



The pastor as the primary teacher in the church: The meaning and expectations of pastoral ministry within the mainline denominations

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Abstract

A pastor is widely viewed as a shepherd and a Christian leader. Pastors have complex roles stemming from a complex calling; pastoral practice is multidimensional and not easily defined. The contemporary use of the term "pastor" denotes different kinds of religious roles in church leadership. In mainline denominations a pastor is generally viewed as an ordained minister designated for the ministry of the word and administering sacraments. The pastor has many pastoral roles including church leadership, pastoral care, the preaching of the word. It is argued in this article that the key role of the pastor is that of a teacher who empowers the lay leadership and church members in general through his/her various pastoral roles. In Southern African languages such as Shona use the term *mufundisi* while in Ndebele and Zulu use the *umufundisi* referring to a pastor. This is most appropriate because *mufundisi/umufundisi* means an ordained minister who is regarded as a teacher, equipper of people and leader of all sections of the church. The article begins by discussing the general processes and procedures of pastoral calling in the mainline denominations. It draws its central point of the pastor being a teacher from the very accurate way in which the pastor is viewed and defined as a *mufundisi* in the above-mentioned African languages, as well as from the role of Jesus as a teacher. The article then discusses the nature of the pastor as a teacher and the expectations of this role in pastoral ministry from a southern African context.

Keywords: Pastor, *Mufundisi*, teacher, laity, mainline, empowering.

Introduction

While the title "pastor" is not often used by mainline denominations like the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Church, and the Methodist Church, it is frequently used by Pentecostal denominations such the Family of God Apostolic Faith Mission and Glad Tidings and Victory Fellowship (Moyo, 2015). The title "pastor" is used to explicitly refer to the functional ministry of Christian leadership and caring for God's people, and pastors in mainline denominations are typically referred to as reverends, ministers, and occasionally as priests. In many instances the term is used with reference to the leader of a congregation, or parish who is then regarded as "the pastor in charge". The term "pastor" actually means a Christian leader who is ordained and appointed by the church to shepherd God's people. A pastor serves as an ambassador for the universal body of Christ in all of his or her roles. These include gathering the flock of God around the word and the sacraments in order to heal, guide, feed and sustain the people of God in their different circumstances and in a range of contexts of life. The focus of this article is to explore the role of the pastor as an educator in the church as expressed by the title *mufundisi*, a teacher following the model of Christ the master teacher. The article begins by defining a pastor and pastoral calling to ministry. It will then focus on the model of a teacher



in Jesus Christ's ministry. The main thrust of this article is to argue that the meaning and role of the pastor is being that of a teacher. Throughout the paper it is argued that the pastor's work is to teach and empower the laity and the body of Christ for the sustenance of the church and ministry. This is done by drawing from the ministry of Christ the *rabbi*, the meaning of the term *mufundisi* (pastor/teacher) and the nature of pastoral ministry which requires one to lead, identify the spiritual gifts and talents of others, and teach and equip them for ministry. Pastoral teaching gives direction and guidance to the community of faith in terms of lifestyle and carrying out the duties of the ministry. Basically, the pastor should be one who is well equipped and qualified to teach others as a way of empowering them for ministry.

Perspectives on the pastoral calling

A pastor is one who is called by God and ordained by the church for the ministry of the word and sacraments (Moyo, 2015; Willimon, 2002; Nurnberger, 2005). Moyo (2015:7) asserts that, "Becoming a pastor is not a rational choice by an individual but is a calling by God out of different choices one might have gone for". The pastor is the shepherd who fulfils their responsibility on behalf of Christ the great Shepherd (Moyo, 2015). Pastoral responsibility is delegated by God hence the pastor is a servant and a steward of the household of faith and of God's mission (Jacobson, 2006; Scragg, 2017). The pastor is called to share the love of God with the community of faith by connecting its members with God through the word and sacraments. Hove (2022) argues that the term "pastor" refers to a role or office dispensing shepherding functions. Ordination depends on denominational tradition because mainline denominations emphasize ordination, while Pentecostals and contemporary ministry do not usually ordain, but anyone performing a pastoral role in a church or home group can be called a pastor (Moyo, 2015).

A pastoral calling is the unshakeable conviction that one feels that God is leading one in the direction of God's mission. Often some pastors have gone through different professional choices and have explored their passions in other fields but finally joined the pastoral ministry due to God's calling. "God calls men to shepherd God's flock and to take care of its well-being, to show God's people by example and instruction how they should live their worth of God their Saviour" (Prime & Begg, 2004:18). The love of God is also expressed through inter alia compassion and pastoral care. Pastors are those who represent God's will on earth and constantly pray for God's will to be carried out on earth as it is in heaven (Moyo, 2015). This will of God is fulfilled through God's mission executed through his church under the leadership of the pastor. The pastor keeps the knowledge and presence of God alive in society by leading, teaching, and performing acts of compassion. God the Holy Spirit empowers and stirs the inner passion for ministry so that one can often end up leaving the comfort of one's home, city, community, and profession for pastoral ministry. God's calling takes a variety of forms just as was the case with different prophets and his servants in the Bible. The prophet Isaiah, for example, was called while he was in the temple (Isaiah 6:1), Elisha was called while ploughing (1 Kings 19:19-21), David was called while busy looking after his father's flock (1 Samuel 16-17), and Paul was called while on his way to persecute the church (Acts 9:1ff). Their callings were all different but essentially it was a call to serve the people of God. Similarly, pastors are called in different ways and in a variety of circumstances to fulfil God's mission.

In the mainline denominations one's inner calling is examined and verified by leaders, such as the bishops, deans and other senior pastors or designated members of the ministerial board in the case of the Lutheran Church (ELCZ, 2012:32). In the Methodist Church they use the Synod Examining Committee and a ministerial session of a Conference respectively (Eagle and Mueller, 2022). These boards and conferences seek to ascertain the fitness for ministry of the ordained. According to Lauterbach (2010:269), "The confirmation of a call by other religious people points to the fact that becoming a pastor is not only the making of an individual career and is not feasible without the acceptance of the social networks the young pastor depends on".



The process of confirmation of the calling is an important aspect in pastoral ministry (Prime & Begg, 2004). It gives the church leaders confidence that one is fit for pastoral ministry. The process is done through interviews for ministry where a person testifies, justifies and affirms their calling. Among other issues some people would talk of their calling that had come through dreams. Some people would relate some dramatic events that brought confusion at a previous workplace leading to their conviction of actually being called to the ministry while others would dwell on their deep desire to preach the gospel for the salvation of God's people and care for the well-being of the household of God (Prime & Begg, 2004). If church leaders are satisfied based on their understanding of calling in their specific denomination, a person would then be sent for training at a seminary or university recommended by that denomination. In this regard Adams (2016:18) argues, "Since the office of the pastor/teacher requires teaching (formal/informal), wise understanding and application of God's truth and ability to communicate the same, the educational and intellectual side of ministerial training in most instances is vital". Therefore, pastoral theological training remains key in pastoral ministry. It equips one with the basic skills for ministry. This is echoed by Nell (2020:4): "The purpose and task of theological training are to educate and equip prospective leaders with the necessary gifts and competencies to empower other believers to participate in the mission of the Church". To gain the necessary knowledge, insights, and competencies needed for the ministry, one has to receive specific theological training. According to Nell (2020:6) there is a wide variety of competencies needed: "...from competencies to read the text and context, to understanding intercessions of power, to good communication linked to integrity, to developing own theological frameworks, to understanding smaller competencies, to dealing with complexities of trauma and to appreciating knowledge in terms of cultural and religious diversity."

Theological training is a process of preparation for ministry so that one fulfils one's calling and mission mandate. The current emphasis on theological training is not only to produce competent preachers but also ministers who can respond to current challenges using their skills and theological knowledge (Amanze, 2009). The mainline denominations/protestants ordain and appoint or deploy a pastor for service at a specific congregation, parish or some of its departments after theological training. It is assumed that through one's training one would have acquired the necessary competencies needed for pastoral ministry. Some pastors choose to work full time for the church while others may choose to work part time, being busy with what is commonly known as a tentmaking ministry (Amanze, 2009). A pastor may serve as a parish pastor, school chaplain or hospital chaplain; or be seconded to be in the public service as a teacher, prison or army chaplain (Mujinga, 2012). Others may be seconded by the church to join tertiary education institutions such as colleges, universities and non-governmental and ecumenical organisations. Besides serving outside church institutions, the pastor can still offer pastoral services to the church/denomination on a part-time basis. Throughout their ministry the pastor remains a teacher to nurture and empower people for life, faith and ministry.

As alluded earlier on, both the Zulu and the Ndebele call the pastor an *umfundisi*, meaning teacher. *Umfundisi* is derived from the verb *-fundisa* (to teach) because the missionary pastor and preacher was also the schoolteacher (Khumalo, 2004). In Zimbabwe, the Shona also call the pastor *mufundisi*, meaning the teacher (Kurewa, 2011). The term *mufundisi* literally means the teacher, and those who use it are the faithful because in Africa pastors often brought the gospel and education to villages. The pastor becomes both a classroom teacher in school and at church. From an African perspective, the pastor is thus perceived as a teacher and a shepherd (Kurewa, 2011). In many respects a pastor is a teacher that needs to be intentional when it comes to teaching and leading every section of the church. Prime and Begg (2004) aver that the most important characteristic of pastors/teachers which is ascribed to the elders, bishops or overseers, is being "able to teach" (1Timothy 3:2). The ability to teach is thus the cornerstone of pastoral ministry. It is through teaching that the pastors have influence on the members of the church and in the wider community. Their teaching ministry goes beyond the four walls of the church and touches the lives of the people around the constituency in which



they work. This is closely related to Jesus Christ's ministry that influenced the lives of his disciples but also the lives of people around the world throughout the centuries.

Adopting Jesus Christ's teaching ministry as a pastoral model

The gospels portray Jesus as a *rabbi* – a teacher rather than a general preacher. Jesus progressed “from a wonder-working prophet – to a messiah-king who rises after he is killed” (Robbins, 1992:11). Besides miracle working and his miraculous resurrection he paid more attention to teaching and making disciples. Jesus is referred to as a teacher or a *rabbi*, and his closest adherents are referred to as disciples (Evans, 2011:1223). He was a unique *rabbi*, a teacher and a *mufundisi* in line with the African understanding of a pastor or church leader. Making disciples would mean making learners or students who resemble the life of Christ their teacher (Jung, 2023). Besides being addressed as a teacher by his disciples, Jesus also called a teacher by the Pharisees and scribes (Matthew 9:11, 12:38 and Mark 12:13-14). “Other than the title "Lord," people called Jesus “Teacher” more often than any other epithet in the New Testament, and often with a great deal of respect and admiration (Mark 10:17; Matthew 22:16)” (Keller, 1998:19). Jesus is addressed as *rabbi* or teacher more than 56 times in the New Testament (Keller, 1998; Evans, 2011). John's followers referred to Jesus as a teacher (John 1:38). Nicodemus also referred to him as a good teacher. “He (Nicodemus) came to Jesus at night and said, ‘*Rabbi*, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him’” (John 3:2). Martha recalled her sister calling Jesus “the teacher” (John 11:25). A rich young ruler also called Jesus a teacher, asking Jesus, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 18:18). Similarly, a lawyer came to Jesus and addressed him as a teacher (Luke 10:25). The numerous occasions when Jesus is addressed as teacher is proof of his title and give a description of the nature of his ministry.

From the beginning of his career, Jesus engaged in the ministry of teaching. As a *rabbi* Jesus seized every opportunity to teach about God's kingdom and people's relationship with God and with one another (Black, 2009:152). He taught in many places, including the synagogue, temple and wherever the people gathered due to curiosity. His first sermon recorded in the Bible was in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21). Keller (1998:19-20) highlights instances when Jesus seized the opportunity to teach:

Other depictions include the itinerant Jesus teaching multitudes (Matt 5-7), individuals (John 3 and 4), adversaries (Luke 15), and disciples (Mark 4: 10-20, 33-34; 7:17-23; 10: 10-11, 23-31). He teaches in the temple (Matthew 26:55; Mark 11:17; John 7:14), in synagogues (Matthew 4:23; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:15; John 6:59), in houses (Mark 7:17-18; 9:25), from a boat (Luke 5:3), on the hillside (Matthew 5:1-2), at a well (John 4:7-30), at table (Luke 7:36-50), on the road (Luke 24:13-32), and by the shore (Mark 2:13; 4:1). In other words, Jesus teaches people wherever he is and wherever they are.

Jesus served as a teacher, and a pastor, in other words, as a *mufundisi*, to the various audiences. He delivered his teaching with an authority beyond that of their teachers of the law (Mark 1:22, Matthew 7:28-29). He was well known as a unique and powerful teacher. He attracted many followers with his unique form of teaching.

Besides frequently visiting the synagogue where he taught, Jesus also attended the temple festivals (Evans, 2011). The temple was another important place for teaching, especially during the period of the Jewish festivals when people (the pilgrims) gathered in Jerusalem for many days (John 7:14). “Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives” (Luke 21:37). There he taught both the common people and the Jewish leaders. “Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him” (Luke 19:47). The priests, the scribes and the Pharisees were beneficiaries of Jesus' teaching in the temple. He entered their sacred space to teach about the kingdom of



God but they sought to kill him because of his teaching. Despite threats from these religious leaders, many people believed in him because of his teachings.

Jesus was also involved in “open air teaching”. Keller (1998) observed that Jesus did not wait to go to the sacred places, such as the temple and synagogues, but whenever he met people, he taught them. “Again, Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water’s edge (Mark 4:1). Jesus also taught the crowds on the plain or mountain (Matthew 5:1ff). He could teach in any place. What Jesus needed, in fact, was not a specific kind of place, only the availability of an audience. His teaching on the mountain covered almost everything from personal faith for daily living to the life of the church, and his second coming (Black, 2009:153). As a teacher he sought to give comprehensive teachings to the crowds that gathered to listen to him.

Jesus used private moments to teach his disciples. In their case, he taught by word and deed. When he taught his disciples how to pray, he was in a private place (Luke 11:1), not surrounded by a crowd. When his disciples saw him praying, they cherished it and were keen to learn. They asked him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). On that day, Jesus used the opportunity to intentionally teach his disciples how to pray and about the impact of their prayers. In this private place Jesus also took the time to teach his disciples about his coming suffering, death and resurrection. “For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, 'The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later’” (Mark 9:31). When he was with his disciples alone, he mentored them, teaching them about his mission which would later, after Jesus’s departure, become the centre of their own ministry.

Taking a leaf from the book of Christ our saviour, pastors are to be ideal teachers of the word. “As a teacher, Jesus has a unique ‘educational plan’ - the doctrine of God’s kingdom and His teaching methods have a strong effect on students” (Krasicki & Albin, 2023:75). Pastors need to fulfil their calling, mission and mandate as teachers of Christ. In the true sense they live up to their title as *vamufundisi*, ‘teachers’. Their role is to teach and lead people towards salvation. But Jesus also called himself a good shepherd; hence, a pastor (John 10:11). The shepherd leads out and directs his sheep, caring for them and feeding them. His shepherding role involved much of the teaching that led him to make many disciples who followed him to the synagogue, temple, courts and wherever he went throughout his ministry (Keller, 1998). In so doing Jesus more than 2000 years ago became the master and model of pastoral ministry centred on teaching and transforming people’s lives. His teachings continue to transform people today.

The Great Commission as pastoral mandate

Christ explicitly commissioned and charged his followers to engage in a mission of teaching and making disciples. “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20). Teaching seems to be the core of the great commission. The mandate of all Christians in general and pastors in particular is to make disciples and teach them. Discipleship involves imparting knowledge that forms and transforms the followers of Christ. This requires pastors who intentionally and diligently teach the word and the will of God. To be a “good pastor” is to be a good teacher who continues with the apostolic calling of teaching other Christians and passing on the message of salvation, the kingdom of God and the Christian heritage.

Christians have never questioned the fact that God calls His people. He calls everybody to salvation but also calls and anoint some specifically for the ministry of shepherding as they teach and guide others along the way. Kurewa (2011:101) argues that God does not call a person to salvation without showing that person the mission at the same time. The great



commission is actually like a mission statement which is commonly read to baptismal, confirmation and ordination candidates. For some reason or another, some respond positively while others turn down the invitation by not pursuing this mandate. This include the pastors who are not committed to fulfil their calling to teach and shepherd God's people with passion and compassion.

Elements that constitute a good pastor

God calls and the church provides training, ordains, and appoints a pastor for ministry. Sending someone to theological school makes the person a theologian. Only after declaration and ordination can one become a minister in one of the mainline denominations. This is, however, different from other, often Pentecostal, ministries that usually neither send their pastors for theological training nor officially ordain ministers (Moyo, 2015). In mainline denominations a pastor is usually a baptised member of a specific denomination where they ought to serve after the affirmation of calling, training and ordination. It is ordination that sets aside the person for the ministry of preaching the word, teaching, healing people and communities and administering the sacraments (Moyo, 2015). It is the church that confirms that one from among them is being called to the ordained ministry as a vocation (Kurewa, 2011:106).

The term "pastor" also means shepherd; hence, in some instances the two terms can be used interchangeably (Moyo, 2015). Moyo (2015) argues that the terms "shepherd/pastor" are descriptive of someone possessing the spiritual gifts or ability to look after God's flock. Hence, pastors should be endowed with these spiritual gifts and also equipped with certain competencies to perform their duties. In pastoral ministry the pastor is engaged in pastoral care for the purposes of leading, healing, sustaining, nurturing and reconciling others (Lartey 2003; Willimon 2002). The title of pastor is not about socio-economic status but about serving in the ministry.

It is unfortunate that in some Pentecostal denominations, due to the influence of the prosperity gospel, some would aspire to be pastors for personal fame so that they can be recognised as successful men or women of God (Heuser, 2016). In these Christian circles pastors are usually venerated and receive material and financial gifts whenever they preach or offer service in the church (Heuser, 2016). Due to economic challenges some people from both mainline churches and Pentecostal churches/ministries tend to join ministry for material benefits and economic survival (Masenya and Masenya, 2018). They take up ministry as a form of employment. Although pastors get their livelihood from stipends and allowances, material wealth often becomes an end in itself. In some instances, there will be a lack of passion for the work of God if the pastor does not realize expected financial gain in ministry. If a parish cannot meet its financial needs, it impedes pastoral ministry as the pastor may have divided attention, doing ministry and engaging in personal business for financial purposes.

If pastoral work is done for socio-economic reasons the ministry will have serious setbacks. There will be an abuse of the pastor's personal position and spiritual powers (Molete, 2021). Instead of concentrating on serving, such a minister would seek to be served and get recognition. This is the opposite of Christ's mission. Christ said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Christ himself demonstrated the humble service that his followers should emulate. Pastoral work is a serving ministry following Christ's model of servant leadership. So, a pastor is a servant of God in the service of God's people. Servanthood requires humility and readiness to serve effectively.

Effective preaching by a pastor (*mufundisi*)

We have now established that a pastor is essentially a teacher. A pastor is called to live according to God's will and fulfil God's mission of teaching through preaching and expressing Christ's love and compassion (Moyo, 2015). The pastor's ministry is basically about imparting



the knowledge of salvation and Christian living. According to Long (2005), preaching is dialogical, therapeutic, conversational and educational. Preaching should be “a catalyst for more responsible and ethical living on the part of those who hear” (Long, 2005:29). Preaching remains intentional to bring about transformation in the listeners’ lives. Preaching that brings change to humanity also brings God to the congregation. It is God’s presence that leads to the transformation of the listeners. Thus, Lamb (2016:21) argues:

All ministries of the word, preaching included, should be an occasion when God comes to us, is present with us and speaks to us. Just as on that remarkable day in Jerusalem, when we open the Bible in our churches and hear that word proclaimed, we can truly encounter the living God.

The encounter with God in preaching is one that can bring transformation in different areas of life. The congregation and the audience of every sermon is always composed of people with different life experiences, aspirations and expectations. Some will be at peace, while others will be struggling with socio-political and economic challenges (Heuser, 2016). An effective pastor is one who is very aware of the audience and their contextual needs, concerns and aspirations as he/she goes to the pulpit (Nurnberger, 2019). The spoken word should comfort and bring healing to the listeners’ various bruises and wounds. Therefore, effective preaching brings a message of hope to heal the sick and comfort those who are suffering. Willimon (2002) argues that preaching is akin to surgery because the word damns to bless and kills to make alive. On the one hand the biblical message of the law points towards the sinful and helpless nature of humanity, whilst on the other hand the gospel message in the word of God brings the promises of God’s grace (Nurnberger, 2019). The message of grace promises God’s unconditional love, care and forgiveness that brings healing to the sinner. According to Long (2005:29), “The pastoral preacher must think about what parts of that message hearers need at this moment and which aspect of the gospel they can receive amid the pain and clutter of their lives”. The message of the text is then relived and presents the audience with issues that resonate with their own stories of pain, joy, hurt and love.

A healing sermon helps the listeners to courageously face and resolve their personal life crises, guiding them to make informed decisions whilst listening to God and their conscience. A well-planned contextual sermon can help those with estranged relationships as they seek to reconcile with God and with one another. Some sermons intentionally or unintentionally speak directly to listeners’ various complex and difficult life experiences and relationships. This is a fulfilment of the pastoral ministry of reconciliation. In 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 Paul states: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” The church is assigned to the ministry of reconciliation as the core business of its mission to the world. Thus, the church with its pastoral ministry should work towards healed relationships between God and humanity and among humanity. The hearers should find a competent, authoritative, trustworthy and compassionate healer in a pastoral preacher who seeks the healing of their listeners (Long, 2005:31). Such healing words can be found in sermons dealing with concrete, often difficult, life situations such as people’s broken relationships. When listeners’ experiences are unwittingly captured in a sermon, it refreshes the memory of the people of God and announces the promise of God’s future in healed relationships (Long, 2005:33). Contextual preaching brings about holistic healing to listeners in different contexts.

Besides healing and comforting listeners in their different life experiences, preaching should impart knowledge to those who are listening. Preaching cannot be divorced from teaching. Like any other form of education (teaching and learning), preaching moves listeners from one level of learning and understanding to another (Naidoo, 2012). It is through effective preaching that transformation of the mind can be realised (Romans 12:1-2). When new knowledge is acquired, it leads to cognitive development and subsequent behavioural change. Consequently, effective preaching should raise comprehension levels and bring new insights



to listeners (Blackwood, 2009). According to Nurnburger (2019:24), "God's Word... fills the mind of the preacher with new content in the very process in which it cleans out and fills the minds of the listeners with new content". In the process of preaching there could emerge new ideas, values and skills emerge for the listeners to take home. Pastors do not preach to simply draw people's attention but to deepen their understanding of God their creator, saviour and shepherd, as well as how to live out their faith in various life situations. Blackwood (2009) argues that the main goal of preachers and teachers of God's word is to etch the biblical truths in the minds of the congregation so that they can remember and practise it in their daily lives. The pastor is the primary teacher in the church (Willimon, 2002) and their teaching gets fleshed out and strengthened through their lifestyle.

The pastor's life, preaching and teaching

People learn by hearing, seeing, and by imitation. A pastor's delivery of their message and the way they live their life affect the lives of believers in their pastoral care. The main calling of pastors is to teach (Blackwood, 2009). By presenting well-prepared and insightful sermons, the pastor teaches and empowers the laity. To avoid sermons that are fragmented and incoherent the pastor/teacher is compelled to be thorough and systematic during the preparation stages (Adams, 2016). Sometimes a preacher manipulates the word to let it say what they want it to say instead of allowing the word to truly inform what they preach and how they live their life. This is often either due to a lack of good training or a lack of preparation. Thorough sermon preparation would mostly lead to effective sermon presentation (Nurnburger, 2019). Sermon preparation should never be taken lightly or neglected because it is the cornerstone of teaching the word of God and lies at the heart of preaching. This will also affect the way in which the sermon is received by the audience.

A pastor's lifestyle should mirror their preaching and teaching. "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:16). Paul encouraged Timothy as a leader and teacher of the word to be careful in keeping his teaching and watching his lifestyle to promote the propagation of the gospel. Paul also strived to be a model to those whom he taught and exhorted them to live exemplary lifestyles as a way of concretizing the message of the gospel (1 Corinthians 11:1). The best way of preserving doctrine in the church is by practising what one teaches (Nurnburger, 2019). Jung (2023:319) argues that "...the teacher's life, worldview, and values are delivered to the disciples who feel, experience, and live in the same way as the teacher". According to Chiroma (2017:60), Jesus's disciples learnt how to fully adopt their master's way of life not only through receiving factual teachings, but also through observing and participating in their *rabbis* life. Jesus clearly used his life example for his disciples to learn and live. Keller (2009:27) states:

Instead, they are called to be with Jesus, to listen to his words, and to follow his example so they might partner with him in his work for the kingdom. Consequently, they are summoned to be transformed, to die to themselves, to be born from above, and to become like little children.

Jesus is a true teacher who exemplifies for his disciples his connection with his Father by living all he teaches (Krasicki & Albin, 2023). Jesus was a teacher and a role model because he shared the timeless truths about the kingdom and his words were supported by his conduct (Krasicki & Albin, 2023). Great teachers embody their teaching and their lives become a living testimony to enhance their teaching. Lamb (2016:89) argues that "eloquence, homiletical skills, biblical knowledge are not enough", these need to be backed up by daily living. In other words, to be effectual, sermons and pastoral teachings need to be undergirded by the teacher's exemplary lifestyle. God's transforming word should have done its work in the pastor's own life before it is delivered to the audience. The pastor thus becomes a role model for others to realise the transformational power of the gospel in their lives. According to Lamb (2016:91):



We must study as hard to live well as how to preach well. It is of vital importance that preachers ensure their lives are truly modelling the truth of the gospel, and that, like a parent, they are giving energy to the shaping and forming of other disciples, through encouragement that is supported by practical and genuine example.

Christians in general and pastors in particular, are to lead by example so that those under their leadership should want to follow their example. Those who listen to the word will find it easier to appreciate and value it when practised by the pastors/teachers who walk their talk.

A pastor should be a role model for people, inspiring and encouraging them to serve in the vineyard (Cooper, 2005). Paul says to Timothy, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). Thus, Paul encouraged Timothy to be a role model as a preacher and a church leader in the church at Ephesus. Smith (2008) observes that people are always influenced by the spoken word through preaching, teaching and seasoned conversations. The manner in which we conduct our lives as church leaders, if it is exemplary, will demonstrate our faith in God, and love for God and his people which will in turn attract many to love God and his work. One may argue that discipleship is not only meant to create membership in the church but also to inspire people to become pastors and servants of God. Jesus made disciples whom he entrusted to continue with his ministry after he had gone. People learn through audio-visual experience and touching. The pastor needs to be conscious and sometimes deliberate when it comes to living as a model of the faith community so that he/she can inspire others for ministry. Such inspiration can come by showing commitment to the word, service, effective teaching, mentoring, and equipping others for ministry as well as one’s general lifestyle in family and community.

The pastor empowering the laity

The laity include the lay preachers, leaders of church organs such as the children’s church, youth, young adults, men and women’s leagues as well as the church members in general. They all have a contribution to make in building the body of Christ (Kwara, 2014). The pastor, as a teacher, is there to equip the laity for ministry. Empowering the laity means equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed for them to make a meaningful contribution in ministry (Kwara, 2014). Empowerment of the laity is meant to enable the congregants to participate in God’s mission in the world (Chiroma, 2017). The *missio Dei* (mission of God) is a project for both the ordained and the laity (Lamb, 2011; Kwara, 2014). It is unfortunate that in most cases ministry is relegated to the clergy, leaving the laity at the periphery. It is crucial to note that the members of the laity are equally key stakeholders in God’s mission and the church’s missional mandate. Empowering the laity for ministry is an admission that the clergy and the laity are all core workers in mission and that no one should be left behind. Sharing ministry between the ordained and the laity is based on the understanding of the priesthood of all believers which is a call to all believers to share in the life and ministry of Christ in every context regardless of a member’s social status (Lamb, 2011). Empowered members of the church are enabled to fulfil their mission mandate.

The empowerment of the laity begins by identifying church members’ talents and spiritual gifts and strengthening these by providing space for learning and for people to exercise their gifts. The pastor’s responsibility is to discern, identify, promote and nurture church members’ talents and gifts (Morris & Olsen, 1997). The pastor can thus discover potential in those whom they lead and have faith in them so that they can collaborate with them when these members start to fulfil their obligations (Kwara, 2014). This increases the human power for mission. In this regard Siburg (2018:25) states:

When we do it together with our related but unique capacities and unique gifts, God’s work is done more fully and faithfully. When serving together as God’s people, what God entrusts to us is stewarded more holistically. When serving together, there is a better opportunity to discern what God’s



kingdom looks like, how we are all part of its upbuilding and in-breaking, each of us in our own unique ways.

The ability to identify, acknowledge and promote the spiritual gifts of the congregants will promote sustainable collaboration between clergy and laity. Lamb (2011) observes that pastors are normally cognisant of their church members' knowledge, spiritual gifts, talents, skills, areas of specialization and commitment. "Business management, education, athletics, and the arts all recognize particularly gifted people" (Morris & Olsen, 1997:48). Like any other organisation, the church has gifted people for the various sections of the church such as leadership, preaching, and music. Unless pastors recognize the different gifts, these will remain untapped. Members' spiritual gifts have been given by God and should be validated by the members of the community of faith, particularly the pastor (Morris & Olsen, 1997). Through the pastor, the community validates the talents by delegating or electing and giving those members the space to put their gifts into action so that it will enrich the entire church ministry. This is a recognition of the church functioning as a body with many parts (Romans 12:3-8). Each part should be allowed its full function so that the whole body of Christ can be nourished and thus remain healthy. The pastor has a special role in promoting members' gifts whilst minimising competition and jealousy. Empowering members in their gifts and ministry areas will also enable them to complement one another in God's mission.

Pastors are in the privileged position of usually being revered church leaders and specialists in ecclesial matters. Chiroma (2017) argues that pastors are equipped through their theological training and ministerial formation. As they continue with their theological studies, mentoring during their own training empowers pastors with skills in various ministry areas (Chiroma, 2017). They should be trained thoroughly so that they will be able to teach and train others. When empowering the laity, the pastor has an opportunity to share some of the knowledge and skills they have acquired during their theological training. When a pastor fails to teach, however, it is not only a betrayal of their calling but causes the congregants to lose confidence in them because they are supposed to be the primary teacher in the church (Willimon, 2002).

For a pastor, teaching is one of their most important responsibilities in the church. It is a way of nurturing the congregants for their Christian life, spiritual growth and development (Asi, 2014). Gangel (1980:116) asserts that we should not underestimate the role of the church's educational programs in fostering the kind of congregational life that the Bible commands. Empowering the laity includes teaching and training through workshops to develop people in their areas of gifting (Kwara, 2014). Furthermore, lay training enables the congregants to realise their identity, the identity of their church tradition and their mission (Chiroma, 2017). Purposeful and specific teaching can help church members to understand their role in the church and its ministry in the world, as well as realising their strengths and weaknesses in terms of knowledge and practice. Often this kindles their desire for more learning, contributing to a laity that can carry out their duties effectively

Equipping different organs in the church

Church organs means various sections of the church such as men, women, young adults, and children/ Sunday school. Members in these organs need to be empowered to make meaningful contribution in church ministry (Kwara, 2014). The pastor exercises the teaching mandate through intentional teaching aimed at empowering church members. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20a). Besides baptism, Christ in the great commission emphasises the aspect of teaching so that people can obey what he had commanded them to do. The role of the pastor is to teach and empower the baptised. In fact, "pastors are the chief teachers within the congregation, thus it has ever been" (Willimon, 2002:205). For this reason, the pastor is known as a *mufundisi* or teacher. According to Gangel (1980:113), "The productive leader is always a teaching leader. He is always taking time to explain to his subordinates the issues involved



in the way that their own ministries can be made productive by utilizing the things he has learned”.

Church members may be senior members in the church, and leaders and specialists in the community and other institutions, but the pastor is the specialist in the church when it comes to matters of church ministry. The pastor provides theological and pastoral knowledge to church members (Chiroma, 2017). There may be, for example, a need to teach individual church members to lead the men’s and women’s fellowship, the young adult group, the youth, catechism class, children’s church or Sunday school. In this context Cooper (2005:55) says:

When the leader is walking with God, his own personal agenda is put aside for the interest of empowering others to follow God. Only by a strong relationship with God can the leader set aside his own interests for God’s interests in others. This will give others the confidence that the leader’s motives are not self-derived, but pure.

Empowering others for ministry depend on the agenda and focus of the pastor. They usually take serious consideration and planning for teaching and learning to take place in the congregation. The pastor needs to consider the human, material and financial resources needed for teaching and empowering church members for mission (Tizon, 2016; Forward, 2001). For effective teaching, a curriculum for Christian education needs to be organized and agreed upon by the various sections or organs in the church. Teachers need to be identified and trained to be able to follow a structured teaching and learning program. The focus on Christian education empowers the laity and strengthens the faith of believers (Asi, 2014). Christian education is one of the tools that help us to avoid being conformed to this world yet be transformed by the renewal of our mind Romans 12:1-2 (Willimon, 2002). If the process is well-managed the congregation will be free to contribute to the education of the members.

The men, women, young adults and children in the congregation need to be taught the word of God as well as their church dogma and tradition to be able to understand their rights and responsibilities. Kwara (2014:89) argues that, “Sound biblical teaching, provided by pastors, Bible teachers, and evangelists, will certainly enhance the spiritual maturity of the people”. However, he also observes that for the teaching to be valuable and relevant it should be contextual and addressing community needs (Kwara, 2014). Contextual teaching enhances the pastor’s relationship with co-labourers (laity), Christ and church doctrine (Cooper, 2005). This makes empowering the laity for ministry imperative for the pastor. Counselling sessions too are needed for married couples and for young adults planning to get married (Lauterbach, 2010). Besides, the pastor offering pastoral counselling there is need to train and supervise lay leaders in offering counselling services in the church (Kwara, 2014). Above all, church members also need to be equipped with teaching on general Christian living in the context of church, home, school and the workplaces.

Children’s church/Sunday school needs to be taken seriously or else they are left behind. According to Nurnberger (2019), some preachers tend to neglect children ministry because they think that concentrating on the youth and children’s church undermines their ministry, is below their dignity and high calling. The truth is, however, that “they are the congregation of the future” (Nurnberger, 2019:51). Teaching them means orienting them to the gospel, church tradition, life and ministry of the church. Hence, a focus on the children’s church is actually crucial, and whoever teaches them needs to be trained well and be equipped with enough resources to be effective. Sunday school or children’s church leaders and teachers too routinely need thorough training (Anderson-Umana, 2022). They are preparing young new disciples for Christ and develop future pastors, leaders and members of the church. It is a wrong assumption that every adult or young adult and even elder can teach children. This assumption may either lead to an attitude of neglecting the children in the church or pushing them out of the church to play without any productive learning. Congregations that have trained Sunday school teachers will usually have well-organised church sessions for children (Rop, Ngige & Kithinji, 2021).



Wherever there is a well-organised Sunday school or children's church, one invariably finds a pastor who takes a special interest in and promotes children's ministry (May, Stemp & Burns, 2011). This begins by recognising the importance of children as current but also future members of the church. This kind of attitude will influence the selection and training of the teachers and mentors for the children in the church (Anderson-Umana, 2022). "Continuous training and development programmes ensure that Sunday school teachers keep updating the skills and knowledge in line with changes in the society" (Rop, Ngige & Kithinji, 2021:200). Mambo (2019) notes that a teacher's understanding of child development and children's thought processes enables effective teaching and learning. When teachers have been empowered, they are well equipped to collaborate with the pastor in drawing up a syllabus, liturgy and mobilise resources for teaching and learning (Anderson-Umana 2022; Rop, Ngige & Kithinji, 2021). Teachers should receive annual training workshops and do refresher courses so that they remain up to date and well equipped in their important ministry of leading the children's church.

Teaching often takes the form of leadership seminars and workshops. Successful institutions, businesses and companies rely on in-service training and refresher courses offered at work. Any *mufundisi* (teacher) should empower or equip the laity through leadership training. Most leaders in the church are elected or appointed because they are church members but often, they execute their responsibilities without the necessary training and knowledge of their responsibilities. Jesus called his disciples and mentored them before sending them out. Krasicki and Albin (2023) avers that Jesus empowered his disciples as a foundation before assigning them to the great commission articulated in Matthew 28:18-20. As a teacher Jesus imparted knowledge before he instructed his disciples to go out teaching his other followers to observe what he had commanded them. It was like passing on the same message which they had received earlier during his teaching.

The various council, board or committee members need to be empowered through works and training so that they have the knowledge to do their work effectively (Anderson-Umana, 2022). Annual cycle of leadership training workshops can provide knowledge or serve as a refresher course to those who have been in a particular role and had previously undergone some training. In fact, the pastor and the ministry will be severely hampered when people do not know how to do their work effectively. There will be too much duplication of roles, inactivity and inefficiency. Some people do not perform their duties, not because they are lazy, but because they lack the necessary knowledge; hence, they are not equipped to do their work (Rop, Ngige & Kithinji, 2021). There is a need to adopt the model of Christ who taught his disciples before commissioning them.

Finally, there is a need to empower the lay preachers who also contribute to feeding the flock. Before sending his disciples out, Jesus taught them and empowered them with knowledge, skills and the necessary authority (Luke 10:19). He gave them the power and the opportunity to go out, proclaiming the gospel and casting out evil spirits. Krasicki and Albin (2023:75) note, "As a teacher, Jesus has a unique 'educational plan' – the doctrine of God's kingdom and His teaching methods have a strong effect on students". Pastors should empower lay preachers by equipping them with a sound theological framework, knowledge of the church doctrine and tradition and help them develop their homiletical skills (Nhiwatiwa, 2012). Lay preachers need to be encouraged and assisted to remain connected to God so that their sermons will in turn connect with the congregation. Lamb (2016:90) argues that "...no amount of homiletical technique can compensate for the absence of a close personal walk with God". Inasmuch as we may teach the skills for sermon preparation and delivery, there is a need to teach about personal communion between the preacher and God who is the centre of any preaching. To empower lay preachers is part of the servant leadership of a pastor as teacher. This implies that the pastor embraces mutual collaboration as the pastor becomes a companion, enabler and a spiritual leader who empowers others for ministry.



Conclusion

The pastor's role in general and particularly in the mainline denominations is to follow in the footsteps of Christ and assume the responsibility of a teacher – a *mufundisi*. The title *mufundisi* or *umfundisi* directly links the pastor to the teaching office of his/her ministry. The pastor is both a church leader and a community leader who shapes and transforms people's lives through their ministry. Through frequent training and workshops the pastor in their teaching ministry empowers the laity in various sections of the church, including the lay leaders and preachers. To empower the laity involves identifying church members' talents and spiritual gifts, preaching, teaching and leading by example. The empowering of the laity increases collaboration between the laity and the pastor. The pastor's teaching is strengthened by being a role model as a good servant of God, in other words, by practising what they preach. Passionate service in ministry demonstrates the desired character of a pastor, namely that of a teacher who is a dedicated servant of God to his people.

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