

Preaching as an Art of Shared Leadership

Eunjoo M. Kim

A couple of years ago, I had an interesting conversation with a friend of mine who is a lay leader of her church. She expressed her disappointment with her new pastor's preaching. Her major complaint was that in his preaching, he treated his listeners like little children inferior to him in knowledge and experience and considered them the object rather than the subject of his ministry. However, she comforted herself by telling me that her church would be fine with that pastor as long as he could perform other leadership roles effectively, for preaching might be just one of the components of pastoral leadership. Recently, I met her again and learned that her church was in crisis because of the pastor's lack of leadership. That time, she firmly declared that "Preaching is not merely *a* component of pastoral leadership but is itself leadership!"

"Preaching is itself pastoral leadership!" This statement may sound exaggerated since the pastoral role is multifaceted. It makes sense, however, when we realize that preaching represents the particular style of a pastor's leadership and that preaching is the most important medium of communication between the pastor and the congregation. Through preaching, pastors regularly communicate spiritual and pastoral concerns in public and provide theological and practical directions for the journey of the community of faith on personal and communal levels. Upon realizing the inseparable relationship between preaching and church leadership, the preacher needs to ask such crucial questions as these: What does leadership mean for the church in our changing context for the ministry? What kind of paradigm shift is necessary for the ministry of preaching in order to participate in the

renewed leadership of the church? How can the church practice theologically relevant and practically appropriate preaching?

This essay seeks to answer these questions by proposing a new paradigm of preaching based on a new leadership model. Concerning the search for a new leadership model, historian Jean Miller Schmidt reminds us of a lesson from church history, that the ministry of female preachers in early American Methodism thrived because of “the vital partnership in ministry between laity and clergy-lay preachers and class leaders providing pastoral leadership at the local level.”¹ Further, she tells us that partnership between clergy and laity grounded in the “ultimate trust in the sufficiency of grace” of God was the foundation of church leadership in early American Methodism.²

These historical remarks of Schmidt’s will be the starting point for developing a new paradigm of preaching in the following five sections of the essay. The first section will focus on understanding the context for preaching by analyzing internal and external conditions of the contemporary church. The second section will be a brief historical review of leadership in the church, paying special attention to the practice of the shared ministry. The third section will explore the theological meaning of leadership in light of shared ministry and will propose shared leadership as a new leadership model for the renewal of preaching. The fourth section will concentrate on the understanding of preaching as a practice of the shared ministry. The last section will focus on developing the practice of preaching as an art of shared leadership by suggesting a practical theological methodology.

[A]Preaching in Transition

The development of a new paradigm of preaching should begin with “exegeting” the congregation. As Leonora T. Tisdale urges in her book *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*, preaching requires the preacher to exegete both the biblical text and the

¹ Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient*, 151.

² Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient*, 21.

congregational culture.³ However, the congregational culture is not merely formed by internal cultural components but is also exposed to the larger world to which the congregation belongs. Obviously, contemporary churches are facing complex internal and external conditions in many unpredicted ways. Just as our society is going through phenomenal spiritual, political, and socio-cultural shifts, so are Christian churches. Such shifts can be explained in at least three ways.

First of all, one of the most challenging internal conditions of the church is the enhancement of egalitarianism in the leadership roles of the church. Since the middle of the twentieth century, mainstream churches in the United States have gradually begun to ordain women to the role of Minister of the Word and Sacrament and have allowed them to serve the church as lay leaders. Currently, about fifteen Protestant denominations allow women to be ordained pastors, and a growing number of female clergy serve local churches as Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. For example, 23 percent of United Methodist Church clergy are now female.⁴ In the 2006 statistics of the Presbyterian Church (USA), women comprise approximately 30 percent of active (non-retired) clergy.⁵ The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reports that the percentage of its ordained clergywomen doubled from 1991 to 2003, to 16 percent.⁶

Many clergy in mainstream churches—both female and male—experience traditional patriarchal leadership as no longer effective in the contemporary context of the ministry. This kind of experience challenges church leaders to reconsider the concept of leadership and seek a more egalitarian and collaborative leadership model. If the leadership model changes in this way, the ministry of preaching also needs to change, since it is closely related to the practice of leadership in the church.

³ Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art*.

⁴ General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

⁵ Presbyterian Church (USA).

⁶ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Another shift in the mainstream church that challenges the traditional model of church leadership is its membership decline.⁷ The heyday of large memberships in mainstream churches has passed. Half a century ago, mainline denominations were bursting at the seams. They were so thriving that their church buildings were on every corner of the streets, and many of their churches were so affluent that they could offer a luxurious salary and benefit package to pastors. Nowadays, however, many churches struggle to pay ordained pastors even their minimum compensations required by their denominations. As a result, they cannot help but replace paid staff positions with lay volunteers and encourage lay people to participate in leadership roles which were once played by professionally trained pastoral leaders. The increasing demand on lay leadership challenges both clergy and laity to reconsider the identity and mission of the church and to ponder how to develop shared leadership between clergy and laity, not merely for their churches to survive but to thrive in the changing situation.

Shared leadership is also more demanding when we realize the shift of our world into an age of globalization. In our globalized world, human beings and other creatures are interconnected beyond geographical boundaries, more closely than ever before in human history. The global economy and the advancement of communication technology and transportation systems have contributed to changing our society into multicultural and multiracial environments. Moreover, the local is no longer isolated from the global. On a daily basis, people are experiencing social and ethical issues in their local contexts that emerge from the larger context of the globe.

⁷ See Hout, et al., “Demographics of Mainline Decline: Birth Dearth”; The Presbyterian Church (USA) lost 46,544 members (2 percent) in 2006 and 57, 572 members (2.5 percent) in 2007 (blog.gajunkie.com/.../pcusa-membership-statistics-for-2007.aspx – viewed on 08/12/2010); The United Methodist Church lost 1.01 percent of professing membership in 2008 (www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c...b=2789393 – viewed on 08/12/2010); The Episcopal Church membership has declined 7 percent and Sunday attendance by 11 percent over the past five years (geoconger.wordpress.com/.../more-pressure-to-postpone-lambeth-conference-on-110907-p-6/ – viewed on 08/12/2010).

In our increasingly multicultural society in North America, many churches realize that they can no longer remain homogenous in regards to race, ethnicity, language, and culture and therefore face practical issues such as whether they give up on their racial and cultural homogeneity and open to become an inclusive community or move to a less multiracial location to keep their traditionally homogeneous identity. It is unrealistically, however, to try to escape the changing reality entirely. The more we are aware of the web of interconnectedness we share with others, the more we understand that diversity is one of the crucial issues for the church to deal with. The issue of diversity challenges the leaders of the church to reconsider its identity and how to share leadership with others who are racially and culturally different from them.

In the changing context for preaching caused by such internal and external conditions as egalitarianism, membership change, and globalization, pastors are challenged to reconsider the concept of leadership and to reevaluate their ministry of preaching as a practice of their leadership. Leadership in the Christian community is inherently a matter of communication.⁸ Through many different forms of communication, the vision and mission of the church are renewed, and the attitude and behavior of the members are transformed to live out the shared vision of their church. Therefore, the leadership of the church is broader than the official leaders of the church. It is a shared exercise of influence between the pastor and the congregation.

Keeping in mind this understanding of leadership, following is a brief review of the exercise of leadership in the church. Critical reflection on the history of church leadership will provide us with insights into developing a new leadership model which can bring a paradigm shift in preaching for our contemporary church.

⁸ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 26.

[A]A Historical Review of Church Leadership⁹

The history of the primitive and early churches reminds us that the Christian church was first formed by means of the shared ministry. The Acts of the Apostles, Pauline letters, and Pastoral Epistles in the New Testament are evidence that the original model of the Christian ministry was a shared ministry between traveling apostles and local church leaders. In addition to the historical records, biblical references of such metaphors as the body whose parts have different functions for its organism (Rom 12: 4ff; 1 Cor 12:12ff) and house utensils that are made for different purposes (2 Tim 2:20-22) show that primitive churches were encouraged to share ministry based on the gifts that members were granted by God. Early church history also reveals dynamic interaction among members of the church in a wide variety of leadership roles such as preachers, apostles, deacons, teachers, prophets, and priests, regardless of gender, race, and social status.¹⁰

Since the church was institutionalized under the Roman Empire, however, church leadership has belonged solely to clergy. Through the process of institutionalization, the church created hierarchical leadership positions and limited them to educated male clergy. The shift of church leadership from shared to clergy-centered ministry has changed the concept of the ministry in terms of clericalism and degraded the role of the laity into passive recipients of the ministry. Yet, the clergy-centered patriarchal orders of church ministry were protested by numerous ecclesial movements during the Medieval Era. Many female leaders and laymen resisted the hierarchical system of the church and struggled against it to regain equal opportunities to participate in church leadership beyond the boundaries of gender, race, education, and class. For example, from the end of the twelfth century to the early thirteenth century, the Carthars and Waldensians in the south of France, in Italy, in Flanders, and in

⁹ Some portion of this section is included in my essay, "Asian American Women and Renewal of Preaching," in *New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Views*, in which the initial idea of the paradigm of preaching as a shared ministry was explored.

¹⁰ Kim, *Women Preaching*, 34-35.

certain areas of the Rhine Valley revolted against the established orders of the church and claimed that church leadership, especially the right to preach, should be open to the laity.¹¹

Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other sixteenth-century reformers also denied the ecclesial orders and reclaimed the authority and right of the laity to participate in church leadership. They proposed the shared leadership of the primitive church in the New Testament as the ideal for the Reformed church. It is noteworthy that among the reformers, Calvin was not an ordained minister but still played a dominant role in the leadership of the Reformed church. He served the church by preaching, teaching, and administering sacraments, never wanting to be an ordained pastor, for he firmly believed that ordination “was not an indispensable requirement for serving God’s Word and leading the community” and that the pastoral office should be functional “under the working of God’s Spirit.”¹² Yet, Calvin and other reformers restricted their understanding and practice of the shared ministry to men. A number of Pietist groups, however, such as Mennonites, Quakers, and Baptists, emerging later outside the mainstream of the Reformed Church, extended the reformers’ doctrines of Christian freedom and the priesthood of all believers to women and included them in their shared leadership.¹³

Shared ministry was also revived in the early Methodist movement in the eighteenth-century. Wesleyan theology emphasizing the freedom of the Holy Spirit and its personal experience as the source of individual and communal transformation became the theological foundation for the movement to view the church as functional and charismatic rather than institutional and authoritarian. Such theological understandings of the church diluted the boundary line between women and men as well as that between clergy and laity in leadership roles. Most of all, due to the undersupply of ordained clergy to the expansion of the movement, the leaders of the movement could not help but share their leadership roles with

¹¹ Kim, *Women Preaching*, 53.

¹² McKim, *John Calvin*, 10.

¹³ Kim, *Women Preaching*, 80, 84-85.

the laity and even with women. During Wesley's late days, women were granted the right to preach and, as a result, many Methodist women participated in preaching as well as leading class meetings and love feasts. The vital partnership in ministry between clergy and laity made it possible for the Methodist movement to grow to become an independent denomination of the Christian church.¹⁴

In nineteenth-century America, however, the Methodist church was institutionalized by male leaders and failed to embrace women and racially marginalized people in the leadership of the church. More precisely, just twelve years after Wesley's death in 1791, the majority of conservative male leaders resolved to rule women's preaching unnecessary and, consequently, few Methodist women could share the pulpit with male preachers from that point in time until the middle of the twentieth century.¹⁵ Furthermore, African American converts who were former slaves were excluded from the leadership roles of the church and eventually separated themselves to establish an independent Christian church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1815.¹⁶

Shared ministry is biblical and powerful. But most churches have ignored its theological and practical significance, keeping the status quo of the traditional model of clergy-centered patriarchal leadership as the standard of church leadership. Against this situation, the movement of feminist theology since the middle of the twentieth century has raised a prophetic voice. In her book *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church*, Letty Russell regrets clerical privilege in the leadership of the church¹⁷ and urges leaders of the church to revive the "partnership paradigm" of church leadership. As a way to share ministry with the laity, Russell proposes "round table leadership."¹⁸ According to Russell, round table leadership is centered in "Spirit-filled communities" rather than

¹⁴ Kim, *Women Preaching*, 151.

¹⁵ Kim, *Women Preaching*, 88.

¹⁶ <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php> – viewed on 08/12/2010.

¹⁷ Russell, *Church in the Round*, 54.

¹⁸ Russell, *Church in the Round*, 63.

privileged individuals and shares “the gifts of the Spirit among all those who share new life in Christ.”¹⁹ In round table leadership, power and authority are “something to be multiplied and shared rather than accumulated at the top.”²⁰ Therefore,

[EXT][T]here are never too many leaders, for power is not understood as a zero sum game that requires competition and hoarding in order to ‘win.’ Rather, power and leadership gifts multiply as they are shared and more and more persons become partners in communities of faith and struggle.”²¹[/EXT]

Today, this feminist understanding of church leadership cannot be taken as a marginalized voice in theological education. Rather, it is essential to revitalize contemporary churches. Many theologians and church leaders who take seriously the changing context for the ministry agree that traditional clergy-centered patriarchal leadership is no longer a relevant leadership model for the church and that the partnership model, which has already been proposed by feminist theologians and church leaders, should be the paradigm of a new leadership model of the church.

For example, in his book *As One with Authority: Reflective Leadership in Ministry*, Jackson W. Carroll proposes “reflective leadership” as a new leadership model. In reflective leadership, explains Carroll, leaders function not in “a top-down, asymmetrical fashion”²² but invite their congregants to be their ministry partners in the process of “reflection-in-action.”²³ As another example, Norma Cook Everist and Craig L. Nesson propose the “relational leadership” model. In their book *Transforming Leadership: New Vision for a Church in Mission*, they emphasize the significance of a “genuine partnership between the called leader and all of the people” and suggest that church leadership should be relational between

¹⁹ Russell, *Church in the Round*, 64.

²⁰ Russell, *Church in the Round*, 57.

²¹ Russell, *Church in the Round*, 56.

²² Carroll, *One with Authority*, 123.

²³ Carroll, *One with Authority*, 177.

pastoral leaders and their congregants in order to bring forth a mutual transformation between them, thus participating in God's mission of justice and peace.²⁴

In addition, Richard L. Hamm develops the concept of shared leadership into the practice of team ministry. In his book *Recreating the Church: Leadership for the Postmodern Age*, Hamm analyzes complex problems associated with leadership in the contemporary church and proposes that team ministry based on relationship and trust between the clergy and laity should be a way to recreate the church. For Hamm, ministry with a team of people who have complementary leadership styles makes it possible to bring changes into the church, since the team can explore what changes are necessary and how it can seek these changes in an approach relevant to the internal and external situation of their church.²⁵

[A]Preaching and the Theology of Shared Leadership

The phenomenological analysis of our context for preaching and the critical review of church leadership throughout its history convince us that the leadership model for our contemporary church should be shifted from the traditional patriarchal leadership model to the shared leadership model. However, shared leadership seems unrealistic when it relates to the ministry of preaching. On the one hand, most mainstream Christian churches firmly believe that only professionally educated clergy can preach. On the other hand, preaching has been understood as one of the most power-related ministries. Many pastors who were raised in the environment of clerical elitism tend to regard preaching as their distinctive privilege and right that they should not give up. In addition, they are afraid that their congregations may judge them impotent if they share their preaching ministry with others. Consequently, the pulpit has been the most exclusive place, in which serious leadership issues are tangled. In an actual ministerial context, for example, how the pulpit can be shared between the senior

²⁴ Everist and Nesson, *Transforming Leadership*, viii-ix.

²⁵ Hamm, *Recreating the Church*, 91-94.

pastor, who is usually male, and the associate pastor, who is usually female, is one of the tricky issues, let alone how to share the pulpit with the laity.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to reconsider the practice of preaching in relation to shared leadership, for it is theological rather than simply pragmatic. The concept of shared leadership is grounded in “the intercommunion of our Triune God,” who is “by nature relational.”²⁶ The relational life of God revealed in the Trinity should be the source and the goal of church leadership. The relationality of God in the Trinitarian structure means that the nature of God is not a single being manifesting oneself in various forms but that which pervades and reaches beyond a single entity to include others in its oneness, which is “the communal principle.”²⁷ In the Divine communality, the three Persons are ontologically equal, and there are no hierarchical degrees among them. Each Person of the Trinity is seen as God who shares in the fullness of the substance and has difference in its function. But different functions of the three Persons do not make them superior or inferior to others but make God’s nature interdependent among the three Persons. Thus, the unity of the Trinity is defined in terms of the community which the members of the Trinity share. That is, the fundamental unity of God is “a unity-in-difference.”²⁸

In the divine community, power is the one thing shared among the members, for it is not the possession of a singular Person but belongs to the essential nature or substance of what it means to be Divine. In other words, God shares power with the three Persons on the ontological level and makes it a force for the Divine, who is in essence a fundamentally active principle in or a force to the universe.²⁹ God’s nature endlessly shares God’s providential power among the three Persons through the way that is faithful to God’s essence, love, and character, the *kenosis*, revealed in Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:11). Since God is love,

²⁶ Everist and Nesson, *Transforming Leadership*, 4.

²⁷ Ogbonnaya, *Communitarian Divinity*, 77.

²⁸ Jansen, *Relationality*, 110.

²⁹ Jansen, *Relationality*, 82.

God restricts God's own power and presence to allow creation to exist and shares power among creatures to whom God relates through the *kenosis*, self-emptying. God, who interacts with God's creation not by subordination and servitude but by mutuality and love, necessarily requires the freedom of human beings to respond to this love.³⁰

If God's nature is understood as relational and communal, the relationship between God and God's creatures is to be reciprocal and mutual. Moreover, relationships among God's creatures should be based on reciprocity and mutuality. Just as the nature and power of God is correlative with the three Persons in the Trinity, so we humans are created to live out the image of the relational God through sharing our gifts and power granted by God. When those gifts and power are shared among the members of the church in trust of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church flourishes best toward mutual transformation among its members.

The theological ground of shared leadership in the Trinitarian structure of God challenges us to rethink the nature and practice of preaching. Throughout church history, the pulpit has been the place of demonstrating God's power, and many Christians have imagined who God is based on the preacher's exercise of power behind the pulpit. If God's nature is relational by sharing the divine power among the three Persons and among the creatures, our preaching should also be relational in order to appropriately represent the nature and power of God. That is, the pulpit should no longer be the place of a monopoly on power, but must be a place representing God's relational nature and shared power to the world.

The exercise of power behind the pulpit can be transformed into this Trinitarian way when the traditional patriarchal paradigm of preaching is shifted to the paradigm of preaching as a shared ministry beyond clericalism. Preaching as a shared ministry is a practice of shared leadership based on open, inclusive, and communal relationships with others. Such preaching shares the authority and power with others, not only collegial people but also traditionally

³⁰ Jansen, *Relationality*, 127.

underrepresented groups in the church based on gender, sexuality, social and economic status, race and ethnicity. The new paradigm of preaching as a shared ministry will freely invite those who are willing to witness to God's redemptive power in their lives and creatively work in collaboration to transform the church and the larger world into a place where people can foretaste God's reign.

[A]Preaching as a Shared Ministry

Preaching as a practice of shared leadership is a communal effort between the pastor and the congregation to discern God's grace in their lives together and bring it into a shared experience. As Schmidt reminds us, "there is grace sufficient even for our day,"³¹ and the more the pulpit is open, inclusive, and communal, the more can God's grace be discerned and shared with others.

In order to practice preaching as a shared ministry, at least four prerequisites are necessary. The first is that the pastor and the congregation should reconstruct their understanding of authority. Traditionally, authority has been perceived as the power of control possessed by the person who stands on top of a hierarchical system. Such an understanding, however, is not the authentic meaning of authority, because authority is in essence relational, rather than hierarchical, rooted in God, who is its ultimate source. More precisely, God has granted authority to people in manifold ways "as abundant commodity"³² or gifts to share with others. Authority in the church, therefore, is not a possession that the leader should make every effort not to lose in competition with others but God's gift that is supposed to be shared with others as a means of building up the community of faith (cf. Eph 4:7-12).

In her book *Growing in Authority: Relinquishing Control*, Celia Allison Hahn explores the multiplicity of exercising authority and categorizes it into four different modes:

³¹ Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient*, 295.

³² Hahn, *Growing in Authority*, 27.

received authority (shaped in roles they receive), autonomous authority (shaped by professional knowledge and experience), assertive authority (shaped by relationship with other), and integrated authority (shaped by using the above three modes of authority contextually and eclectically). Among Hahn's description of the four modes of authority, integrated authority provides insight into understanding authority in relation to the practice of preaching as a shared ministry. According to Hahn, integrated authority emerges in paradox between the authority coming from within the self of the leader and the willingness to share her authority with others and arrives at "a paradoxical and gratifying resolution of the self-other contradictions"³³ by setting aside for a time her received authority and giving up some of her autonomy and assertiveness for the sake of the people she is called to serve.³⁴ If pastors understand their authority as integrated authority, they will not consider their preaching as a win-lose game, competing with others, but a shared ministry with others for mutual growth. By sharing preaching, pastors can provide hospitable space in which others can participate in discerning the grace of God and empower one another to blossom God's abundant authority among them.

The second prerequisite for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry is that both the pastor and lay leaders should have a humble mind or humility. N. Graham Standish may be right when he regrets that "[t]oo many churches have pastoral and lay leaders who are somewhat arrogant, assuming they always know what is best and that the members are spiritual infants who are ignorant of God's desires."³⁵ How, then, can such church leaders open themselves to God and others and submit themselves to their wisdom? Only genuine humility makes it possible. Genuine humility means neither condescendence nor impotence but honest openness to God and others with respect to diversity. Respect is a "willingness to

³³ Hahn, *Growing in Authority*, 90.

³⁴ Hahn, *Growing in Authority*, 24.

³⁵ Standish, *Humble Leadership*, 17.

show consideration or appreciation for someone”³⁶ who has a different value-orientation and life-experience. By respecting difference, pastors and lay leaders can place their egos at the service of others.

Genuine humility leads pastors to realize that preaching is a communal calling, a calling to an interdependent and collaborative partnership with others. By humbly praying and studying together with others—especially the marginalized, oppressed, and exploited—to discern God’s mysterious presence and power in our mundane lives and by sharing them with others through preaching, the pastor can help the congregation freely witness to God’s grace to the world. Consequently, preaching as a collaborative ministry contributes to transforming the church, whose “‘product’ is transformed people.”³⁷

The third prerequisite for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry is that the pastor should have a teachable spirit and pedagogical skills to train and work with her preaching partners. Some may think that shared preaching will result in a negligence of the pastor’s responsibility as a preacher and an exploitation of the labor of lay people or other staff members to lighten the burden of the pastor’s duty of preaching. Or, the practice of preaching as a shared ministry may lead to a misconception that it does not take seriously preachers’ education or training because shared preaching invites every believer to participate in preaching regardless of one’s qualifications.

However, these are not true. Shared preaching demands of the pastor not only her sufficient knowledge and experience of preaching but also her passion and diligent efforts to sustain the pulpit to be the place where God’s truthful message is communicated in quality. This is not possible without the pastor’s willingness and ability to educate her preaching partners to be faithful witnesses to the Word. From the selection of a preaching partner(s) through the process of sermon preparation and to the performance of preaching, the pastor

³⁶ Everist and Nesson, *Transforming Leadership*, 123.

³⁷ Hahn, *Growing in Authority*, 116.

should be the leader of the shared ministry of preaching by teaching, facilitating, directing, and encouraging her preaching partners. Thus, the image of the pastor for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry is multiple, including the images of a teacher, a facilitator, a colleague, a coach, a project coordinator, and, most of all, the leader of the congregation. Through these leadership roles, the pastor is called for “the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph 4:12). The pastor serves those whom she is called to lead by helping them participate in witnessing to the grace of God to and beyond the church.

The last prerequisite for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry is that the pastor should have skills for building up relationships with others. The church is a covenantal community, formed based on relationships with God and with people and continuously renews its identity, vision, and mission through preaching and other ministries. While contractual relationships are concerned with job descriptions, compensation, working conditions, and such like, covenantal relationships are concerned with the right of the members to be involved in both the ownership of problems and responsibility for the community, i.e., the right to make a commitment to the community. In order for people to feel a sense of belonging in the covenantal community, a great deal of trust among the members of the community and a clear sense of interdependence between the leader and the members are eminently necessary.³⁸

The church, like other covenantal communities, is based on the commitment of the members, and they assume a genuine opening of the community to their influence by letting them use their gifts in decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of community events. Thus, leadership for the church does not depend on the pastor’s tactics or strategies but artful skills of relationships, including creativity in attentiveness to the divine action already present in individual and communal lives and pastoral skills in listening to people and polishing,

³⁸ De Pree, *Leadership Is an Art*, 36-43.

liberating, and enabling the gifts that they bring to the church. Preaching can be practiced as a shared ministry when the pastor has an ability to perform this kind of art; the pastor who is willing to practice preaching as a shared ministry is called to be an artist who builds relationships with God and the people.

[A]Preaching and Practical Theology

“Shared ministry” is a comprehensive term that means a collaborative ministry between leaders of the church and its members. If we consider preaching a shared ministry, how can preaching be practiced in an actual ministerial setting? While a wide range of practices can be experimented with in creative ways, it is important to remember that the practice of preaching as a shared ministry is a practical theological discipline. Just as preaching is a sub-discipline of practical theology, so is preaching as a shared ministry.

In the contemporary theological education system designed on the basis of the clear-cut dichotomy between theory and practice, the term practical theology tends to be regarded as an “applied theology,” whose aim is to teach students techniques and skills of application of the substance that were gained in other fields such as biblical, historical, and systematic theologies. Practical theology, however, is more than “a handmaid of other theologies,” for it means a dynamic theological reflection that guides the church to the life of faith. It includes all doctrinal and biblical teachings and metaphysical reflections about God related directly to the life of faith and offers pastoral and soteriological implications for the daily lives of believers. In fact, Christian theology is, in its origin, not abstract or speculative but a “practical discipline” that concerns a vital relationship between theological reflection and the practice of a Christian life in the world. In other words, all Christian theology is, in essence, practical theology, for, as H. Richard Niebuhr insists, all theological reflection is inherently practical and, in this sense, all theology is practical.³⁹

³⁹ Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism*, 115-6.

The subject of practical theology is not restricted to ordained ministers but includes all believers—both clergy and laity. As a community, the entire congregation is responsible for theological reflection on their practice. Here, the term practice does not mean a simple application of theory but “practical wisdom” or “*phronesis*” in Aristotle’s term. Its definition is a “prudent understanding of variable situations with a view as to what is to be done.”⁴⁰ Moreover, practice is not an activity of a single person, but a communal activity which creates a new way of life in the context of a community.

The holistic and communal aspect of practical theology can be described no better than in the way Friedrich Schleiermacher does. Although Schleiermacher divides areas of studying Christian theology into three—philosophical, historical, and practical—he stresses practical theology as “the crown of theological study.” For him, “leadership in the church is the final purpose of theology,” and the area of practical theology is “the final part of the study because it prepares for direct action.”⁴¹ Therefore, all theological knowledge taught in the areas of philosophical, biblical, and historical theologies must be reflected in relation to our personal and communal lives to give meaning and direction to the present and future lives of humanity.

Schleiermacher further suggests that the method of practical theology should be a “probing, rigorous, critical, and constructive” theological reflection, stepping back to think about the meaning of faith, church, and life, with some critical distance before again jumping into action.⁴² This reflective method has been advanced by contemporary practical theologians such as Richard R. Osmer. In his book *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, Osmer develops the method of practical theological reflection into four interpretive tasks, based on the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice: 1) the descriptive-empirical task, 2) the interpretive task, 3) the normative task, and 4) the pragmatic task. In the stage of

⁴⁰ Tracy, “Foundations of Practical Theology,” 73.

⁴¹ Schleiermacher, *Christian Caring*, 99.

⁴² Schleiermacher, *Christian Caring*, 17.

the descriptive-empirical task, the pastor gathers information about the context for the ministry “through informal information-gathering, careful listening and looking more closely at patterns and relationships that are taken for granted,” by asking, “What is going on?” In the stage of the interpretive task, the pastor goes deeper to better understand patterns and dynamics occurring in the particular situation by analyzing them through theories of the arts and sciences, by asking, “Why is this going on?” In the stage of the normative task, the pastor uses theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses and learning from “good practice,” by asking, “What ought to be going on?” In the last stage of the pragmatic task, the pastor determines strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and enter into a reflective conversation with the “talk back” emerging when they are enacted, by asking, “How might we respond?”⁴³ For Osmer, this interpretive process is more like a “spiral” than a circle, since it constantly circles back to tasks that have already been explored.⁴⁴

Preaching as a shared ministry should be practiced not as a random or arbitrary case study but as a consistent practical theological act followed by critical reflection. Osmer’s four core tasks of interpretation for practical theological reflection can be used as guidelines for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry. For example, the history and current situation of the preaching ministry in a particular church can be analyzed through the descriptive-empirical and the interpretive tasks. The normative task will help the pastor theologically reflect on the current practice of preaching in her church and provide theological guidance for the practice of preaching as a shared ministry. And the pragmatic task will help the pastor discern her role as the leader of the shared ministry and increase her pastoral sensibility.

Through the process of practical theological reflection, the pastor can practice preaching as a shared ministry in a variety of ways. For some churches that understand

⁴³ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 4-10.

⁴⁴ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 11.

preaching as the pastor's own business, a low-key introduction to shared preaching may be effective. Such churches may begin by inviting some lay leaders or staff members to preach a children's sermon in Sunday worship. Churches that have a Bible study program may develop it into a lectionary reading group or a theological book club, in which the pastor can study with the members, focusing on some theological theme or preaching texts, and then reflect on the discussion later when she prepares a sermon.

In churches that are open to new things in relation to the ministry of preaching and had talented members in storytelling, music, dance, audiovisual technology, and so forth, the pastor can be creative in preparing preaching by inviting them to participate in the preaching event based on their talents. Preaching a dramatized sermon, a dialogue sermon, a theatrical sermon combined with music and dance, etc., can be rehearsed with a team in a given time and situation. Designing a sermon as a dialogue with preaching partner(s), rather than as a monologue by the pastor, or as an embodied performance including singing, drama, dancing, and other artistic elements by inviting those who have such talents among the congregation will help the congregation understand preaching as a shared ministry. For the effective practice of preaching as a shared ministry, it would be useful to organize a preaching committee, whose role is to participate not only in preparing, performing, and evaluating preaching but also in recruiting participants who are interested in sharing their experiences of God's grace with others through preaching.

The practice of preaching as a shared ministry is not limited to the preparation process and actual performance. It can be extended to post-preaching events such as a sermon feedback time after the service. Or, if a congregation is open and flexible to changes in the order of the worship service and is interested in sharing their reflections on the sermon during the service, the pastor can design the order of the service including a moment of reflection

after the sermon as a response to the Word. This practice should be preceded by the pastor's instructions on how to share their responses to the sermon in constructive ways.

The ideas suggested above are just a few. The practice of preaching as a shared ministry requires of the preacher ongoing efforts to innovate and practice new ideas for shared preaching. A variety of creative approaches to preaching as a shared ministry will challenge the church to rethink its identity and mission and contribute to revitalizing the church with fresh insights and passion for communal and collaborative ministry. The practice of preaching as an art of shared leadership will eventually bring forth a new chapter of Christian ministry as an art through which the congregation can appreciate the beauty of leadership.

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