Third International Training Consultation
Emmaus Bible College
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Workshop 3.2. Leadership in Brethren churches - a Hermeneutical-Cultural challenge:

Remit: Plurality of Leadership Structure – understanding the nuances of eldership and part/full-time workers What are and how absolute are the Biblical bases for "elder-led" and "Pastor-led" –churches Making team leadership work. Blending part/full-time workers and eldership. "Pastor-led" churches – how do we train for the use of full time workers in local churches without following a CEO model. This workshop is an application of the morning plenary sessions on how we interpret the Bible regarding the Gospel and its demands on us as applied to different cultural contexts.

Facilitator 1: Ronnie Magpayo (Philippines)

Issues:
Plurality of Leadership Structure – understanding the nuances of eldership and part/full-time workers. What are and how absolute are the Biblical bases for "elder-led" and "Pastor-led"

A brief overview of the historical development of church organization and leadership

The Gospels
The primitive church was formed under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. It started, as a movement within Judaism whose central figure is Jesus. His relationship with his disciples was parallel to that of a Rabbi to his pupils.

The Book of Acts
- The believers continued to meet in house churches, synagogues and the temple. The communities of believers were characterized by their spontaneous and charismatic nature.[1]
- They had no formal or rigid church structure. Leadership was initially focused on the twelve, being representative of eschatological Israel (1:6, 20-26; 6:2)[2]
- Elders and deacons appeared in several instances playing some roles in the leadership of apostle Paul (11:30; 15:2, 22; 16:4; 14:23)[3]
- After the death of James in AD 62 it seems that the pattern of synagogue government for the Jerusalem church was adopted. (11:30; 15:2,4,6, 22 ff; 16:4; 21:18)[4]

Epistles of Paul
- The Epistles of Paul describe the church by the presence and work of the Spirit (charismatic).
- The ministry belonged to all and not solely in the hands of the few. Believers used his/her gifts and functions in order to strengthen the church. (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4)

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[1] (Antioch and with Paul, 13:2,4; 16:6ff; 18:9; 22:7, Hellenist and with Ananias of Damascus-6: 8, 10; 7:55; 8:26,29,39; 9:10. Peter and John and others in Judea, 4:8; 10:10-16,19; 11:18)

[2] There had been prominent leading figures during this period in the life of the community (Peter, John, James, and Paul). But these people did not dominate the whole authority of the church.

[3] The people were still part and being consulted on issues that concerns the community (Acts 15:22; Gal. 2:2-5)

[4] In AD 44 (After the death of Herod's Agrippa) that a firm and final pattern of leadership had gradually taken its shape and authority became more institutionalized. James, the brother of Jesus was the key figure in Jerusalem church during this period.

- Leadership in Pauline churches was not sacerdotal. The Spirit prevailed over the old Jewish distinction between priest and people.

The Pastoral Epistles
- In the Pastoral Epistles, elders and deacons are seen as more established offices. Their functions appear to be more clearly defined and regulated.
- The role of Timothy and Titus is not clearly defined in terms of their rank within the church structure.
- The "charismatic" nature of the Pauline churches was no longer present in the community. The only citation on the active work of the Spirit was seen in the course of Timothy's ordination.

Summary:

Jesus discipleship was a movement within the Jewish religious community. Jesus was the central figure and authority of the movement. The primitive church described in the book of Acts was not a separate entity outside Judaism. The first generation of believers were empowered and governed by the Spirit (charismatic community). It grew primarily under the spiritual authority of the Apostles assisted by prophets, teachers, elders and deacons.

In Pauline churches, ministry belonged to all members of the body of Christ and functions according to their gifts and abilities. The assimilation of synagogue pattern of government was part of the process on the church's gradual shaping of its own identity. Evidences of early institutionalization of the church (early Catholicism) could be observed in the Pastoral Epistles (Timothy and Titus) when the second-generation believers were facing heresies.

Questions for discussion:
1) How church order/structure may actually hinder the work of the Spirit in our churches?
2) What are the dynamics and tensions that we need to recognize between plurality of leadership (or other form of church government) and the priesthood of all believers? What are its implications in the way we view leadership and ministry?

Facilitator 2: Chuck Gianotti (USA)

Issues:
Plurality of Leadership Structure – Making team leadership work. Blending part/full-time workers and eldership. "Pastor-led" churches – how do we train for the use of full time workers in local churches without following a CEO model.

Relevant Scriptures:
- The need for an equipping ministry (Eph 4:11-13)
    - Existing in midst of plurality of elders (cp. 1 Tim 1:3 Timothy was apparently in Ephesus when he received Paul's letter/teaching about elders and church order)
- The need for gifted, available, willing elders to serve in fulltime capacity.
    - "Rule" (Greek: προΐστημι - *prohistemi*) well
    - "Labor" (Greek: κοπιάω – *kopiao*) at preaching and teaching (1 Tim 5:17-18)
    - "Double honor" related to "the laborer is worthy of his wages" - financial support.
        - *(Presumably this financial support frees up the man to spend more time teaching and preaching the word and less time in "tent-making" occupations).*

Practical steps for blending fulltime and non-fulltime elders, maintaining a true plurality of leadership.
- Elder-team interpersonal relations
    - Build mature, strong team of elders (cp. Elder qualifications)
    - Affirm all elder participation in ministry
    - Work at shared leadership & decision making
    - Guard against jealousy/competition
    - Avoid default clericalism
    - Protect the fulltime elder
    - Firm up solidarity

- Elder-team congregation relations
    - Teach biblical leadership/eldership/spiritual gifts
    - Dispel misperceptions
    - Ensure elder face-time

- Honor and Support
    - Free up fulltime elder's from spending time in secular income
    - Provide adequate support
    - Honor those not financially supported who work hard.

Areas of potential tension:
- Jealousy/insecurity over "pulpit time"
- Less opportunity for others utilize their giftedness
- Fulltime elder has more time to think through decisions and issues, and thus be more prepared for decision making than the part-time elder who spends considerable time in secular employment.
- The fulltime elder has more time to study the word and carry greater knowledge of the Word and thus be more influential in dealing with doctrinal issues and differences.
- The fulltime elder may have more public exposure to the congregation than the other elders, by virtue of his more frequent teaching and preaching.
- The congregation could inadvertently begin to elevate the fulltime elder like "the pastor." The proverbial "slippery slope" can be real.
- Use of titles that distinguish the fulltime elder.

Pendulum swing – extremes
- Avoid suppressing the gifted individual. Consequence – elder burnout
- Avoid the fulltime worker doing too much. Consequence – fulltime elder burnout
- Avoid non-fulltime elders becoming non-functioning. Consequence – leads to CEO style leadership

Questions:
1. Which of the above concerns are potentially troublesome to you? Are there others to be alert to?
2. How can the fulltime elder help ensure that the biblical principle of plurality of elders is a reality in practice and not just in word?
3. How can the other elders protect the fulltime elder? What does he need protection against?