

Forming leaders for the future

Increasing effectiveness in mission

For local Baptist faith communities to thrive, it is crucial that we have robust leadership. **Charles Hewlett** interviews **Jonny Weir**, the director of Ministry Training at Carey, about identifying and empowering the next generation of Baptist leaders to lead in fresh, creative and faithful ways.



Jonny, you have a leadership vision for Baptist faith communities. Tell us about this.

Charles, I am compelled by the shared vision you are building for Baptist faith communities. I believe your emphasis on robust leadership is vital for where we are currently. My particular passion is for the development of new leaders. If we are going to 'thrive' and not merely 'survive' as churches, we must share a commitment to calling out and developing leadership potential.

In my experience, we often overlook leadership development as a key success factor for thriving churches. I frequently hear pastors lament that they are run off their feet. It is a genuine problem. Yet it is a problem that can be addressed by a focus on developing leaders. As a movement we need to build the leadership capacity of our churches. We need pastors and elders who get excited about cultivating the 'leadership development soil' in their congregations. This neglected instinct needs to become the heart of what we do.

Put simply, my vision is that Baptist churches will be known for their development-focused culture, which prioritises the identification, growth and deployment of robust leadership for our churches and wider denominational ministries. If our churches want to increase their effectiveness in God's mission, then we need this collective focus on leadership development.

What does a development-orientated leadership culture look like?

Development-oriented cultures are characterised by four key qualities: inspiration, inclusion, equipping and empowering.

- **Inspiration:** Development-oriented leadership cultures have a *big* God! In this kind of culture, faith is vibrant, prayer is audacious, and there is a Kingdom-oriented passion that captivates the imagination. In this kind of culture, it would look normal to 'give your life for the sake of the gospel'.
- **Inclusion:** Development-oriented cultures don't make you fight to get noticed. Everyone is seen as a potential leader. Too often we have

a narrow definition of leaders and what they look like. Too often I only notice the potential in people who look and operate like me. Over the years I have learnt that God calls unexpected people to step into leadership. Inclusion requires us to trust the notion that 'difference and diversity' is where gospel genius ignites.

- **Equipping:** Pastors are often focused on organising and executing ministry, as 'the main thing'. We feel that 'if we don't do it, then nobody will'. We need to shift to a culture where our leadership impulse is, 'if we don't do it, then that will give us time to train and equip other people to do it'. This is about shifting everyone's expectations to align with the Ephesians 4 pattern, where church leaders are called to equip the saints for the work of ministry.
- **Empowering:** This one is complicated. It takes the most spiritually and emotionally mature leaders to pull this off effectively. 'Giving away power' means trusting others and giving them genuine responsibility. This requires



accepting failure as learning, and best effort as success. For those of us with leadership insecurities, this is a challenge. For those of us who 'want it done right' and who confuse our identity with our performance, attempts to empower others often default to well-meaning versions of control. Development-oriented leadership cultures have a big God—and they also have a playfully generous, permission giving, and joyfully trusting leadership oversight.

What does this mean practically?

I would start with the lead pastors or the key leadership team. This is where the overall culture of the church is shaped. There needs to be a passion and energy in this group to see leadership growing across the whole church. Development often gets lost in the regularity of preparing for Sundays and, the busyness of the week. Leadership development never knocks on your door or emails you for attention on Monday morning. We need key

leaders to prioritise, strategise, motivate and resource this space. We need leaders who are committed to multiplying leaders.

We then need to build across all levels of the church culture and strategy, the conviction that 'the multiplication of leaders' is key to helping us achieve the Kingdom dreams that God has given us. This requires a ruthless focus. It requires a prioritising of energy and resources. It requires a determination not to get easily distracted from the central task of pouring into the lives of leaders who multiply the ministry. Let's all start with an audit of our own church strategy, activity and resourcing. If we find that discipleship and the multiplication of leaders does not have central focus, then get to work on changing that.

Finally, we need churches collaborating within our regions to resource, inspire and empower each other to become leadership-rich environments. This leadership development stuff is hard to do

on your own. Together, we could have regional support networks, training events and opportunity pathways developed for our tribes of emerging leaders.

In summary, I would like to see our churches practice three core commitments:

1. Existing pastoral leaders and churches regularly commit to the priority of apprenticing and creating space for new leadership to emerge.
2. Regional Associations focus on coordinated strategies and pathways that resource the development of existing and emerging leaders.
3. National denominational structures organise to foster a culture where we embrace creativity, risk-taking and diversity as a key pathway to hearing God's voice and noticing where leadership emerges.

What sort of things do you look for when identifying an emerging leader?

Leadership potential can look like a lot of different things. I try to be open to finding leadership in the most unexpected places. It is important to avoid narrow and restrictive views on what traits to look for.

That said, there are a few indicators I notice:

- Hunger: I look for those who I don't have to drag along or →

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persuade to get involved. They are the ones who arrive early and are happy to hang around afterwards. It is often those with initiative, passion and energy to make things happen. They are happy to take responsibility and get to work.

- Selflessness: I look for those who are slow to anger, patient, faithful, kind, generous, encouraging, and sacrificial. They listen well, take feedback and look for opportunities to grow. Other people love being around them because they generate an authentic sense of community. They understand that discipleship is the way of the cross, and still they live in the power of the resurrection.
- Spiritual and emotional health: This one is a lifelong journey, but the signs of life should be evident for all to see. I look for people who draw me toward the goodness of God. They have an observable love

for Jesus and for their neighbour. They are self-aware enough to know their vulnerabilities, while faith-filled enough to 'step out of the boat' and trust God. The transforming work of the Spirit in their life makes them hard to ignore.

Hunger, selflessness, and spiritual and emotional health all precede giftedness as leadership indicators. Yet with these three qualities evident and growing, there is plenty of momentum to build leadership gifting and competence for the future.

Conclusion

The 23rd August is Carey Sunday for 2020. Please look out for the 'Church Service Pack' provided by Carey, including a sermon preached by Principal John Tucker. Carey is the theological college of the Baptist Churches in New Zealand and provides many opportunities for leadership

formation. I encourage you to support our college by using the material provided and celebrating Carey Sunday in your faith community.



Contributor: Charles Hewlett

Charles is the national leader of the Baptist Churches of New Zealand. He is often heard saying, "I love Jesus. I love the Bible. I love the gospel. I love the church. And I love mission."

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