning and communicating God's will ensuring the obedience of the covenant community questioning the status quo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> church's obedience and faithfulness to God God-oriented faith (less "fear of man") challenge to prevailing consciousness countercultural action social justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one-dimensional, "hobby-horse" feel to leadership's conception of church factionousness exclusive and even offensive propensity to be overly activist and driven sometimes an overly "spiritual" feel
Evangelistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> essentially the recruiter, the carrier, and the communicator of the gospel message truth-teller to the unbeliever calls for personal response to God's redemption in Jesus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making clear the offer of salvation so that people might hear and respond in faith recruiting to the cause 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expansion of the faith through a response to God's personal call organic numerical growth of the people of God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> loss of overarching vision and communal health narrow perspectives on faith, limited to "simple gospel"
Pastoral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> essentially the pastor cares for and develops the people of God by leading, nurturing, protecting, and discipling them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cultivating a loving and spiritually mature network of relationships and community making disciples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> nurture into the faith and the community loving relationships growth in discipleship sense of connectedness worship and prayer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> closed, nonmissional community co-dependency between church & pastor (messiah complex) don't rock the boat approach to organization if too "feminine" in expression, males can be alienated from the church
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> essentially the ministry that clarifies the revealed mind/will of God so that the people of God gain wisdom and understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discernment guidance helping the faith community to explore and seek to understand the mind of God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding of God and the faith truth guides behavior self-awareness devotion to learning and integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> theological dogmatism Christian gnosticism ("saved" by knowledge of Bible and theology—Bible replaces Holy Spirit) intellectualism control through ideas: pharisaism ("is it lawful?")

To understand the different nature of each of these ministries, we need to briefly explore the core tasks/functions of each, the effect when one monopolizes and dominates in isolation from the others, and the effect when it is integrated with the other ministries. The easiest way to do this is within a comparative table.

Some Qualifications about APEPT

First, in *The Shaping of Things to Come*, we articulated that it is important to keep in mind that ministry is different from leadership by matter of degree and function.³⁸ Ephesians 4:7, 11–12 assigns the APEPT ministries to the entire church, not just to leadership (“to each one of us grace has been given,” v. 7; “It was he who gave some to be . . .,” v. 11). All are therefore to be found somewhere in APEPT (apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral, teaching/didactic). I would strongly argue that APEPT is in actual fact part of the DNA of all God’s people—in the very fabric of what it means to be “church.” In other words, it is *latent*. Recognizing this is critical to unlocking the real power of the Pauline teaching and is as such an extension of the New Testament teaching of the priesthood and ministry of all God’s people. So much for the generic ministry embodied in Paul’s ecclesiology. What of leadership?

Snyder rightly remarks that the central task of leadership is to build an apostolic, charismatically empowered, ministering community based on Ephesians 4:11–12.³⁹ Leadership in the light of APEPT can be conceived as a “calling within a calling”; it is a distinct task that entails leading and influencing the body of Christ, and not just ministering. Not all ministers are leaders—that much is obvious. As such, leadership embodies a particular APEPT ministry that is given to the believer but extends and reorients it to fit the distinct calling and tasks of leadership.

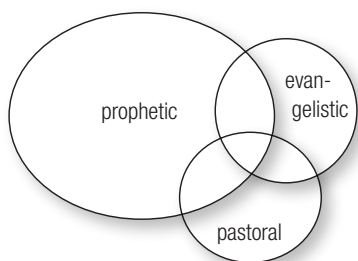


Second, in my experience, it is rare that a person has only one of these ministries in operation. Rather, our ministry callings seem to be expressed

38. *Ibid.*, 170–73.

39. Snyder, *Decoding the Church*, 91.

more as complex of ministries, though we operate primarily out of one of these, depending on our context. So we can view it this way: we can have primary, secondary, and possibly tertiary ministries all acting in a dynamic way. Each informs and qualifies the primary ministry type. These go to form a certain ministry complex, not dissimilar to personality typing (go to www.theforgottenways.org to do a personal profile of your ministry). For example, a person might be primarily prophetic but have evangelistic and pastoral dimensions as well. That can be diagrammatically represented as follows.



Third, many have asked if the Ephesians text is the definitive and final list of ministries. My answer is that it is definitive but not necessarily final. There could well be others, but these only add to the basic listing found in Ephesians 4 and must not subtract from them.⁴⁰ Perhaps the best way to say it is that the nature of the New Testament ministry is *at least fivefold*.

Fourth, how do the spiritual gifts relate to these ministries? My belief is that the ministries draw upon all the various spiritual gifts as needed and as God graces. Clearly, particular ministries draw upon a particular group of spiritual gifts. For instance, the teaching ministry clearly relies on the gift of teaching, wisdom, and other forms of revelatory gifts. The prophetic draws upon a different compound of gifts, but all are available if the situation requires them and the Spirit wills it.

Finally, APEPT is meant to be, and to operate as, a system: a system within the living system that makes up the church. The whole Ephesians 4 text is rich in organic images and perspectives (body, ligaments, head, etc.). Christian ministry is never meant to be onefold or twofold, but *fivefold*, and each leadership style is strengthened and informed by the particular contributions of the others. Let's look at this a little more closely.

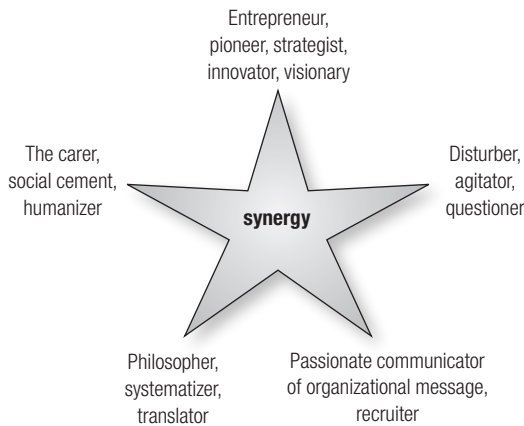
40. Clearly, there are other lists, but these are not located in passages that describe the fundamental nature and structure of the church's ministry. Also, I distinguish between spiritual gifts and ministries. The gifts as I understand them are given as the situation demands; the ministries tend to be more stable and relate to vocation and calling. However, ministries draw upon the gifts to fulfill their functions.

One Plus One Equals Three or More

Moving away from the more theological perspectives, let us take a quick look at the church as a social system to explore further the impact of differing leadership styles. When we do this, we discover that Paul's radical plan for the Christian movement is affirmed by current best practice in leadership and management theory and practice.

In most human leadership systems it is acknowledged that there may be one or more of the following leadership styles:

- The entrepreneur, innovator, and ground breaker who initiates a new product, or service, or type of organization
- The questioner or inquirer who probes awareness and fosters questioning of current programming leading to organizational learning (*agent provocateur*)
- The communicator and recruiter to the organizational cause who markets the idea or product and gains loyalty and allegiance to a brand
- The humanizer or people-oriented motivator who fosters a healthy relational system through the management of meaning
- The systematizer and philosopher who is able to clearly articulate the organizational purpose and goals in such a way as to advance corporate understanding.⁴¹



In *The Shaping of Things to Come*, Michael Frost and I comment that the

various social scientists use different terms for the above categories but recognize that these represent vital contributions that different types of leaders

41. Frost and Hirsch, *Shaping of Things to Come*, 173–74.

bring to an organization. In most leadership management theory it is assumed that the conflicting agendas and motivations of the above leaders pull them in different directions. However, imagine a leadership system in any setting (corporate, government, political, etc.) where the entrepreneurial ground breaker and strategist dynamically interacts with the disturber of the status quo (the questioner). Imagine that both these are in active dialogue and relation with the passionate communicator/recruiter, the person who carries the message beyond organizational borders and sells the idea/s or product/s. These in turn are in constant engagement with the humanizer (HR), the carer, the social cement and the systematizer and articulator of the whole. The synergy in this system would be significant in any context. Clearly the combination of these different leadership styles is greater than the sum of its parts.⁴²

Just as the various systems in the human body (e.g., the circulatory, nervous, digestive systems) work together to sustain and enhance life, so too in all living systems the various elements in the system interrelate and serve to augment each other. Dysfunction is the result of a breakdown between various components or agents within the system. When each component operates at peak and harmonizes with the other components, the whole system is enhanced and benefits from synergy—that is, where the result is greater than the sum of the individual parts. So it is with APEPT. When all are present and interrelated in an effective way, the body of Christ will operate at peak. To use Paul's terms in Ephesians 4, it "grows," "matures," "builds itself up," and "reaches unity in the faith."

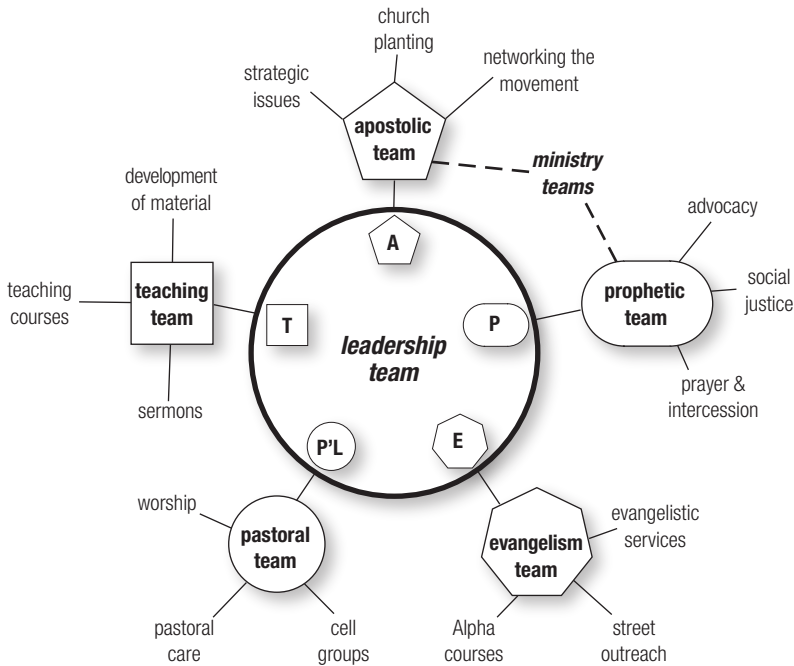
Furthermore, in living systems theory, moving an organization into adaptive organic mode requires that we (1) develop and enhance relationships, (2) cross-pollinate ideas from different specialties and departments, (3) disturb equilibrium by moving to the edge of chaos, and (4) focus information according to organizational mission. Developing a fully functioning APEPT system in a local church, mission agency, or denomination will go a long way toward achieving these ends.

Around 2000 at South Melbourne Restoration Community, we restructured our leadership team on this principle, and it led to significant movement toward being a missional church. We restructured leadership so that we could ensure that all five ministries were represented on the team, each in turn heading up a team related to the respective APEPT ministries. So we had an apostolic team that focused on the translocal, missional, strategic, and experimental issues facing the church. We had a prophetic team that focused on listening to God and discerning his will for us, paying attention to social justice issues, and questioning the status quo of an increasingly middle-class church. We had an evangelistic team whose task it was to oversee and develop evangelism and outreach. The pastoral team's task was to develop community,

42. *Ibid.*, 174.

cell groups, worship, and counseling, and to enhance the love capacity of the church. The teaching team’s task was to create contexts of learning and to develop the love of wisdom and understanding through Bible study, theological and philosophical discussion groups, etc. All were represented by a key leader on the leadership team. While at times it created significant debate on what the key issues facing the church were, it was thoroughly stimulating.

At leadership-team level, we operated this model on the idea of open learning system, which allows the team to “fit and split” and to “contend and transcend.”⁴³ The term *fit* refers to that which binds an organization together (unity). It is the group’s common ethos and purpose. *Split* happens when we intentionally allow for a great diversity of expression in the team (diversity). *Contend* refers to leadership permitting, even encouraging, disagreement, debate, and dialogue around core tasks (duality). *Transcend* means that all collectively agree to overcome disagreement in order to find new solutions (vitality, “reaching unity in the faith”).



SMRC goes APEPT

43. See Richard T. Pascale, *Managing on the Edge: How Successful Companies Use Conflict to Stay Ahead* (London: Viking, 1990).

So on just about any ministry issue, the leadership team would be pre-committed to the common mission of the group. We were covenanted to do “whatever it takes” to see our mission fulfilled. And given healthy relationships within the team, this meant that we allowed for the divergent opinions of each member without being offended. We had lived together, struggled together, faced issues together, and our bond to Jesus and this particular expression of his people was strong. It was this sense of fit that gave permission for each member to operate out of their own ministry biases and represent their perspectives on the issue at hand. The apostolic person would present or critique in light of the need to galvanize the community around mission. The prophetic types would challenge just about everything and ask irritating questions about how God fit into our grand schemes. The evangelist would always be trying to emphasize the need to bring people to faith and how what we suggested would achieve that. The pastoral type expressed concerns about how the community could healthily engage the issue sustainably, and the theologian would try discerning its validity from scripture and history. The split therefore allowed for significant divergence of interests, and there were many debates, even arguments. But we would not try to resolve debate and disagreement too quickly (this drove the pastoral types nuts). We would sit with the problem until we had assessed all options and had, through dialogue and debate, arrived at the best solution—an outcome that was likely to be more true to calling, more faithful to God, sensitive to the needs of the not-yet-believers, sustainable and mature, and theologically well grounded.⁴⁴

APEPT, if well led and directed, can operate in a very invigorating way indeed. Most churches seem to prefer more hierarchical structures with a chain-of-command approach and are most often led by people gifted as pastors and teachers. Such ministry types can tend to avoid conflict or focus primarily on ideas and not action. The resultant organizational culture struggles to find fit and split, contend and transcend. In the operational model, decisions are made at the top and filter down to the grass roots. There’s little room for any real interaction and participation around central tasks and ideas. As a result, in many denominational structures and churches the members at the “bottom” of the system can tend to feel silenced and resentful.

A bottom-up approach to APEPT creates a healthy learning system: the dynamic nature of the whole matrix ensures that an open learning system results from an organization built with such leadership structures. The

44. Let me encourage the reader to try to identify his or her own ministry by creating the online profile provided at the website related to this book (www.theforgottenways.org). This can be done either through filling out the simple personal questionnaire or, preferably, by doing the 360° test. Our ministries are not always defined in the same way we see them, but they are discerned through the impact that we have on others around us—hence the need for feedback from colleagues and friends. I encourage the reader to undertake the online 360° APEPT profiling test to help identify the dynamics of his or her own ministry.

more outward-looking, non-status quo types (in this case A, P, and E) will ensure incoming information from outside the system and guarantee a dynamic engagement and growth with the organization's environment. The more sustaining ministries (like P and T) will ensure that the church is not overextended beyond its capacities. All in all it makes for a good balance of church health and missional fitness.

There seems to be a wonderful "ecology" for healthy ministry at work in a fully functioning APEPT system. It provides us with a theologically rich and organically consistent understanding to help leaders and organizations become more missional and agile. In fact it would be hard *not* to be missional if one intentionally develops this into the life of God's people at the local and/or regional levels. I have been involved in a similar organizational reconstruction around the APEPT idea for my denomination, both at the national and at the international level in the form of an informal, very talented, tri-national body called the International Missional Team (IMT). The IMT has been responsible for significant stimulation of the missional cause in my denomination in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, as these ideas have been employed at a strategic level. I say this to assure the reader that these ideas are actually being tested in practice at local, regional, and international levels, and while the full impact has not yet had time to be assessed, there is no doubt that they are creating significant movement in the denominational culture.

The Final Word

This chapter has tried to articulate why the apostolic environment, with all that it means, is a key component of Apostolic Genius. Quite frankly, it is hard to conceive of metabolic, organic, missional movements existing, let alone lasting, without apostolic influence in its varying forms. This is because apostolic ministry is entrusted with the mDNA of Jesus's church, and without this mDNA manifesting itself in its true form, Apostolic Genius cannot fully manifest. Apostolic influence awakens the church to its true calling and identity and as such is irreplaceable. At best, movements and churches without apostolic influence can only pick up aspects of mDNA; they cannot connect them in that cohesive, synergistic whole that constitutes true Apostolic Genius. This is partly the reason for calling the elemental force of the church "Apostolic Genius." There is something essential and irreplaceable in the ministry of the apostle that is critical to the emergence of missional movements like that of the biblical and postbiblical periods and of the underground phenomenon of the Chinese church.