

# C HAPTER SIX

*“The church is called to mission for the integrity of mission, not for the sake of church growth.”*

(Callahan 1990:19)

## TOWARDS AN EMERGING, MISSIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY

### 6.1 TOWARDS AN ANCIENT FUTURE

After reading through the Gospel of John, some feelings of admiration and awe should suffice. We have, after all, taken a bird’s eye view on one of the witnesses of the history in which God established his covenant with humanity (Barth 1963:26). Through our sequential reading we have become involved with an eyewitness of the deeds done in his time, and a hearer of the Word spoken in his time.

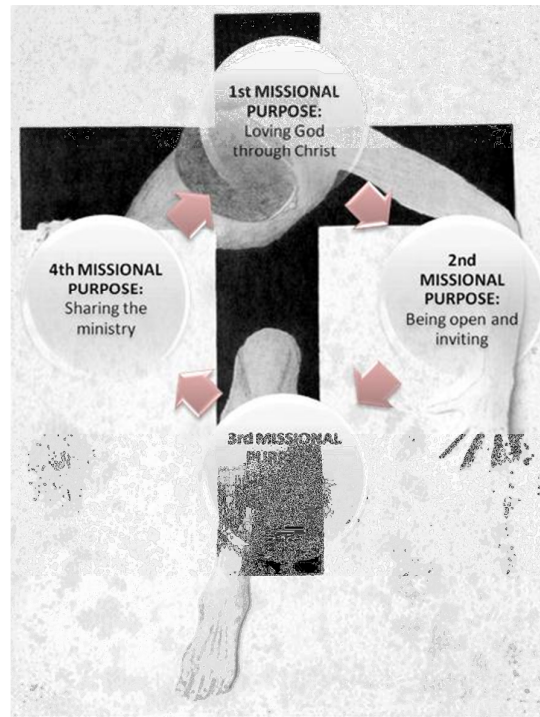
When we start with exegesis we need to remind ourselves that the end in view is not a tidy system in a book to be available as a “correct answer,” but

*“... the life of witness to the love of God, through all of which the church is built up and energised for mission, the believer is challenged, transformed and nurtured in the faith, and the unbeliever is confronted with the shocking but joyful news that the crucified and risen Jesus is the Lord of the world. That is letting Scripture be Scripture” (Wright 2009:40).*

As such, we should bear in mind that the Gospel of John is a living writing. This means it was a writing that evolved from an original oral tradition, and its development was necessitated by the history of the community, alive with interest in the life and ministry of Jesus (Westermann 1998:75). We still share in this interest, today. The question therefore is how we can be able to share the testimony of this faith community in a manner that we ignite the same interest in the life and ministry of Christ.

Perhaps we could take our cue from ancient Mediterranean culture itself: The future was experienced in the present; tomorrow is tackled when it arrived; the past thus served as a mirror held up to the present and problems were solved in the light of the past (Malina, Joubert & Van der Watt 1996:105).

In an effort to adequately structure the resulting ecclesiological paradigm – reframed on the study conducted in the Gospel of John’s use of μαρτυρία – the following schematic depiction of the parameters of this paradigm can be utilised:



**Figure 2** *Parameters of a paradigm for emerging, missional ecclesiology*

The background drawing shows a person climbing through the cross of Jesus into a new life, thus depicting our identity in Christ and the process of being born from above. The four missional processes necessary to become a community of believers that will foster this new life in Christ is super-imposed over it to draw attention to the reality that an emerging, missional ecclesiology is not a means in itself but dependent upon the salvation work of Jesus. The drawing was made by Hayward (2008). He gave this as the motivation for his drawing: *“It captures for me the idea of the narrow way and the way of the cross somehow being the same. I was compelled to draw it.”*

The four missional purposes are interrelated to each other. None of them can exist without the others and it supposes resulting ministry practices that form a cyclical process to create an ongoing ecclesiological homeostasis. Each ministry practice is an ecclesiological development of one or more of the discussed μαρτυρία-pericopes. An effort is made to create a sustainable theological theory from the insights gathered in the study, knowing full-well that no simplistic leap between text and current context should be made or over-elementary principles deduced from the exegesis. In this we take our cue from John's Gospel's introduction of the lexeme into the different narratives and the instructional scope it opened up to the way he communicated the meaning of the word group within each narrative section. This means a placing of the different μαρτυρία-pericopes as instructional material for specific ministry practices. The effort, however, is preliminary in scope and through ongoing research it should be more thoroughly developed.

## **6.2 FIRST MISSIONAL PURPOSE: WORSHIPPING GOD THROUGH KNOWING CHRIST**

### **6.2.1 Hermeneutical Framing**

It should be noted that “foundational core” tries to sufficiently capture the overarching Christological theme of John's Gospel message. Ecclesiologically, this means that the church's reason for existence is because Christ is, and since Christ was (i.e. He came to earth in all his humanity), we are. The church is witnesses to this history -

that is our purpose. We serve this purpose and its message when we build faith communities that worship God through our personal relationships: specifically with Christ, but also with each other and definitely with people outside the community of believers.

*Although the evangelist demands what amounts to a dogmatic stance from his readers who must profess Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, he does not do this simply as a test of intellectual orthodoxy. He does this 'that through this faith you may have life in his name.' Unless Jesus is the true Son of God, Jesus has no divine life to give. Unless he bears God's name, he cannot fulfil toward men the divine function of giving life (Brown 1970:1061).*

With this statement, Brown puts into words the radical nature of the message of the Gospel of John. For John the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the exalted Christ is connected in the most intimate way with the identity as Christian faith as a whole: Only if the Redeemer was truly human could He bring salvation to humankind. Therefore it is necessary to maintain the humanity and historicity of Jesus, up to and including his death on the cross, if the proclaimed message was to touch human beings in their historical situation and lead them to faith (Schnelle 1992:229).

The references to the passion that permeate John's Gospel as well as the repeated emphases on the humanity of Jesus show that John did not merely want to describe a revelatory event in mythical form but he wanted to depict the revelatory way of the

Incarnate One. Moreover, through the resurrection, Christianity's faith in Jesus' victory over death is depicted (Brown 1970:966). There is no doubt that the writers of the four Gospels believed in the empty tomb and that Jesus' body was raised to glory (Brown 1970:967). To all four this is the climax of the ultimate revelation by the Incarnate One (Morris 1971:828).

Here-in lays the purpose of the Christian community's ongoing testimony. John recorded the Easter events as he regarded them theologically and historically true, but to his mind it is not the last word - the risen Jesus is not to be regarded as the old Jesus all over again. Sight plays its part, but the Christian life is ultimately lived by faith (Barrett 1978:562). After all, the stories about Jesus' resurrection in John 20 contain important statements for future believers and serve the central purpose (John 20:31) to John's writers' presentation which was set for the whole Gospel (Schnackenburg 1982:301).

These stories help future believers more clearly to understand the nature of the act of faith by which the life in Christ may be appropriated (Lindars 1972:595). John wrote at a time when the resurrection was in the past already, but he interpreted the present experience of the church in the light of them (Lindars 1972:598). The essential point for him was that the Christian is in a vital personal relationship with the risen Christ, the mutual indwelling expounded in the narrative of Jesus' ministry to his disciples. The resurrection narratives are handled in such a way as to lead to the response of faith by which this relationship is established. Thus the resurrection narratives are not so much proofs as pointers towards the interpretation of the

Christian experience of life in Christ, who is the same Lord who revealed the Father and died and was glorified (Lindars 1972:599).

The Christian message consists of telling about Jesus Christ. This message is not merely a religious proposition or dogmatic argument, but altogether an act of worship, based on an intimate, personal relationship with the One who became human. In this sense, then, the testimony of the Samaritan woman meeting the Christ and coming to know him (John 4:7-26) provides the foundational, hermeneutic basis to the faith community's life of ongoing testimony. Christ is the Giver of living water (John 4:10). The believer who receives this living water has in himself or herself a spring welling up to eternal life (John 4:14), which means the current existence in which the believer exists, is transformed by the water into living life to its fullest.

From this it can be metaphorically inferred (by playing along with John's words for well and spring) that the community of believers exist as a well from where the living water is flowing, remaking a stagnant vessel of containment, the well, into an overflowing hub of eternal life, where life is lived to its fullest extent in the here and now. At the very core of the full life is the new perspective on worship (John 4:21). Worship is no longer an act to be performed in a specific place, but a relationship with the only person who can produce the living water. To worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23) is to depict the new community of believers in her life-creating and life-giving power through the Spirit of God involving them in the fullness of God's grace

(John 1:16) and made possible by meeting the Mediator of this grace in Person, i.e. in Jesus (Ridderbos 1987:193).

In John's Gospel, the motif of witness functions to confirm the dignity of John's message (Schnelle 1992:231). The witness publicly affirms what he or she heard, a process that confers a special degree of truth and reliability on the matters that the witness address:

- The Baptist testifies to the incarnation of the Logos (John 1:6-8, 15, 19-34).
- Jesus testifies to heavenly things (John 3:11, 31-32).
- The Father testifies to Jesus (John 5:31-40; 8:12-20).
- The Paraclete testifies to Jesus (John 15:26-27).
- The Beloved Disciple testifies to Jesus' death (John 19:34b, 35).
- The Beloved Disciple is made the author of the Gospel, whose true witness is confirmed by the Gospel's editors (John 21:24).



The following ministry practices, among others, result from this missional purpose:

- The ministry of corporate, public worship and testimonial preaching.
- The ministry of facilitating personal and public prayer.

### **6.2.2 The ministry of corporate, public worship and testimonial preaching**

The focus of this ministry is the corporate testimony that God exists and deserves the honour and glorification of the faith community. It is also the public proclamation of the identity of Jesus. The focus of preaching in this setting is not necessarily instructional or with the sole aim to teach, but also to serve as an exposition of the ongoing testimony to the identity and presence of Jesus Christ in the particular time and context in which the faith community is functioning.

John's Gospel presents the central reason for the church's existence and the core of an emerging, missional ecclesiology, in John 1:1-18. He furthermore suggests to his readers the idea that the church should be witnesses to the reason of her existence by introducing into his argument the testimony of John the Baptist. We have a compelling word picture indicating that this testimony is not supposed to be an

individual affair, but - derived from the remark that all believers are children of God (John 1:12-13) - we can come to the assumption that witnessing to Jesus as Son of God is a combined effort with a distinct public character. As a first ministry practice, then, Christians should come together publicly to proclaim their faith in Jesus and testify about it to each other.

A **second** hermeneutic indication on the corporate character of the church's testimony stems from the narrative of John's testimony when he testified to the arrival of the bridegroom (John 3:22-30). Through this, he inferred the celebratory character of a wedding onto that of a worship service. The way we publicly celebrate the coming of the Messiah as a joyous feast and celebration, serves as testimony to God's presence in our lives.

**Thirdly**, we can associate with Jesus' practice to attend the Jewish feasts and his re-interpretation of those feasts as another hermeneutic foundation (John 8:12-20). By adhering to important dates and occurrences that shape our relationship with God – notably, then, the celebration of his resurrection on the first day of every week – we call to mind our ongoing testimony of who He truly is. This brings to the foreground Jesus' remark of him knowing his origin enabling us to present to an unbelieving world the testimony about the Father.

We can **finally** take the triumphal entry into Jerusalem as a hermeneutic prompting to include corporate worship into an emerging, missional ecclesiology (John 12:12-

19). Although John demonstrated through Jesus' entry the Jewish people's nationalistic celebration, it was re-interpreted through the inclusion of the remark about the ongoing testimony of the people who were present at Lazarus' raising about the event. We are herewith enabled to re-imagine worship and church services through a lens of proclaiming the triumphant entry of God into our world as king.

### **6.2.3 The ministry of facilitating prayer**

In the second ministry of ecclesiological interpreting John's instruction on μαρτυρία, we find a hermeneutical marker showing towards the corporate practice of prayer. Prayer is usually understood as an internally personal practice of speaking with God. Yet, when John remarks in John 2:23-25 that Jesus knows humankind and needed no witness attesting to humanity, we find a confirmation of the intimate character of prayer: Jesus actually knows the heart of men and women. As the narrative here contrasted this knowledge with the masses' coming to faith because of His signs, we find an ecclesiological instruction to present testimony of authentic faith. A theology of prayer cannot be investigated here as it falls outside the scope of our investigation.

John also showed us how an asking for miraculous intervention by Jesus (John 4:43-54) was greeted with incredulity on his side, and the subsequent provision in the official's request. We discussed how John's remark on Jesus' testimony about not being honoured by his own people, served as a link to the comment in John 2:23-25,

further explaining what authentic faith means in contrast to a “seeing-is-believing” belief system.

What we can include here is showing how the narrative also serves as typology for prayer:

- Initially approaching Jesus in faith.
- Expecting a reply but receiving a put-down.
- Accepting Jesus’ word alone without seeing any immediate results.
- Eventually seeing the request answered.
- Putting it in perspective with the context of the making of the request.
- Renewed faith.

## 6.3 SECOND MISSIONAL PURPOSE: BEING OPEN AND INVITING

### 6.3.1 Hermeneutical Framing

In Chapter 4 of this study we discussed the use of μαρτυρία in Jesus' parable of the sheepfold (John 10:22-30). This pericope tells of the demand by the Jewish authorities that Jesus clearly states whether He is Messiah. In his reaction He invoked the testimony of the Father and stated that the authorities do not believe this testimony because they are not of Jesus' sheep (John 10:26). The remark is followed up by the allusion to the intimate relationship between Jesus and his flock ("My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" - John 10:27) with the provision of eternal life added into the fray to show how Jesus will protect his sheep. Finally, in John 10:30, Jesus makes it clear that He is in total unity with the Father in heaven.

This testimony of Jesus' identity as Messiah and the use of a pastoral metaphor, building on the Jewish collective of understanding how a shepherd and his flock operate, provides a basis for the first missional purpose of an emerging ecclesiology. Actually, it turns the metaphor around to view its meaning from the perspective of the flock, since it is the flock that derives its identity from really knowing the shepherd - in this case knowing that Jesus (the shepherd) and the heavenly Father share exactly

the same mission. A few elaborating remarks on this metaphor, and how it hermeneutically serves this first missional purpose, is therefore necessary.

According to Brown (1971:391) and Van der Watt (2000:56) the imagery in John 10 can be divided as follows:

John 10:1-5(6)      An account of events in a sheep pen

John 10:7-10      Explaining the gate

John 10:11-18      Explaining the shepherd

John 10:25-30      Explaining the sheep

In John 10:1-5 the reader is introduced to the imagery of sheep farming through a depiction of events taking place in a sheep pen. The point of the story is clear (John 10:1-3a): To approach the sheep, a proper way exists and this is through the gate opened by the keeper. The relationship between the sheep and shepherd is accentuated in John 10:3b-5 (Brown 1971:392).

Jesus used a common image when He used the metaphor of the shepherd and the flock. Richer families employed hirelings to tend to their sheep, while poorer families ascribed a family member to the task (Stander & Louw 1990:135). Oftentimes a collaboration of owners used the same fold to house their sheep. These folds only had one entrance. To protect the sheep, the shepherd slept with them in the fold. These sheep folds were without roof, so thieves could enter by climbing over the walls. The sheep of different owners didn't get mixed up as each shepherd knew his sheep. A close relation developed between shepherd and flock due to the large amounts of time the shepherd spent with them (Louw & Nida 1990:140). Thus the shepherd immediately knew if something is wrong with members of the flock.

An important aspect that will enable a better understanding to Jesus' use of this particular metaphor is found in the way the shepherd looks after the flock in the field (Stander & Louw 1990:141). The sheep were kept together by shouting something or throwing a stone in their direction. The shepherd never drove his sheep on in front of him, but rather walked up ahead with them following him, reacting to his calling.

In John 10:7-10 Jesus drew on the imagery of this metaphor and called himself the door. This indicates a specific relation between Jesus and the sheep/disciples with relatively little information provided about the true identity of the sheep (Van der Watt 2000:67). That Jesus didn't associate with the shepherd instead seems to reiterate the uniqueness of this application of the metaphor. One possible interpretation is that Jesus' association with the gate is aimed at the reference to the thieves who want to steal the sheep (Brown 1971:393). Another possibility is that Jesus uses the door as

a reference to the salvation He provides (Brown 1970:394). Van der Watt (2000:68) illustrates how the first possibility is viable as the idea of the door is a legitimising factor, is thematically prominent in John 10:1-2 and a natural choice for metaphorical application.

Jesus therefore fulfils the same role to those who belong to him as the door has for the sheep – identifying the legitimate shepherd. In referring to the thieves and robbers, Jesus shows us how several different people preceded him in depicting themselves as saviour, therefore the metaphor of him being the door accentuates that He is the only One through whom authentic salvation becomes possible (Van der Watt 2000:70). Yet the door is depicted not only as the entry point of the sheep, but as Brown (1970:394-395) argued, it also serves as illustration of what happens when one moves through the door. It brings salvation and a person who moves through the door finds life and sustenance (Van der Watt 2000:73).

In John 10:16 the ecclesiological implication of this metaphor is made clear. Jesus' remark, *καὶ ἄλλα πρόβατα ἔχω ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τῆς αὐλῆς ταύτης: καὶ κείνα δεῖ με ἀγαγεῖν, καὶ τῆς φωνῆς μου ἀκούσουσιν, καὶ γενήσονται μία ποίμνη, εἰς ποιμήν*, shows a possible redactional move at a later stage in the Gospel's development to enlarge the scope of the Johannine community's understanding of their own mission (Brown 1970:396). John semantically activates the truths established in John 10:1-5 here by means of intra-textual reference (Van der Watt 2000:86). This brings the entire question to the extent of the significance of the salvation and death of Christ in proper perspective: This shepherd will die for everyone.



John 10:17-18 links thematically to the previous verses in the repetition of the phrase, καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν μου τίθημι ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων in John 10:15, ἐγὼ τίθημι τὴν ψυχὴν μου, in John 10:17, and ἀλλ' ἐγὼ τίθημι αὐτὴν ἀπ' ἑμαυτοῦ in 10:18. Through this, John shows how Jesus' death is identical to glory and victory as it will reveal to all people (including his disciples) who he really is. His deeds are based on his relationship with his Father, and true identity will become evident when he will die and rise from death (Van der Watt 2000:87). Says Van der Watt:

*“Because he will die and rise from death, his death as Shepherd does not imply the end of his relationship with his disciples, but the **beginning** of a new relationship, which is based on the realization by the disciples of why Jesus is truly the **good Shepherd**.”*

Thus it brings us to the ecclesiological purpose to be established. The metaphor of the sheep is continued in the pericope that contains the word group we investigated. It is clear from the whole discussion that the depiction of Jesus as good Shepherd is not intended as a pastoral metaphor, meaning the metaphor as used in John's Gospel is not intended to be understood as pertaining towards the care of the flock.

Rather, it depicts the way people are introduced into the flock – through the voluntary death of the Shepherd. It depicts the purpose with which Jesus reveals His true identity – to provide true life to his flock. And it demonstrates the scope of his

mission – including all people and not only a select few. This is made evident by the discussion of the reason why the Jews reject Jesus’ message in 10:26-28: the sheep are in a relationship with Jesus and they benefit from his works, but the Jews are not, as they lack such a relationship (Van der Watt 2000:88).

The intertextual relationships between the different pericopes activate this message, even if the metaphor isn’t explicated anymore. By introducing the concept of Jesus’ works testifying on his identity as Messiah, John links the coming glorification of Jesus with the missional practice of sharing this message in such a way that its hearers are able to grasp its implications so that they are able to believe it.

Thus ***the pastoral metaphor becomes a missional metaphor***, through pastoral testimony by the sheep themselves. The implied ministry practices of this missional purpose would include, among others:

- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of hospitality to all people who make contact with the members of the faith community.
- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of caring and kindness, of showing compassion to the ill, destitute and infirm, poor and powerless, regardless of their church affiliation.

### 6.3.2 Ministries of hospitality

The narrative of John the Baptist's ministry in John 1:19 - 2:51 provides us with a hermeneutic key to a way of ministry leading to Jesus: The Baptist attracted a crowd of people. Among them were investigators from Jerusalem with the intention of placing the Baptist in the context of their belief system. In every encounter with them the Baptist testified to the identity of Jesus, and John's Gospel shows how he showed his own faith journey as an integral part of his testimony ("I didn't know, by now I see").

The way it is told, shows us how the Baptist chose against polemic, preferring testimony instead. Later John's Gospel shows how these same figures went to Jesus directly.

When the Baptist's disciples heard his testimony on Jesus, at the event where Jesus was present and baptised, they left John for Jesus. Apparently Jesus showed them hospitality and invited them to stay, which they did. This resulted in them getting to know Jesus better as well as them going to their own friends and family members with the message of the Messiah. The cycle repeats and these men also went to Jesus and started spending time in his presence.

In this we find an ecclesiological ministry practice that could be replicated. Ministries of hospitality towards strangers and members alike, involve an organised strategy to open the church community up as an inviting place of safety for people to investigate the claims of Jesus being Christ and through ongoing testimony of this, introduce people into a faith-based relationship with Jesus.

### **6.3.3 Ministries of caring, kindness and compassion**

The story of the woman at the well (John 4:1-30, 39-42) is actually more than an intellectual conversation on worship. The narrative provides enough indications of an approach geared towards life change through compassion than meets the eye: The woman is suffering socially and emotionally. She is isolated. She has a history of pain and hurt in her life. She is searching for God, but continuously misunderstanding the message, probably because of her painful past and ostracised present. We also know Jesus was selective in telling unequivocally that He is the Messiah.

Yet, to an unknown woman gathering water in the heat of the day, He disclosed his true identity. She reacted through testimony: this man knows who I am and what I did. Come see!

The ministry practice is rather evident: By showing compassion in hurt, Jesus presented the life giving water of His identity and enabled a hurting individual to have the testimony of the Saviour. Furthermore, her testimony had such an impact that her townsfolk investigated her claims and also came to meet Jesus personally.

In practice, the church must intentionally create ministries that can show compassion to the sick and ailing, hurting and destitute, and through this testify about the living presence of Christ. As Jesus' choice to travel through Samaria is depicted as intentional, we can accept that the instructional understanding of this text includes a strategic ministry emulating this deed of his.

## **6.4 THIRD MISSIONAL PURPOSE: LOVING ONE ANOTHER JUST AS CHRIST DID**

### **6.4.1 Hermeneutical Framing**

It has been noted that the use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme is conspicuously absent in the passages that are telling of Jesus' ministry to his disciples (John 13-17). Thus it necessitates a cursory overview of the content and message of this narrative block, which has been called the fifth act of the Gospel (Thyen 2005:582). At the core of this "farewell narrative" is Jesus' instructions to His disciples on their conduct after he has left them.

From a narratological perspective it is evident that John uses John 13-17 to present a significant development in the plot of the Fourth Gospel (Tolmie 1995:189-190). He specifically uses this section to provide the implied reader of the text with a comprehensive ideological perspective on discipleship.

For the purposes of our discussion we adhere to the demarcation of this block provided by Thyen (2005:x-xi):

John 13:1-38      Jesus washes the feet of his disciples

John 14:1-31      Jesus' first Farewell to his disciples

John 15:1-16:3      Jesus' metaphor of the vine

John 16:4-33      Jesus' Farewell and more information on the Paraclete

John 17:1-26      Jesus' Prayer

The most notable part of this discourse is the introduction of Jesus' teaching on loving one another with an act of service and Jesus' application of his deed (John 13). In John 14:1-31 Jesus explained his imminent departure and promises that He will leave behind the Paraclete. In John 15 Jesus introduces the metaphor of the vineyard to further expound on the commandment of love He gave in John 13.

His attention then turns towards the hatred the world will show the disciples and He uses the explanation to comfort them with the Holy Spirit's presence and to exhort them to faithfulness in ministry as they share the testimony to the Father, like the Spirit. In John 16 Jesus consoles them on his departure again and explains in clear terms where He will be going.

Finally, in John 17, He prays for his disciples, and in this unity prayer He passes the final responsibility of his ministry to the disciples and, after them, all believers. In essence the whole passage is set in the form of a discussion between Jesus and his disciples, looking forward to the actual life of the church, when Christians knew themselves to be united with Christ through their possession of the Holy Spirit (Lindars 1972:442).

The introduction to this discourse is an act of service and not of might, as Jesus' decision to wash his disciples' feet was considered a menial task reserved for slaves (Lindars 1972:446). Thus, the tone is set for the teaching He wants to impart on his disciples as the verses of John 13 explicitly introduces the commandment to love

one another in a way that emulates the example He set for them (John 13:14, 34-35). If we ignore for a moment the interlocutory passages about Judas Iscariot's treason, the whole of John 13 demonstrates the way in which the members of Jesus' movement should act towards each other – by acts of self-sacrificing love.

Some ecclesiological important clues are left in our midst. Jesus is given the titles of Lord and Teacher, as titles of respect (John 13:13-14), and He doesn't repudiate it. He actually bases the introduction of his commandment of love on being called this (Lindars 1972:452). Moreover, if He sets the example, as Lord and Teacher, He expects his followers to follow it (Thyen 2005:593).

The actual commandment to love one another is not new, as it forms part of Jewish law (Lindars 1972:463-464). Stylistically John uses an *inclusio* technique, linking his description of how Jesus loved his disciples in John 13:1 with the commandment here by using the same verb, ἀγαπᾶν. The implied newness of this commandment lies therefore in the fact that by demonstrating this self-sacrificing love, Jesus' disciples show that they are active followers of Jesus (Thyen 2005:608-609). In this, they also keep the spirit of Jesus alive among them as they continue their life in this world (Brown 1970:612).

Furthermore, it alludes to the covenant language of the Old Testament, found in Exodus 20 and especially in Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Brown 1970:614). This covenant language has a very specific corporate dimension, as a new brotherhood and



sisterhood has been created on the basis of Jesus' work for men with a new relationship within that brotherhood (Morris 1971:633).

This makes this commandment with its implied marking of the disciples' identity – as belonging to Jesus – a matter of ecclesologically exploring the implications for the church's ministry modus. It has implications for discipleship as this mutual love is the proof of Christian discipleship (Barrett 1978:453).

Most importantly, the commandment to love grows from the experience of Jesus' love and this experience is the prerequisite and impetus for the creation of a new community for the sake of this new experience (Schnackenburg 1982:54).

The implied ministry practices of this missional purpose would include, among others:

- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of small group ministry.
- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of intentional faith development through the practice of spiritual disciplines by all members.

## 6.4.2 Small group ministries

The image Jesus invoked when he answered the questions of Nicodemus, forms part of the metaphors pertaining to the church as family. In John 3 the discussion centred on entering God's world and Jesus' argument was based on the reality that a person must be born from above. This can only happen through faith – believing that Jesus has the ability to make this supernatural birth possible. He further argued that the Father's love for the world is the driving force behind this mission and that faith enables a person to also live a life of obedience, marking him/her as believer.

Wedge into this argument is the linguistic leap from individual (singular tense) to communal (plural tense) when Jesus introduced the concept of the testimony on what is known (John 3:11). In our discussion we concluded that John's narrative wanted to involve the church corporately through these words of Jesus. This provides the basis for ministries that demonstrate and model family life, enabling people to be born from above, in faith, in a nurturing environment.

These ministries have at the core the testimony that new life in Christ enables a person to experience the love of the Father and grow in obedience to God. It therefore makes an excellent case for the strategic implementation of small group ministry in a congregation.

### 6.4.3 Intentional faith development

In John 5:31-47 Jesus presents the witnesses attesting to his identity. In the discussion on this pericope we came to the conclusion that Jesus wanted his hearers to find confirmation and verification of his identity. We saw how the conviction with which He shared his testimony can be corroborated by these witnesses.

On an instructional level we find a typological account of faith development to grow in one's own conviction and resulting testimony of Jesus' identity. By introducing the Father as witness, we learn how our own dependence of the Fathers' provision leads to a testimony of God actively involved in our lives and a greater conviction of the reality of the Unseen in our world. By allowing the light of the Baptist to shine for a while, we learn how the witness of the people of faith who went before us, provide us with the perspective on a history of witnesses who knew Jesus.

And by recalling Jesus' deeds we not only attest to His mission and glorification, but we also create an ongoing discourse on the continuance of his deeds in our own lives. Finally, by studying the Scriptures we have the ability to externalise our testimony by our growing ability to understanding the Word of God.

What can be seen in this narrative is a list of resources for faith formation, to increase the conviction of our testimony that Jesus is truly the Christ. Ecclesiologically this should be translated into strategic ministries to enable congregation members to intentionally adhere to practices of faith formation.

## **6.5 FOURTH MISSIONAL PURPOSE: SHARING THE MINISTRY**

### **6.5.1 Hermeneutical Framing**

It is especially the testimony of the Paraclete who actualises and makes present the Johannine witness to Jesus Christ. Through the Paraclete the productive interpretation of the past in relation to the problems of the present is made possible by the Paraclete (Schnelle 1992:232). He remains with the community forever (John 14:16-17), teaches it and reminds it of all that Jesus has said (John 14:26). He shares all that is received with the community, reveals the future and glorifies Jesus (John 16:13-14). The Paraclete takes from the fullness of Jesus' revelation and gives it to the community (John 16:15). This makes Him the basis for the Johannine ability to make present what is past and is the Spirit-enabled interpretation of the Christ-event, continuing to work within the community of believers borne from the testimony of the Gospel (Schnelle 1992:233).

The Paraclete makes possible a legitimate reinterpretation of the work of Jesus, as Jesus speaks through Him and eliminates the distance between past and present. The close combination of the testimony that makes present what is past with the fiction of historical eyewitness is not a contradiction; through the Paraclete, time horizons are dissolved into a unity. In John, the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the resurrected Christ is protected by making no further distinction between the two.

This elimination of the distance between past and present as function of the testimony of the Paraclete, thus serves as the fourth missional purpose of our emerging ecclesiology. It opens the doors for future generations of believers to not only share in the testimony to Christ, but also in the responsibility of the ministry of Christ. As it is argued in Chapter Two, the distinction between professional clergy and receiving laity has disappeared, making every member of the body of Christ a minister. The issue at hand is therefore no longer the activation of the laypeople, but the development of Christian leaders who, through their personal testimonies to Christ, will serve as ambassadors for Christ in this world, especially outside the confines of the congregational context. Some theological perspectives on leadership are therefore necessary.

Leaders share a characteristic, and that is the ability to make things happen (Engstrom 1976:20; Maxwell 1993:1). More specifically, they have the ability to help other people in a specific environment to reach their best potential in contributing to the task at hand. Christian leadership is wholly dependent on a person's identity in Christ and should therefore not be understood institutionally (Richards & Hoeldtke

1980:37). In ecclesiological terms a leader could best be described as a person who with wisdom gained through experience builds relationships with other believers to enable them to grow spiritually (Richards & Hoeldtke 1980:92). As such, leadership is the art to help people find fulfilment in their fundamental life quests and help these persons grow beyond themselves (Callahan 1990:64).

Leadership can be distinguished on five levels (Maxwell & Dornan 1997:5):

- The most basic level is the formal appointment a potential leader received in an organisation.
- From this initial level onwards a person's leadership grows through the granting of permission to act beyond the boundaries of influence of his/her job description in influencing people.
- The third level of leadership is found in the level of productivity when a leader successfully assembled a team who work together harmoniously.
- On the fourth and fifth levels the leader is able to establish and develop other leaders (fourth), which are also able and busy establishing and developing other people as leaders (fifth).

Since the church is ministering in a time of transition, the specific demand on its leadership ability dictates the ability to manage transition (Smit 1995:12). In this sense leadership is to be understood as the growing insight into and direction-giving of processes that directs the faith community and her ministry towards a shared vision of the future. This asks for specific attention to four aspects:

- Presence – or the ability to represent God with authentic love with people.
- Vision casting – the ability to help people to live from the reality of the resurrection of Christ.
- Facilitating – the ability to help a faith community to develop processes and structures to promote their community life and ministry in the world.
- Energizing – the ability to unlock the energy that is present in a faith community to enhance the mission of Christ.

It finally leads to the growing conviction that leadership in the faith community is aimed at moving people onto the agenda with which God operates (Blackaby & Blackaby 2001:20).

Hjalmarson (2006) probably succeeds in describing the demands on Christian leadership the best when he says leaders must discover that:

- Leaders do not lead people, but they lead with them.
- Leaders do not lead with certainties anymore, but with discovery, co-operation and faith.
- Leaders do not lead from a position of authority anymore, but from the emptiness caused by their dependence on Jesus.
- Leaders do not lead as managers anymore but as mystics and poets that articulate a common future.
- Leaders do not lead from the centre anymore but from the fringes of society.

The implied ministry practices of this missional purpose would include, among others:

- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of leadership development.



- An intentional strategy with resulting member-driven ministries of developing personal testimony as an individual life practice of witness to Christ, also resulting in member-driven ministries of evangelistic outreach in the community.

### 6.5.2 Leadership development

Embedded in the narrative of Jesus' ministry to his disciples is the solitary reference to the μαρτυρία lexeme (John 15:18-16:4). The context of this passage is the hatred of the world that will be shared by the disciples. Jesus showed how the Paraclete serve as ongoing witness to his mission as they were together from the beginning of time and how the disciples share this testimony as they were with Jesus since the beginning of his earthly ministry.

With this cursory remark Jesus showed how believers will be able to hold fast onto their faith in times of tribulation: by intentionally sharing in the Godly ministry to the world. As we have discussed we do not live in a Christendom Paradigm any longer. This calling is therefore not to be understood as faithfulness and submission, but as intentionally missional. Every believer is included in this remark of Jesus – this becomes especially clear when the high priestly prayer in John 17 is read.

Ecclesiologically, congregations should strategically develop ministries to empower their members to find the adequate place and mode of living their testimony. This is a wider discussion than getting members involved in the ministries of the specific congregation. This entails a process of enabling Christians to share their witness as a practical lifestyle, through their chosen professions and voluntary activities in the community and based on the verbal testimony that stems from their relationship with Christ. It is, therefore, a process of leadership development of all members, as all members are called to share in the ministry of Christ.

### **6.5.3 Testimony through Public Discourse**

Several of the μαρτυρία passages in John demonstrate a purpose of enabling faith in the hearers of the testimony. As John stated, the purpose of the Gospel is to share Jesus so that people can believe and have life in Jesus' name (John 20:30-31). It is therefore all the more important to see how John relates this purpose to the word group he so frequently used to instruct his readers in the finer nuances of the practice.

The narrator's remark made in John 3:31-36 shows us how Jesus' testimony of heaven leads to people confirming that God is truthful (John 3:33), therefore attesting to the true identity of Jesus and the purpose of his mission to earth. Testimony to this results in people believing the message, receiving eternal life and living in obedience to Christ.

The alternative possibility of understanding John's use of *marturiva* in John 18:19-24 opens another avenue of instruction for the believers' community: In the public discourse, where Jesus' message and following is questioned, his followers' testimony should be of such a nature that it either reveals its untruth or attests to the authenticity of the witnesses. This means that when faced with public scrutiny, the faith community should testify to Jesus in such a way that nothing can be brought against Jesus.

The testimony of the beloved disciple in John 19:31-37 is clear-cut: He was there and saw Jesus dying. He can give testimony of the event and through his testimony he enables faith and people believing in Jesus.

Finally, the redactional comment in John 21:24-25 that this witness' testimony is true, provides a clue of how the subsequent generation of believers associated with the testimony provided by the eyewitnesses. They accepted it, even expanded on it, and shared it to enable yet more people to come to faith.

Ecclesiologically we find in this a missional purpose: Congregations should strategically include ministries that enable their members to verbalise their faith as a testimony in public discourse. Furthermore, congregations should establish ministries that engage with the community this testimony with the sole purpose of facilitating the process of people coming to faith in Christ.