



Leadership functions and church decline in the Reformed Churches in South Africa: Considering Ephesians 4:11–16

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Multiple studies from Ephesians 4:11–16 have been carried out that focused mostly on aspects of the believers' priesthood. This article highlights the significance of adhering to the biblical instructions of God as a means to attain church growth. The church was instituted by God and as such he directs the process of church growth. Nevertheless, the ongoing membership decline in the World Protestant Churches globally and the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) locally is an indicator that the church is failing to meet the will and purpose of God with the church. In the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA, the decline trends are basically the same, and the loopholes are pointing at church leadership. This article seeks to describe the leadership failure to uphold the blueprint of church health according to Ephesians 4:11–16. These are the keys to real church revitalisation and growth. The exegesis of the problem verse (Eph 4:11) was carried out to indicate the various leadership gifts that are necessary for church growth to occur. The Bible and related literature are the sources of data. This article identifies how an omission of the gift-oriented tasks in a congregation leads to church decline.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: Within the context of the continued church decline within Western Christianity (Christendom), this article reflects on the historical, mostly 'Practical theological' focus on church growth by exegeting the source texts from a 'missiological perspective'. This study is also very conscious of modernity's onslaught on the evangelical church through the therapeutic and managerial revolutions, which functions with an attitude of anti-clericalism when focusing on church growth.

Keywords: leadership functions; church decline; Reformed Churches in South Africa; World Protestant Churches; Ephesians 4:11–16.

Introduction

The missional God is focused on the numerical and spiritual growth of his chosen people (Gn 12:2–3; Mt 28:19–20). These two aspects of church growth are attained in our own time when the Christian church reaches out to all the people of the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, enfolding those who accept the call into the church and then discipling them successfully (Van Aarde 2017:6). This process of church growth makes church growth missiological because believers are urged to participate with the Lord in what he is already doing in the world. This participation process is facilitated through an effective leadership that God provides as a gift to the church. The goal is to spearhead church growth within and also through the congregations. This is because the leaders are the gifts or instruments through whom God works to achieve his purpose with the church. Thus, church growth or decline is closely tied to the leadership functions within the local Christian church.

Regrettably, the Protestant Churches globally, and the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) locally, have been in decline for several years. Decline in the RCSA was identified since 1994 (RCSA 2015:492). The lengthy period of church decline may indicate leadership flaws within the ministry of the RCSA denomination. However, the decline trend in the RCSA is also realised in the World Protestant Churches in the very same way. In both cases, several congregations are still closing because the membership does not justify an independent congregation (Elphick & Davenport 1997:397; RCSA 2015:492). As the apostle Paul highlighted that leadership gifts were given by God as a means to church health and growth, it can be concluded that leadership is the chief player in church growth. Therefore, church decline that is ongoing in the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA must primarily be attributed to the leadership's failure in their calling to spearhead church growth.

Central to the present study is the description of Christian leadership gifts that are necessary for enhancing a missional church that is mature and healthy and therefore an expression of Christ in the world, as highlighted in Ephesians 4:11–16. These leaders are called by God and are gifted to help the church 'to move from where they have been into a new place to which they are being called' (Weems 2010:2). This makes the present study missiological in which the church's Christ-likeness is primary as the send-one to transform nations by the light of Christ. In an endeavour to accomplish this purpose, the main responsibilities of the ordained leadership are the identification of members' spiritual gifts and to cultivate them for effectiveness before allocating them to appropriate ministries (Gelder 2007:6).

This investigation therefore wants to establish the leadership loopholes within the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA leadership that are one of the primary barriers to church growth, resulting in ongoing church decline (Morrison 2014:62; Reeder 2008:141–145; RCSA 2015:492–496, 2018:971–972).

The study exegetes the mentioned text, to highlight the role of the missional leadership in helping the membership develop their spiritual gifts (Eph 4:7) and properly allocate them to serve in their gifted ministries. The exegesis unveiled the following aspects that are dependent on the leadership and are vital and crucial for the maturity of the church, in spiritual unity with Jesus Christ:

- leadership and gifts – verse 11
- leadership purpose – verse 12
- the goals of leadership functions – verse 13
- the results of leadership functions – verses 14–16.

These are the pillars for church growth that are established by Jesus Christ for his church. All four are necessary and are accomplished in the order provided above. These are means for church growth, the method to achieve church growth and the goal of church growth and the result of church growth.

Definition of key concepts

Church leadership

Over the years many things have been written about leadership, both in the world and the church. Whilst the church is still trying to finish the 'unfinished business' of the Reformation, 'returning the ministry to the people of God' (Ogden 1990), it is currently experiencing the attack of modernity's therapeutic and managerial revolutions (Wells 1994:62). Various perspectives on what leadership should be are still brought forward. Nevertheless, when focusing on the variations in the definitions of the Christian leader, the exclusion of authority should run across all of them (Weems 2010:1; Wright 2000:2). This does not mean that church leadership do not have the power to move the people in the direction of God. It is only an indication that everything that the church should be and should do have already been put in place by God. The leadership only has the implementation

function. This principle of leadership is clearly explained by Jesus Christ as he castigated the disciples because of their expectation of a hierarchical structure of leadership within the church. The church already has Jesus Christ as the leader and head of his body. The body imagery highlights that, just as it is with the human body, each Christian has a role to play in making the body to function properly. In this process, the leadership (as a gift from God) receives a very specific and designated relationship to all the other parts of the body. They need to equip all gifted members for their functional role within the body. Gelder (2007:6) alluded that the main responsibilities of the ordained leadership are the identification of members' spiritual gifts to cultivate them for effectiveness before allocating them to appropriate ministries. Organic leadership is the model given in the Bible and it is greatly dealt with in Acts and the apostle Paul's epistles (Ac 6:1–15; 14:23; 1 Tm 3:1–16; Tt 1:5). The other models of leadership such as classical, transitional and visionary, which seem to point at some form of structural leadership (Avery 2004:18), are not appraised in Christian leaders.

The desired direction that the church's ministry should take is shaped by God's vision for the church; hence, the visionary aspect is shared in the leadership. Therefore, the present study's model of leadership utilises aspects of the visionary leadership in which the leadership helps to ground the vision of the Triune God in the context of various denominations and congregations. A visionary leader in the present study refers to one who is effective in helping the church to grasp the vision of the church as ordained by God. In this regard, Niemandt (2012:9) pointed out that these visionary leaders discern where the Spirit leads in all times for the effectiveness of a missional ecclesiology. This makes the missional leadership relevant during all times and places. A visionary leader in an organic context is also a missional leader in line with the vision of God with the nations. Such a leader is effective in helping the entire congregation to be influential both inside and outside their congregations and thus transforming their communities with the gospel. Participating in the mission of God will result in church growth.

Church growth

The Church of God is a family of all the people who were redeemed through the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross as a fulfilment of God's plan of salvation to the world. The word 'family' points to the unity of the church even though it comprises people of different languages, cultures, races and other differences (Oborji 2006:202; Stackhouse 2003:139–140). The family imagery also points to the various members therein, each having specific functions to keep the family united and growing. On the other hand, the image of the body (1 Cor 10:16–17) and that of the vine (Jn 15:1–9) highlight that the church's being and continuity rests with the Lord Jesus Christ. The members in this united family are dependent on Jesus for their being and doing. Thus, the appropriate ecclesiology is one where all the members of the church are given equal opportunities to serve according to the gifts of the Spirit each one has. It stands to reason that the three images of

family, vine and body indicate an organism that has potential to grow. The church should therefore participate with its head, Jesus Christ, in intensive and extensive growth activities.

This urgent need for church growth, especially within Western Christianity, was understood in years past and McGavran (1970) took a timely stance to explain it through what became known as the church growth movement. The emphasis of the church growth movement was on the effectiveness of evangelism that stems from the Great Commission (Hong 2004:2). The church growth movement, which was skewed towards quantitative rather than qualitative church growth, was further articulated and refined by Peter Wagner. As a student of McGavran, Wagner (1998:114) expanded the components of the church growth movement to include church planting, multiplication, church health, all under the praxis the Great Commission. No doubt, the 21st century church still appraises the need for church growth in a refined ecclesiology, in which the organic church promotes the entire membership participation in gifted ministries, to enhance both qualitative and quantitative growth (Cole 2007:9; Stackhouse 2003:141). This points at all Christian life as witnessing the love of Jesus Christ, not limiting it to outreaches or distance evangelism trips. Evangelism is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit who enables the church to witness both in word and in deed.

The organic ecclesiology is the one appraised by the present study in which all believers are encouraged to actively participate in the body of Christ to enhance church health.

Exegesis of Ephesians 4:11–16

The present study identified that several writers and commentators concur in the interpretation of verses 12–16, but that they differ in the interpretation of verse 11. Writers and commentators from various theological backgrounds suggest that the list in verse 11 includes the five offices that the present church should have (Byes 2011:114). The challenging contribution of Hirsch (2009) and his *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers (APEPT)* / *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds and Teachers (APEST)* paradigm, which strongly influenced the missional movement, were also considered. The reformed writers, on the other hand, identified them as gifts that are necessary for church growth (Uprichard 2004:218). Therefore, exegesis is performed exclusively on verse 11 to establish what the apostle Paul is really saying. This enables the present article to describe the aspects of leadership that flows from what the apostle Paul is indicating in verse 11. This is the basis of the entire church process of church growth. Exegesis of verse 11 is discussed next.

Gifts and leadership offices in Ephesians 4:11

καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς,

And he gave some indeed [to be] apostles some now prophets some now evangelist

τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους,
some now shepherds and teachers.

καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν [And he gave] Gave is a verb, aorist, indicative, third person, singular. Thus, Jesus Christ is the source of the gifts that are given. The aorist verb of 'ἔδωκεν' [gave] indicates a onetime event in the past. This aorist, indicative of verb in the verse, helps to shed light in identifying whether, the list of apostles, prophets, evangelist, shepherds and teachers are all continuing or others were discontinued. It is therefore clear that, if the listed were once-off offices, then these offices ceased with those to whom the offices were conferred (Calvin 1976:376–377). Thus, in the present church, these gifts (not offices but gifts) are necessary for the church leadership to accomplish the purpose of the church. It should be observed that the apostle Paul further highlights the same list in Ephesians 4:11 as the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:28; 12:8–11; Rm 12:6–8). These gifts of the Holy Spirit are the basis for church growth and the church leadership is equipped with them as God's agents for church growth.

It is in the interest of the present study to briefly define each of the mentioned 'offices' and 'gifts' described in the mentioned verses and to show how the RCSA leadership has the responsibilities that are attached to them.

1. Apostle: The Greek word 'ἀποστέλλω' means 'to send'. The Twelve were commissioned by Christ to their apostle office. Also, the others who witnessed Jesus' resurrection, or 'supernatural revelation as in the case of Paul', bore the same office (Uprichard 2004:19). Although it is true that the office of apostles ceased with the death of those identified above, the church leadership is sent into the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, to transform the church members and their communities. God's sent people are obliged to fulfil the purpose for which they are sent. They should have the gifted leadership that is responsible for enhancing the achievement of the purpose for which they are sent (Mt 28:19–20).
2. Prophets: These were God's messengers who were taking his message to the people. The Old Testament canon has a selection of prophets, ranging from Isaiah through to Malachi, in addition to many others, who spoke for God and would foretell the future in some cases (Moberly 2006:4). Although the office of prophets ceased with the completion of the canon (Yew 2011:7), its function is basically with the 'gifted' RCSA ministers of the Word. The ministers of the Word should be faithful in teaching and preaching the Word, lest they become false prophets who speak not from the Lord as those indicated in Jeremiah (Jr 23 and 29).
3. Evangelist: This is one who is tasked to proclaim the Word of God. The New Testament has the noun 'evangelist' in only two places, other than Ephesians 4:11. This was in reference to Philip (Ac 21:8) and Timothy who was to do the work of the evangelist (2 Tm 4:5). The verbal form 'to evangelise' occurs frequently, which

literally means to proclaim the good news. The evangelists should be students of the Word to be able to rightly teach the members till they become spiritually mature.

4. Pastors and teachers: This is written with one definite article unlike the other offices, where each has a definite article seemingly indicating that 'the teacher is a pastor or is a pastor that teaches' (Uprichard 2004:224). The New Testament describes the same office with nouns such as 'elders' (Ac 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Tm 4:14 5:12, 191 Pt 5:1-4) and 'overseer' (1 Tm 3:1-7; Phil 1:1). In 1 Timothy 3:2, the apostle Paul writes of the overseer as the bishop also. These whole range of nouns indicate that the offices that are appraised for the church to date are that of teaching and ruling elders.

It must be concluded that the most natural reading of the text points to these people as once recognised in having spiritual leadership and authority in the church, not as intrinsic orientations that each believer develops. Leadership and spiritual authority were especially important to the early church at a time when there was no canon and false teachers and prophets and apostles were rampant.

Therefore, leadership offices of the Protestant churches globally and the RCSA are ministers of the Word, elders and professors (Vorster 1999:17). The leadership functions require the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be effective. The Holy Spirit equips the leaders to be able to accomplish their leadership tasks. The RCSA's teaching and ruling elders are the called instruments through whom God builds his church. They are responsible for spearheading church revitalisation and church growth. However, the ruling elder's effectiveness is a result of the teaching elders who is expected to empower them for effectiveness. The study assumes that, the RCSA congregations second the leadership into their offices through establishing the conviction of those claiming God's call (1 Tm 3:1; 2; Tm 1:9), which should be confirmed by the observable signs of the call before they engaged the leadership (1 Tm 3:7). When this is done properly and all other variables are in place, there is no reason as to why the RCSA churches could continue to decline for such a prolonged period of time (from 1994 to date).

The apostle Paul's description of spiritual gifts (Eph 4:11) is indicating that God purposely gives the gifts to all those with the mandate to fulfil the missional purpose of the church (Nel & Schoeman 2015:88; Niemandt 2012:5). Thus, the leadership that has a true calling of God is endowed with these gifts.

The purpose of the leadership gifts for the church (verse 12)

The purpose of various gifts

There are five categories of spiritual gifts that Christ gave to the church as a means to facilitate church growth. This emphasises the need for unity and diversity in the church of Jesus Christ, in which different leadership inputs in a congregation produce members that are fully developed for

service in the congregation (DeVries 2016:1). The gifts are given as the vehicles that lead to church growth. This makes church growth almost obvious because God provided the means to accomplish church growth. Thus, failure to realise church growth rests with the church leadership, whom God tasked with the mandate to spearhead church growth (Eph 4:11). The church's decline is therefore a direct result of leadership failure to embrace the growth guidance provided by God.

God gave the leadership various gifts:

- to equip the saints for the work of ministry (12a)
- to build up of the body of Christ (12b).

The leadership gifts are necessary for effective teaching of the believers to become actively involved in the church (Getz et al. 2000:1-2). The believers' active involvement leads to church growth. The process of equipping the believers includes the identification of various believers' gifts, which the leadership should develop to enhance membership's full potential of service in the church. Nevertheless, the leaders should be equipped through relevant training to correctly identify members' gifts and then nurture them accordingly. Without the capacity to identify the members' gifts, the training would not produce the desired results. Training does not impart the gifts but develop them for effectiveness.

Jesus Christ, who is the head and model of the church leadership, identified the Twelve and spent about three years, equipping them for effectiveness in ministry (The four Gospels). Jesus commissioned them for service when they were ready to use their gifts in achieving the ministry purpose (Mt 28:19-20). It stands to reason that the empowering of leadership precedes the sending (Ikechukwu 2019:26). The effectiveness of the apostles' ministry is indicated in the book of Acts. The apostles were effective in turning the world upside down with the gospel of Christ (Ac 17:6), resulting in church growth amongst different peoples. This is a testimony that transforming the people does not require a multitude of people, but the well-developed gifts of the Spirit.

In this regard, turn-around and church growth cannot be realised in the RCSA and the other Protestant Churches before all the members are equipped to fulfil their calling in the various RCSA congregations. The leadership can only transform the members if they have the necessary capacity in the use of their gifts (Startup & Harris 1999:118).

The church should reach the following goals:

- All members should attain the unity of the faith in Jesus Christ (13a – paraphrased).
- Having sufficient knowledge of the Son of God (13b – paraphrased).
- To become mature Christians (13c – paraphrased).
- Attaining to the measure of Christ's full stature (13d).

These are the goals the leadership of the RCSA should aim to achieve to accomplish their calling. Thus, the gift God gives to the leadership aims at developing a missional church that can be an expression of God in the church and beyond (Nel & Schoeman 2015:88). When these goals are not attained, the presence of the leadership in the RCSA comes with no positive results. The loophole in the achievement of these goals can be traced to inadequate training of the RCSA leadership as indicated by the responsible deputies (RCSA 2018:970–972, 1056–1084). This inadequacy in the training is the barrier to enhance the RCSA leadership to become trainers for congregation members. These leaders then become barriers to church growth, rather than facilitating it.

The spiritual gifts that are vested in the leadership (v 11) have the purpose of equipping the church for active participation in the body of Christ (v 12). This process leads to the spiritual maturity of the entire church (v 13). Thus, the church becomes salt and light that can live to glorify God in the church and in the community. This is qualitative growth of the entire membership, which enhances quantitative growth (Chaney & Lewis 1977:13).

Ultimate result of the church

The ultimate result of the church growth process in Ephesians 4:11–16 is to have the entire body of Christ that:

- No longer be children, tossed back and forth
 - by every wind of doctrine (14a)
 - by the trickery of men, who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes (14b).
- But practising the truth in love, [Christians] grow up into Christ who is the head (15).
- From him the whole body [church] grows, fitted and held together (16a & b).
- As each one does its part, the body grows in love (16c & d).

The result that is emphasised in verses 14–16 is that the believers become mature Christians who can resist the false doctrine that is currently plaguing the world. This is possible with the members who have been effectively taught the truth. The truth enables the members to distinguish the truth from error (De Moor 2010:135–136; Vorster 1999:44). However, the continuous membership decline in the RCSA is seemingly a result that the members are not grounded in the whole truth of the Word. Today the evangelical churches are emptied of their membership by the false doctrine from men (v 14a) who manipulate the church (Pfau 2002:1).

A church that achieves the goals in verse 13 can reflect the outcomes in verses 14–16. Nevertheless, a church's failure to reach God's purpose with it is in qualitative decline, which manifests in quantitative decline. When the church members are prayerless, lack genuine love, underpassing evangelism and many others, the church is already in decline (RCSA 2015:494–495). The RCSA needs to come up

with strategies to empower the leadership to be effective in spearheading growth.

Way forward for turn-around and church growth in the Reformed Churches in South Africa

Reformed Churches in South Africa's efforts for revitalisation and growth

Since the identification of membership decline in the 1994 Synod, the RCSA has put several interventions in place (RCSA 2015:492). These interventions were meant to enhance church revitalisation and growth. The deputies for turn-around and church growth carried out several researches, geared towards church revitalisation, in South Africa and abroad. Their findings and recommendations, which proved effective in certain denominations, regrettably did not work for the RCSA because membership decline continues (RCSA 2015:503–505). The reason is that the mentioned deputies' recommendations only focused on addressing the results of membership decline. It did not focus on the entire process leading up to church growth (Eph 4:11–16). The deputies underpassed the church growth strategy that is highlighted by the apostle Paul, 'to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ' (Eph 4:12). This should have been the focal point of the deputies' research, to identify whether the means are perfected or not. In addition, the deputies should identify if the goals are met:

[U]ntil [all the members] attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God – a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ's full stature. (Eph 4:13)

Working backwards does not lead to the desired results, hence, the need to follow the order provided by the apostle Paul in Ephesians, 4:11–16 (the means, the purpose, the goals and the results). Thus, the starting point in endeavouring, church revitalisation and growth is to assess the extent to which the leadership uses its spiritual gifts. Furthermore, the RCSA should establish whether the leadership has the gifts (v 11). This is to double check in case there are some leaders who lack in some of the gifts. However, if the leadership in congregations are really called by God, they do have the gifts necessary for the purpose of God.

Establishing the purpose of the spiritual gifts

The purpose of the gifts is to enable the leadership to:

- Identify membership gifts and nurture them for effective service in the church (Ogden 1990:20).
- Empower the members to serve in areas of their gifts in the church – thus contributing towards the growth of the body of Christ (Weems 2010:15).

The description of gifts in Ephesians 4:11 and the exegesis done on the same verse indicate that the RCSA ministers of the Word are responsible for articulating the purpose of God with the church. They are solely responsible for

enhancing the quality of membership that could fulfil the purpose of Jesus Christ with his church. For turn-around and church growth to happen in the RCSA and the other Protestant Churches, the ministers should be the focus of all growth efforts. Thus, the deputies for church growth and other related deputies and committees should identify the needs of ministers of the Word, which are necessary for the fulfilment of the purpose of God for his church, through them. The ministers should be empowered through relevant means. This is foundational for the church to realise turn-around and church growth. The church growth efforts, including the financial, human and time resources, should be channelled towards meeting the needs of the ministers of the Word until they become conversant in using their spiritual gifts. When this is accomplished, the goals and results will obviously come as products of the purpose. It stands to reason that achieving the goals and desired results depends on the effective use of the spiritual gifts.

Working towards real church revitalisation and church growth

Church growth is the will of God because he provided everything necessary for church health to occur. In the whole process of church growth, the leadership is central in enhancing membership participation for church growth to be realised. Nonetheless, church decline points at the leadership that is failing to uphold its calling to affect church growth. The World Protestant Churches and the RCSA should focus their efforts in empowering the leadership to enable the effective use of their spiritual gifts.

Enhancing leadership effectiveness

For turn-around and church growth to occur, the RCSA locally and the Protestant Churches globally should focus on enhancing the ministers' spiritual gifts that they are effectively used. In this regard, the Theological School Potchefstroom (TSP), deputies for church growth, deputies for ministers' training and TSP curators should come up with the theological training that boosts the gifts of ministers.

Proposed theological training for ministers

Such theological education should have the curriculum that prepares the ministers to use their spiritual gifts effectively. Thus, the curriculum, mode of teaching and lecturers should all be relevant to achieve the desired outcomes (Elliston 1988:204; Fanning 2009:2&210; Krejcir 2008:1). In this regard, the TSP should engage the lecturers who had previously served as ministers in congregations. Such lectures have the necessary practical experience on how the spiritual gifts could be effectively developed and used. Nevertheless, hiring the lecturers with the relevant academic degree but lacking practical experience in congregations is abortive in equipping ministers for congregation functions (Elliston 1988:210; Wourms 2007:3). Wourms goes on to argue that such lecturers lack a clear focus on transforming the ministers in such a way that they in turn can transform the congregations.

Furthermore, the identified team responsible for theological training should engage the curriculum specialists, who should work with them in translating the spiritual gifts into clear and measurable objectives. The measurable objectives allow the TSP lecturers to measure the extent to which the graduating ministers of the Word achieved them. This might shift the assessment from basically an academic means to include the practical part. The practical aspect assesses the ministers' use of the spiritual gifts, which is their principal function in the congregations.

Thus, the ministers' training calls for more practical involvement of student ministers during the period of study than what it is at present (TSP Curators 2018:935). This allows students to get assistance in congregations on how they could effectively use their gifts to build the church of Christ. It is important for trainee ministers to have adequate exposure to the ministry in congregations, where they learn by doing, with the help of the experienced ministers (Mwangi & De Klerk 2011:1). The practical part of training is important for enabling the marrying of theory and practice, making it a cohered whole. Also, students learn best through practice rather than through theory. Research on learning established that about 80% of learning happens through practice (Reeder 2008:44). Thus, the current limited practice in ministers' training is seemingly affecting their functions in congregations. This leads to what Ames (2014:19) argued that training that is divorced from the context does not lead to desired results.

The coaching strategy for leadership effectiveness

To recap, the spiritual gifts are the means to achieve the purpose of the church. This leads to the accomplishment of the goals of the church, resulting in real church growth – quality and quantity of membership. The foundation in the whole process is to enhance the effective use of leadership's spiritual gifts. Thus, the leadership training should be meant to instil the necessary character and skills that urge them to influence change in the membership (Wourms 2007:7). Along the same lines, Ogne and Roehl (2008:14) argued that the training for leadership should empower them to equip the postmodern members to use their gifts in building the church. Thus, the training strategies that were effective in the 20th century might not be effective in the present dispensation. The RCSA and the World Protestant Churches should revisit the programmes for the training of ministers.

The fact that all ministers from the mentioned churches are trained but turn-around and church growth are not happening is an indicator of loopholes in the training process. In view of this, Ogne and Roehl (2008:19) proposed a personal transformational way of 'coaching that will pull together training and experience with context and reality'. Their emphasis is on boosting the leadership gifts for effectiveness. The coaching should be carried out with contexts in mind. This follows that church growth is also influenced by the contexts of members, such as political,

cultural, social and economic contexts (Nel & Schoeman 2015:95). The coaching process is aimed at enabling the leadership to effectively use what they learn, and in turn, they become effective in equipping the congregation members (Eph 4:12). Effective use of the spiritual gifts enhances the leadership to adapt to various contexts by providing the conditions that are conducive for influencing membership transformation (DeVries 2016:5). If the appropriate church growth conditions are made available in each context, growth is imminent. Therefore, the Protestant Churches globally and the RCSA locally should exert their efforts in coaching the ministers to become the real means for church growth (Eph 4:11).

This is a call for the Protestant Churches and the RCSA to refrain from dwelling in the lecture hall as the important means of equipping trainee ministers. The current training mode in seminaries has been blamed for producing ministers who are well educated but who cannot translate their theoretical knowledge into practice (Morrison 2014:62; Mwangi & De Klerk 2011:1). The problem is that the education and training do not lead to personal transformation of the leadership to become the means God uses for church growth. The present article encourages the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA to realign the training for ministers, to be more of coaching them in the congregations than dwelling much in the lecture halls at the seminary.

Coaching is appraised as an appropriate approach in empowering of leadership because of the following reasons by Ogne and Roehl (2008:26–28):

1. Coaching is relational: It is consistent with the postmodern value for relationship and community. This relationship provides safety and trust in emerging leaders, who are seeking to relate to modern church denominations.
2. Coaching is incarnation: This is a hands-on, person-to-person, face-to-face learning and it functions in the realm of shared experience beyond knowledge.
3. Coaching is practical: It deals with the real and immediate issues in life and ministry of the leader.
4. Coaching is holistic: It touches on the calling, gifts and character of a leader and the life of the faith community and its place in their way of living, thinking and doing things.
5. Coaching is contextual: Thus, every coaching conversation starts and ends in the life and ministry context of the leader rather than starting from a specific model, or even the coach's external point of reference.
6. Coaching is missional: It enhances the coach to help the leader to understand and engage in the way of living, thinking and doing, through relevant activity that allows a leader to effectively use the gifts of the spirit to benefit the church and the community.
7. Coaching is flexible: It is an especially useful approach to ministry during this time of changing paradigms. It is able to keep pace with the rapid change.

8. Coaching is cross-cultural: It is centred in the context of the leader and not the coach. Thus, it empowers the leader to contextualise ministry principles to his or her culture.

The coaching approach enables the leaders to perfectly develop and use their gifts in effective ways that benefits the local congregations. It allows the coach to identify the needs of various leaders and to provide possible means to meet them. Effective coaching requires an effective coach; thus, professors in seminaries and whoever is involved in the coaching of the leaders should be relevant to the approach.

Conclusion

These researchers want to acknowledge the important discussion and ongoing research, mainly coming from a practical theological perspective, that focuses on 'flattening' or 'broadening' church leadership. It is an important part of the 'fight' against institutionalism and incorporates a definite strategy of 'decentralising' leadership within the institutional church. It is also part of the unfinished business of the Reformation to reclaim the 'office of the believer' (Ogden 1990). We are however against the 'belittlement' of the traditional pastor–teacher office within the institutional church. Whilst the role of human agency in church leadership must be affirmed, a missiological perspective still acknowledges that this role stems from the act and the being of the Triune God within a *missio Dei* perspective. Missional Theology views the act of 'being sent' as part of the act and the Being of the missional God. The idea is grounded deep in Trinitarian Theology and is foundational to spiritual formation (Van der Wal 2018).

Turn-around and church growth has not been realised in the World Protestant Churches and the RCSA in a period exceeding two decades. This is despite the efforts of the RCSA to implement possible means in an endeavour to enhance church growth. This article established that the RCSA failed to identify the root of the problem that leads to church decline. The church growth process provided by the apostle Paul is the answer to the ongoing membership decline in the RCSA and the World Protestant Churches. This article recommends that the TSP redesigns the curriculum in such a way that it enables ministers to be effective in the use of their spiritual gifts. The approach recommended in this study is one of coaching the leadership rather than lecturing to them. This study reaffirms that biblical leadership is a God-given gift that is not only responsible for but also indispensable to the process of intensive and extensive church growth.

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Authors' contributions

Both authors contributed equally to this research article.

Ethical considerations

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