



The Value and Challenge of Team

Rachel Roche

Hey, working with people is crazy, right?!! But I am sure we all want our Church leadership teams to work together in harmony, united in vision, and complimenting each other's strengths and weaknesses. Whether your church is small or large, unity amongst paid and unpaid staff, elders and key leaders is essential to empowering the church to fulfil its mission. Working together is vital for the long term benefit of children, teens and their families. How we work together as a leadership team is a witness to the way Christ is at work in us. The leadership at Northpoint Baptist Church in New Plymouth believes in team and want this dream to be a reality. I was the pastor of Family Ministries at Northpoint for 7 years, ending in 2013. I am now at Carey Baptist College in Auckland but the team continues and I want to share with you my view on our journey.

Like most churches the Northpoint leadership team have all come from different backgrounds, denominations, careers, family upbringing and theological viewpoints. Everyone has a different opinion about politics, the best hot drink, the number of songs we should sing on a Sunday and are we Apple or PC?!!! And this is team. We are different but we try to love and value each other. We work together knowing our differences make us the body of Christ serving the body. We each love the God who made all our crazy, quirky individual selves. Don't get me wrong, we did not perfect this. We still had significant frustrations with each other – but like a family, we were genuinely committed to each other, knowing that working through difficulties is the best long term solution. Actually, what I am about to explain is tricky because it is a way of being, it's about what we valued and how we operated. So try to imagine a community on a journey and it kinda looks like this.....

Northpoint's vision is to: Transform communities through growing in faith, reaching the lost, establishing God's Kingdom and worshipping together as the body of Christ both gathered and scattered. This is the backdrop to our focused way of being. As most of our life does not take place on a Sunday morning, the rest of the week has an ever increasing emphasis. Yes, Sunday morning is our combined worship and celebration but valuing our whole week and what we do



has been both a catalyst and result of valuing each other and all ministries equally. This is not a full deconstruction or decentralisation of Sunday mornings but an active demonstration of valuing what happens during the week in and out of our buildings. Our vision and values are spoken about each week through every possible avenue. More and more we try to emphasise 'faith at home, work and play'. We want everyone to be wrestling with Christ centred living. Sunday morning is a significant time that we endeavoured to invest in, to resource and equip people for the rest of the week. Progress is slow but we know with continual 2 degree shifts we will make huge change over the long term. For example we realised an hour on a Sunday does not achieve our vision so we integrated our strategy and partnered together across the ages. This is relevant to team because it is the underpinning vision and way we do things that filter into every part of who we are. On Sunday we have children and youth included regularly in services. We have All Age services which are not a performance but involve everyone worshipping and interacting together. Communicating this vision means everyone can be on the same page.

Communication and transitions between ministries are vital. Preschool leaders talking to youth leaders, talking to adults leaders, talking to morning tea teams, talking to CRE (Christian Religious Education) teams, talking to the finance people, talking to song leaders, talking to school workers, talking to administrators, talking to preachers.....do you get my drift? Yes, talking takes time but in relationship there are fewer misunderstandings, more unity and more thoughtful sharing and caring. Getting on the same page and heading in the same direction is vital but you knew that already, right? But had you thought what might happen if you were on the same page and valued ministries equally and communicated regularly? What if the children's ministry had a roster with a band like BIG church? What if the church budget was genuinely shared across ALL ministries? Walking the talk is hard but can you afford not to?

On the journey to operating as a team, like all good Baptists we found one place to start was meetings. Are you having regular staff meetings? How often do you get all key staff in the same room? I know some churches find it hard to have everyone present at a weekly meeting but paid or unpaid, full or part time, we all need to be in the same room. At Northpoint our weekly meetings included both paid and unpaid administrators, children's workers and pastors. Valuable



connections were made for all staff at these meetings. We knew that when we were away, or out, we helped each other with tasks, we planned and we debriefed. We had a window into each other's world, and did our best to support each other - and we ate together often! For example, when recruiting new leaders, we had a shared look at people, who they were, what their gifting's and natural abilities were and how we thought they could best serve the overall needs of the church and community - not nabbing them quickly to the detriment of other ministries! When we planned a theme that would be included in all aspects of church life (preaching, children's ministry, lifegroups etc.) it could happen more naturally as we were already meeting together regularly. We tried hard not to be silo based. We found we were more effective if we worked together. Sadly, I know some of your churches, and before you have a meeting together it would be good for you to actually talk to each other, have a coffee and start a relationship. Just because you don't connect with the cool dude song leader or can't relate to the quiet admin person, it doesn't mean they are not part of God's plan for his community.

At Northpoint we believed community involvement was not an added extra but *a way of being*. We knew we were the church gathered *and* scattered. Our involvement in our local community included programmes like ICONZ, CRE and mainly music BUT emphasis was on relationships. As a leadership team we wanted to ooze the vision of a community demonstrating our 24/7 faith by being a people becoming Christ centred with Jesus as our lens, as the one we are apprenticed to. Each week, when we had contact with the congregation we wanted everyone fired up and empowered to love our community. As a team, our interface with the community was consistent, people had confidence in all of us and people could naturally transition through and feel supported by our ministries. Together we had an impact and made a difference.

Creating this team culture did not happen overnight. It was hard work and we had to purposefully prioritise working as team. We were intentional about having fun together and being honest about the challenges. We had our share of mountain top and valley experiences, but our heart was to be a light to the community around us and we believed the best way we could achieve this was through valuing each other and our ministries – together we were team.

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'How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity.' Ps133

'...agree whole heartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.' Phil2.2