Discerning Spirituality for Missional Leaders

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Abstract The concept of *missional church* represents a confluence of ideas on spirituality, discernment and leadership. The very idea of participating in the *missio Dei* implies a spiritual journey and underlying spirituality, and discernment is widely described as the “first step in mission.” The missional church recognises the importance of leadership to envision, shape, and facilitate missional transformation. This chapter acknowledges the urgency and importance of discourses on spirituality and discernment, because of the context of the church finding itself in a complex world. The church *is* a complex system and finds itself in a dynamic reality where the dynamism also entails complexity—to the extent that Friedman (Thank you for being late: An optimist’s guide to thriving in the age of accelerations. Allen Lane, London, 2016) typifies our age as the “age of accelerations.” The research will introduce the idea of missional leadership and its relevance in the light of the renewed attention to concepts of missional church in South Africa, in many other contexts, and in ecumenical organisations. Defining missional leadership as *the Spirit-led transformation of people and institutions by means of meaningful relations to participate in God’s mission*, the chapter will attend to an appropriate understanding of spirituality. This will be against the background of a shift of spiritual formation from knowing and believing, to hungering and thirsting. In the final section, discernment will be described as entering into a triad: the discerning interaction between church, culture, and biblical narrative—to seek, discover, understand, and share in what the Holy Spirit is involved in the close-to-the-ground particulars of the church’s engagement in, with, against, and for the world.

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1 Introduction

We live in complex times, in an age of acceleration. Friedman (2016, pp. 26–27) coined the concept of the “age of accelerations” to describe the rapid acceleration in globalisation where the flow of information and knowledge leads to a hyper-connected world; where the acceleration in climate change leads to biodiversity loss and the restructuring of mother nature; and the acceleration in computing power and smart technology to seamless complexity. These accelerations combine to form the “Great Acceleration,” transforming almost every single aspect of modern life. This is a time where institutions that survived for ages are under pressure, and where even resilient institutions such as churches and universities face unprecedented challenges. It is not only a question of an increase in the rate of change, but an issue of dislocation because the rate of change exceeds the ability of mankind to adapt to change. Friedman argues that the world is not just rapidly changing. Societal structures are failing to keep pace with the rate of change, and the world is starting to operate differently (Friedman 2016, p. 28).

Although Friedman writes from a particular Western and developmental perspective, recent contributions on super-diversity¹ (Vertovec 2016) affirm the complexity of society, more so in South Africa. South Africa is indeed a country of complex diversity: it has 11 official languages; a multitude of ethnic groups; widely diverging histories; all major religions are present; it experienced various phases of colonialisation and decolonisation; it hosts many formal and informal economic approaches; many stories compete for attention.

Friedman’s approach provides an entry point to engage with the complexities of South Africa, especially in terms of leadership studies: “A shifting world opens a new leadership challenge” (Terry 2001, p. 143). The age of accelerations challenges leaders in all facets of society and raises important questions on core competencies of leaders, such as discernment, the ability to formulate appropriate mission, vision and forming teams that are able to transform institutions and communities. The age of accelerations demands a new wisdom culture (*vis a vis* the focus on leadership skills) and more than “outside the box” thinking—but “thinking without a box” (Friedman 2016, p. 14). It demands a discerning spirituality from missional leaders.

This research focuses on leadership in the church and, more specifically, missional leadership. It is certainly limited by the scope of a single chapter and the fact that the researcher represents a particular facet of the complex denominational and religious landscape in South Africa, but attempts to contribute a perspective that can enhance the ability of the system to adapt to the changing context that equips leaders to act with more agility. This is typically the task of missional leaders, and a discerning spirituality will equip and assist missional leadership in this journey.

¹Super-diversity is a term denoting a transformation of population patterns, especially arising from shifts in global mobility. Around the world over the past three decades, there have been increasing movements of people from more varied national, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds.

Missional leadership recognises the fact that big systems, such as denominations, have “traders” and “gatekeepers” that determine the flow of ideas, the pace of transformation and orientation on the identity of systems. The life and actions of a complex system such as denominations are influenced by the relationship between traders and gatekeepers. Gatekeepers are the guardians of the *status quo*. They must ensure stability, fidelity and control. Their mission is to slow the pace of change and to bring stability to the system by leaning back into the past. Yes, any system needs a focus on the past, but then in a particular way with the aim to build on the best in the history of the system (such as is being prepared with Appreciative Inquiry [AI]). The gatekeeping function is appropriate in an age of accelerations, to preserve that of the past worthy of taking into the future (Terry 2001, p. 73). It is to drive forward but keeping an eye on the rear view-mirror. Leadership is rooted in the wisdom of the past: “You live in the present from the past forward” (Sweet 2004, p. 138).

The art of leadership is not to focus on the rear-view-mirror but to journey into the future. Leadership wisdom includes matching the best of knowledge and experience to the current reality and accelerations (see Terry 2001, p. 407). Leadership in an age of accelerations needs the posture of traders. Traders are at the forefront of change. They are the “innovators” and “early adopters” in the system (Keifert 2006, p. 55). Traders ring in changes and introduce new grammar, ideas, and innovation. Traders try to direct accelerations and incorporate a culture that embraces change. Friedman (2016, p. 306) makes a compelling case for what I label as traders, when he says that the most resilient countries and systems are those that are able to absorb many alien influences and incorporate them into the system while maintaining overall stability.

Missionaries are typical traders. They are focused on finding creative solutions and prone to be caught up in a mission to expend their talents for a self-transcending cause—they are people convinced that God has entrusted creation to human beings not merely as caretakers of a past condition but as co-creators with a God of the future (Haight 2014, p. 55).

The church, and especially denominations, find themselves in the midst of the age of accelerations and serve as a case study of the interaction between leadership, discernment and spirituality. The church needs missional leaders able to apply the wisdom of traders on the journey into an unsure and undefined future.

2 Focus on Missional Church

The concept of missional church is particularly relevant due to the renewed attention it receives in many contexts, including South Africa, and in important ecumenical organisations. The concept of missional church is also perhaps the best expression of ecclesiology to address the contextual challenges posed by the age of acceleration, especially since ideas such as contextualisation, welcoming the stranger, and faithful presence in the midst of chaos, are part and parcel of the missional church.

A number of South African churches made important policy decisions to facilitate the transformation towards missional church—to name but a few:

- The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)—The executive of the DRC decided, at the very first meeting of their term, to prioritise the continued missional transformation of the DRC as its most important strategic goal (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 2015, p. 14).
- The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa stated at its 2012 General Assembly that “supporting the development of missional congregations” is one of the mission priorities of the denomination (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa 2012).
- The Anglican Church embarked on a process of renewal and revival labelled “Anglicans Ablaze” to build up the church and serve God in the world (Anglican Church of Southern Africa n.d.).
- The Netherdutch Reformed Church (NHKA) attended to a missional ecclesiology at its 2013 general assembly, and committed itself to a process of missional transformation (Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika 2013, p. 313–314).
- Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA) also focuses on the missional calling of local congregations (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika 2014).
- The same can be said in a global context of a number of other denominations—the Church of England and the Methodist Church in the United Kingdom with the Fresh Expressions initiative; The Protestant Church in The Netherlands (PKN)—with changes in the church polity to express this missional re-orientation²; the Christian Reformed Church with the dream that “our congregations will flow like streams into their communities.”³ For the Reformed Church in America the big picture is about being transformed and transforming.⁴

The issue has received significant attention in ecumenical meetings since 2010:

- The World Council of Churches published a new mission affirmation, *Together towards life* (Keum 2013). This affirmation attends to the missional calling and renewal of the church (Keum 2013, p. 7) and concludes: “Thus the churches mainly and foremost need to be missionary churches” (Keum 2013, p. 22).
- The Cape Town Commitment (Lausanne 2010), a meeting of the Lausanne Movement, acknowledged the mission of the church and the importance of the church participating in God’s mission (Lausanne 2010, p. 5).

²The Kerkorde states: “2. *Levend uit Gods genade in Jezus Christus vervult de kerk de opdracht van haar Heer om het Woord te horen en te verkondigen.* 3. *Betrokken in Gods toewending tot de wereld, belijdt de kerk in gehoorzaamheid aan de Heilige Schrift als enige bron en norm van de kerkelijke verkondiging en dienst, de drie-enige God, Vader, Zoon en Heilige Geest.*”

³The CRC states: “Our congregations will flow like streams into their communities. We will meet our neighbors at community events and gathering places, listening to each other, learning from each other, and serving each other. By our presence we will become channels for the love of Christ and the Holy Spirit’s life-giving transformation.”

⁴This includes spiritual formation to be more like Jesus in loving God and neighbours, and making the world a better place.

- The Edinburgh 2010 mission conference, celebrating the great mission conference of 1910, emphasised the missional nature of the church and the fact that the church is the result of God's mission (Niemandt 2014, p. 66).
- The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) recognises the calling of the church to participate in the mission of the Triune God and urges members with the following:

The missional identity and engagement of the churches and of our communion is the *raison d'être* (reason for being) of WCRC, is essential to its Reformed identity, and therefore, must be reflected in its structures, use of resources and programmatic actions (WCRC 2010, p. 164).

It is clear that the idea of missional church has captured the imagination of a significant, if not critical, amount of South African mainline denominations and local congregations. The missional church sees itself within God's mission (the *missio Dei*), and seeks "to re-enter [the world] as a missionary presence. . .living adventurously as a subversive movement, realising afresh its total reliance on the Lord" (Gibbs 2000, p. 51). Missional ecclesiology builds on the *missio Dei*, the active presence of the Triune God in his creation and the life-changing invitation to participate in this mission of God. N'kwim Bibi-Bikan (2016, p. 2) applies this to the church in Africa as well when he states that the mission of the church in Africa should be the mission of God in Africa. It is important to understand to focus on God's mission: "Mission is the result of God's initiative, rooted in God's purposes to restore and heal creation and to call people into a reconciled covenantal relationship with God" (Hesselgrave and Stetzer 2010, p. 24).

The concept of missional church does not only raise interest due to the ecumenical and denominational focus it receives, but also because it represents a confluence of ideas on spirituality, discernment and leadership. The very idea of participating in the *missio Dei* implies a spiritual journey and underlying spirituality, and discernment which is widely described as the "first step in mission." A missional church is a community of followers called by the Spirit on a journey of discernment. The active presence of the Triune God in his creation presupposes discernment as the way to understand where God is working so that God's people can join in with the Spirit and participate in God's mission. The missional church recognises the importance of leadership to envision, shape and facilitate missional transformation. To be transformed and to nurture a transforming presence in communities and the world at large requires a new kind a leader.

3 Context of Acceleration and Complexity

Discourses on spirituality and discernment are important because the church finds itself in a complex world. This is also and perhaps particularly true of the church in South Africa. The church *is* a complex system. Whether one refers to local congregations or huge denominational structures—they are all complex systems, and complexity theory provides interesting answers to new questions and challenges that churches face. More than that—the church finds itself in a dynamic reality where

the dynamism also entails complexity. Some of the characteristics mentioned by Friedman seems to be quite evident in the South African landscape, such as the acceleration of globalisation, climate change, connectivity and interdependence (Friedman 2016, pp. 26–27).

Complexity enhances acceleration, and acceleration feeds complexity. The interplay between complexity and acceleration results in a situation described by Friedman (2016, p. 91) as a situation where complexity became, “fast, free, easy for you, and invisible.” Computing power, increased connectivity and powerful programmes are changing the world and the way society operates: “It is making the world not just flat but fast. Fast is a natural evolution of putting all this technology together and then diffusing it everywhere” (Friedman 2016, p. 93).

The combination of acceleration and complexity creates a totally new context for the church. The importance of contextualisation in mission has been underscored by Bosch in his argument that contextualisation is an affirmation that God has turned towards the world, and that the world is a constitutive element in our understanding of mission (Bosch 1991, p. 426). This shows the importance of the context of acceleration and complexity for the church. Mission as praxis is about concrete transformation; it is specifically about transformative encounters: amongst people, and between the living God and his people (Kritzinger and Saayman 2011, pp. 49–52). This necessitates a new understanding of contextualisation. Friedman (2016, p. 312) pleads for an openness of cultures to adapt when faced with big changes in the environment. *Deep contextualisation*,⁵ an expansion of contextualisation, might assist in this process. Mission as deep contextualisation will attempt to proclaim the gospel and actualise the good news in the particular circumstances brought about by globalisation and a shifting understanding of history, including “deep history” (Gregersen 2013, pp. 370, 376) and the age of accelerations. Deep contextualisation assists with the re-orientation of the history of mission on a deeper understanding of history. It also embraces the complexity and rapid evolution of society and the existence of vast ungoverned spaces in cyberspace.

4 Missional Leadership

What kind of leadership will assist the (missional) church on the journey of deep contextualisation in the context of acceleration and complexity? Perhaps the discussion on leadership must start with an introduction of Scharmer’s (2009, loc. 356) definition of leadership—he describes leaders as “all people who engage in creating change or shaping their future, regardless of their formal positions in institutional structures.” This can be expanded with the insight that the role of the leader is, “to help people face reality and to mobilize them to make change” (Heifetz n.d.). Leadership gives direction and cohesion to a group of people or an organisation (Noordt et al. 2008, p. 285). Direction implies change and transformation, a movement or journey to new places or experiences.

⁵For a more comprehensive explanation of deep contextualisation, see Niemandt (2017).

The issue of leadership is of particular importance in the process of transformation to a missional church. The church needs an appropriate missional understanding of leadership, in order to organise and transform the church into missional life, and to participate in the transformation of communities to be able to share life in its fullness (Niemandt 2016a, p. 91). The missional imperative of deep contextualisation adds perspective to the kind of leadership needed—it must guide participants with wisdom to face the deep contextual changes and assist the transformation of the church and membership to embrace and participate in God’s presence in an age of complexity and acceleration. Missional leadership is *the Spirit-led transformation of people and institutions by means of meaningful relations to participate in God’s mission*. Missional leadership is a turn towards discernment by God’s pilgrim people. As Hendriks (2004, p. 30) puts it: “The solution to faith communities’ questions about how to participate in God’s missional praxis is a critical, constructive dialogue or correlation between their interpretations of the realities of the global and local context and the faith resources at their disposal.”

Leadership includes helping people to adapt to change and changing contexts. The challenge lies in the understanding of change, especially if the nature of change has changed! Friedman (2016, p. 32) argues that the rate of change has accelerated and now exceeds the ability of mankind to adapt to change. “. . . Our societal structures are failing to keep pace with the rate of change” (Friedman 2016, p. 33). South Africa and the churches in South Africa are not immune to these global changes. But we cannot resist the invitation to be co-creators of the future. The argument by Haight (2014, p. 55) comes to mind when he describes the “Anthropology of Constructive Action”:

God has entrusted creation to human beings not merely as caretakers of a past condition but as co-creators with God of the future. This formula corresponds with the recognition that being is not static but in process, and that human beings were created by God not simply to enjoy creation but, as part of the universe, to work with the processes of evolution and to assume responsibility for its historical movement (Haight 2014, p. 55).

The leadership challenge in the age of acceleration is to reimagine and reinvent social technologies. Friedman (2016, p. 200) argues that we will need a better understanding of the way people and society operates, and we will need to find ways to accelerate the adaptability and evolution of institutions (certainly including churches), organisations and society at large. The church as a relational organism is deeply dependant on social technologies and the ability of the members to cope with and flourish in a new era. Mathewes (2015, loc. 1203–1205) argues that churches “. . . are those institutions that aim to give us a communal and personal, intellectual and affective, structure to help cultivate joy, our cultivation of which is their ultimate purpose.”

Missional leadership responds to these challenges by focusing on the Spirit-led transformation of people and institutions by means of meaningful relations to participate in God’s mission. It is a kind of leadership that facilitates changes and transformation, more so in the face of complexity and acceleration. Mpinga (2014, p. 184) states that missional leadership will have the responsibility to discern, to disclose, to teach, to expose and to develop missional identity. Cordier and Niemandt (2014), reflecting on research carried out in the South African context,

concluded that missional leadership is not in the first place about strategic planning or management, but on cultivating within the missional community the capacities needed for spiritual discernment and formation: “What is needed, is not the training of religious technicians, but the formation of spiritual leaders” (Cordier and Niemandt 2014). Missional leadership requires new capacities and new paradigms.

5 Missional Spirituality

Missional leadership can only facilitate transformation and guide church members to a flourishing life in a new age of complexity and acceleration if it is deeply imbedded in a missional spirituality. In this section, the discussion on missional spirituality will, first of all, be achieved from the perspective of broader discourses on spirituality. What does spirituality really mean? Haight (2014, loc. 269–270) defines spirituality as the way persons and groups live their lives with reference to something that they acknowledge as transcendent. He argues that spirituality is a form of behaviour. It consists in the sum total of a person’s actions as he or she moves along in life: “. . . spirituality is intrinsically developmental. Spirituality is a living thing that grows through time and through the life cycle of human experiences” (Haight 2014, loc. 280–281). Heifetz (n.d.) makes a strong case for the need of a sanctuary. He argues that leaders need a sanctuary, a place where they can go to get back in touch with the worth of their life and the worth of their work. This is not necessarily a physical place or an extended sabbatical. Maybe Heifetz refers to a kind of spirituality that will sustain a leader—the formation of habits and the cultivation of spaces where a leader can create daily rhythms or moments that helps leaders to “stay alive.”

Terry (2001, p. 383, see also Sweet 2004, p. 110) recognises the importance of spirituality in leadership literature and states that the concept plays a role in many books, even to the extent that it is central to many leadership theories. His argument is even more appropriate in the age of complexity and acceleration:

When we are in the midst of chaos and devastation, the past looks clear and sensible, the future unclear, even senseless. Yearning for order and meaning, we want to know that whatever is worthy of our faith and belief is present to inform, support, sustain, and encourage us (Terry 2001, p. 413).

For him spirituality equals with creating a meaning of life. Spirituality refers to the ultimate values we hold and meanings we make in relation to that which is deemed ultimately important (Terry 2001, p. 385).

The broader description of spirituality created the context for a more focused description of Christian spirituality. Wright (2015, p. 121) argues that Christian spirituality is:

—an awareness of the loving and guiding presence of God, sorrow for sin and gratitude for forgiveness, the possibility and challenge of prayer, a love for God and for our neighbors, the desire for holiness and the hard moral work it requires, the gradual or sudden emergence of particular vocations, a lively hope for God’s eventual new creation—is generated by the

good news of what has happened in the past and what will happen in the future. All this and much, much more is what is meant by the good news in the present.

Mpinga (2014, p. 197) describes missional spirituality as the Christian way of living derived from the encounter with God in Christ, the fellowship with him, and his mission in the world. Christian spirituality gives a particular content to the transcendent and acknowledges the life-giving presence of the Triune God. The ability to find meaning in life is a gift from the Spirit and ultimate values flow from the ultimate self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Haight says:

Every revelation and religion has some medium or set of symbols and practises that define the form and content of its faith. According to this formula, the logic of Christian faith is Christomorphic. This means that, by definition, Christians find their way to God through faith in Jesus of Nazareth, who is acknowledged to be the Messiah or anointed one of God or Christ (Haight 2014, loc. 2138–2141).

Missional leaders are centred in and fuelled by their immersion in the body of Christ. Spiritual leadership involves two aspects closely related to each other: (1) *Spiritual discernment*—The spiritual leader possesses the ability to discern and to establish *spiritual discernment* as a practise amongst the leadership team and the congregation; and (2) *Faith formation and discipleship*—The spiritual leader lives a lifestyle of discipleship and focuses on the *spiritual coaching and formation of members* within the congregation towards biblical formation and discipleship (see also Cordier and Niemandt 2014).

With this background in mind, the focus now moves to missional spirituality. Mission is to live in the active presence of the Triune God and to participate in this mission of God. Missional spirituality is Trinitarian. Christian leadership finds its deepest ground, orientation, and direction from the God who is worshipped (Niemandt 2016a, p. 93). Missional spirituality is the discovery of God's rhythms, and the ability to align one's life to those rhythms. It is about rhythms of life, or habits, which integrate the sacred and secular. It is to join God's dance of mission (Niemandt 2016a, p. 89). Missional spirituality is imperative during transformation (Helland and Hjalmarson 2011, loc. 107) and thus completely appropriate in the context of an age of complexity and acceleration. For Helland and Hjalmarson (2011, loc. 559, 239) a missional spirituality is a spirituality embodied in daily life that forms and feeds mission. They argue that, "spiritual disciplines will form us, and doing the Father's work in community will feed us" (2011, loc. 239–240). It is about spiritual formation. Formation is an attitude that aligns the church with the kingdom of God, and that forms the basis for a spirituality that changes lives.

This also means a shift of spiritual formation from knowing and believing to hungering and thirsting, because our wants and longings and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behaviour will flow (Smith 2016, loc. 103). Smith (JKA, loc. 167) criticises modernism with its intellectualist approach that reduces human beings to mere intellect—one that treats us as if we're only and fundamentally thinking things. He builds his argument on his conviction that to be human is to be a liturgical animal, a creature whose loves are shaped by worship (Smith 2016, loc. 434). It is a transformation or re-orientation of the heart that happens from the bottom up, through the formation of our habits of

desire. We are teleological creatures (Smith 2009b, p. 52), formed by habits that constitute the fulcrum of desire (Smith 2009b, p. 56). We act according to habit or dispositions that are formed in us through practises, routine, and rituals (Smith 2009b, p. 62). Smith (2016, loc. 465) concludes: “Learning to love (God) takes practise.”

Ungerer et al. (2013, pp. 48–64)—South African researchers from various disciplines, provide a framework and creative perspective to develop habits for a transformative, missional spirituality. Niemandt (2016a, pp. 85–103) applied the insights of Ungerer et al. (2013) to missional spirituality and practises.

Ungerer et al. (2013) describe the following six virtues, where a virtue is defined as moral excellence, righteousness, and a particularly good (or beneficial) quality. Each of these virtues has a social, or relational dimension, as well as a personal, or emotional dimension. They developed reflective routines (habits) to facilitate inner transformation and personal knowing, and include the art of reflective learning (Ungerer et al. 2013, p. 33).

- Transcendence, which includes appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, humour, and religiousness.
- Humanity, which includes the social competencies of kindness, love, and social intelligence.
- Wisdom and knowledge, which include the cognitive competencies of creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, and love of learning.
- Courage, which includes the personal and emotional competencies of bravery, persistence, and zest.
- Justice, which is associated with fairness, leadership, and teamwork.
- Temperance, which include the competencies of forgiveness, modesty, prudence, and self-regulation.

Niemandt (see 2016a, pp. 94–100) developed missional spiritual practises that relate to each of these virtues. They are summarised for the sake of brevity:

Virtue	Missional practise
Transcendence	Solitude—a ritual to find one’s identity in Christ. Solitude is to step away from people for a period of time, in order to encounter God and rediscover one’s true identity in Christ. Solitude is about creating space to listen—it is to open up for God, mostly in the context of a community of followers of Christ. It entails a disposition to discern
Humanity	Kindness/compassion to all, even those who anger us. The exercise involves not only reflecting on a situation of anger and withdrawing from it, but also active acts of compassion and understanding. It values relations more than theological barriers Hospitality to the stranger is a typical missional response and expression of love. Gospel hospitality has always been at the heart of Christian life. One can say that missional spirituality is characterised by welcome and hospitality
Wisdom and knowledge	This refers to a wisdom-shaped spirituality that focusses on a faithful presence in all contexts

(continued)

Virtue	Missional practise
	<p>Sparks et al. (2014, p. 46) understands faithful presence as taking your bodies, your location and your community very seriously, as seriously as God in Christ took them. Faithful presence invites you to act on the belief that God is giving you what you need to be formed as disciples within your location. Wisdom and knowledge develops ways to be faithfully present</p> <p>Meylahn (2012, p. 40) states that “being church, doing theology is about listening to the narratives of a particular local context and then seeking to interpret these narratives within their cultural, social, political narrative setting, with the help of other disciplines. . .”</p>
Courage	<p>Taking risks. Frost and Hirsch (2011, p. 24) write: “The church should be one of the most adventurous places on earth—the locus of all quests, the highly adaptive Jesus community at the very forefront of what God is doing in the world.” Courage refers to the willingness to break with traditional ideas and convention and agreement in faith communities that mistakes and experiments will be tolerated and even celebrated. In terms of missional leadership, play is important. Play is the oxygen for creativity, and creativity ignites missional innovation. Smith (2009a, pp. 47–49) argues: “We play because our God is good. Grace is sufficient for us. God wants us to be full of joy, and play is a way to experience the goodness of God and the richness of life”</p>
Justice	<p>Ungerer et al. (2013, p. 55) states that the virtue of justice is associated with fairness, leadership, and teamwork. Life in mission means creativity, generosity, and reconciliation. Missional leadership is orientated on the cross. The cross of Christ reveals a missional, justifying, justice-making God and creates a missional, justified, justice-making people. Enjoying flourishing life as a gift of the Trinity is a celebration of righteousness and justice (Niemandt 2016b, p. 5). Smith (2016, loc. 87–88) gives an excellent description of the relationship between spirituality and justice: “If you are passionate about seeking justice, renewing culture, and taking up your vocation to unfurl all of creation’s potential, you need to invest in the formation of your imagination. You need to curate your heart. You need to worship well. Because you are what you love” (Smith 2016, loc. 87–88)</p>
Temperance	<p>Temperance is about forgiveness, modesty, prudence and self-regulation. This entails a “kenotic” spiritual and missional ritual, where missional leaders can practise humility by dwelling in the Word (on a text such as Phlp 2, pp. 5–11). One can ask questions such as: “How can I imitate Christ’s humility?” or “Share a story where you misuse the power of the gospel and what you learned from that.” Transformational missional spirituality focuses on mutual service and interdependence, and on vulnerability. Shared stories create a safe space to practise this kenotic missional ritual</p>

It is important to underscore the perspective that a missional spirituality embraces deep contextualisation. It is a spirituality where church, culture and biblical narrative constantly interact and the missional church dwells in the Word and in the culture (world). It is a movement in the power of the Spirit, where listening to the biblical narratives leads the listener closer to God and where the deepening relation with the Triune God leads to a deeper involvement with culture and context. Although transcendence focuses on the ultimate presence of God, God is never present in a way that ignores humanity and context. Courage, justice, temperance and wisdom plays out in real life.

6 Discernment

Discernment flows from spirituality and nurtures wisdom—it is about making wise choices. It is one of the most important qualities of leadership and emphasises wisdom and an awareness of that which is deemed ultimately important, and thus God’s presence in all of reality. In his argument for the church’s mission in Africa, N’Kwim Bibi-Bikan (2016, p. 26) says: “Every local church needs to discern what God wants it to be and to do.” Discernment is about entering into the dialogue: the discerning interaction between church, culture and biblical narrative—to seek, discover, understand and share in what the Holy Spirit is up to in the close-to-the-ground particulars of the church’s engagement in, with, against and for the world. Discernment is the first, and most decisive, step on this missional journey. Mission is joining in with the Spirit in the *missio Dei*. Discernment is the process of being aware of where the Spirit is working. Van Gelder (2007) summarises this discussion as follows:

A missional ecclesiology understands congregations as being the creation of the Spirit. As communities are created by the Spirit, so also congregations seek to be led by the Spirit. They do this by engaging in some form of discernment process in order to understand their purpose (mission), and how they are being called through this purpose to participate in God’s mission in the world. . . (Van Gelder 2007, p. 107).

It is a core practise of Christian leadership and spirituality. Mpinga (2014, p. 85) says the missional church will use discernment in order to find out a way of reaching out to the community in which it is working. It is the art of reading the times and signs—opening yourself up to the context and to God’s involvement in the context (Niemandt 2016a, p. 90). Quaker communities can serve as an excellent example of communal missional discernment (see Love and Niemandt 2014).

Discernment involves listening. Sweet (2004, p. 17) argues that leadership is an acoustical art. Heifetz (n.d.): “. . . Leaders must want to listen. Good listening is fuelled by curiosity and empathy: What’s really happening here? Can I put myself in someone else’s shoes? It’s hard to be a great listener if you’re not interested in other people.” Meylahn (2012, p. 38) says that the church is no longer an institution—created and sustained by the proclamation of a truth, and the correct administration of the sacraments—but a hermeneutical space of listening and discerning. This is especially true of the missional church. Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011, p. 149) makes a strong case that the missional church is, “. . . a habit of mind and heart, a posture of openness and discernment, and a faithful attentiveness to the Spirit’s presence and to the world that God so loves.” Cordier and Niemandt (2015) describe the importance of listening in missional congregations as, first, the capacity to listen others into free speech. This refers to the skill of listening to others and articulating the insights. The second is the cultivation and facilitation of discerning processes in the congregation, which include the cultivation of four unique and related listening skills: to listen to God, to listen to the Word, to one another, and to the context (Cordier and Niemandt 2015).

In terms of listening to God and the Word, many missional communities found the practise of dwelling in the Word very valuable in the process of missional discernment

(Nel 2013). Dwelling in the Word is the practise of a repeated communal listening to a passage of Scripture over long periods of time in order to enable a Christian community to undertake its decisions and actions in line with biblical meta-narrative. The aim of dwelling in the Word is to discover the preferred and promised future of God for a specific faith community (see Nel 2013, pp. 1–2).⁶

Discernment connects leadership, communal life and missional spirituality, especially in the safe space of worship and liturgy. Rossouw (2016, p. 390) talks about *liturgical listening*. He says it is where the *missio Deo* and *coram Deo* meet. Liturgy creates an open, patient, rhythmic approach to discernment. Love and Niemandt (2014, p. 1) refer to the Quaker communities, where discernment is not simply about making decisions or finding your vocation but, at its heart is an act of worship. For them, seeking participation in the Divine life and will is an act of worship. They intentionally make a place for God to be an active participant in the discernment process (Love and Niemandt 2014, p. 7). The liturgy of worship flows into the liturgy of life when a missional community focuses on finding God in the neighbourhood and broader community. Many in the missional church movement calls this dwelling in the world. Dwelling in the world entails a process of dialogue and engagement with the contexts in which the missional community finds itself (see Niemandt 2010, p. 9). The participants ask: “What is God up to?” in their particular contexts.

⁶Nel (2013, p. 6) found that dwelling in the Word teaches and confirms the followings skills, attitudes and behaviour:

- Group members practice reaching out and sharing their faith with people they do not necessarily know well (the “reasonably friendly-looking stranger” in the group).
- Interpreting the text becomes the responsibility of all in the community, and not only of those considered experts in exegesis.
- Members practice the skill of listening to others and articulating their partners’ insights.
- The communicative playing field is intentionally levelled. Those who are naturally reluctant to speak in groups are helped to do so by not having to share their own personal thoughts, whilst those who tend to dominate discussions are constrained by their having to share the insights of others.
- Strong emotions are negated as all insights are stated in the third person.
- Reading, discussing and reflecting on the Word become more important than concluding the “business” part of church meetings.
- The repeated reading of a specific text creates a shared sense of purpose and willingness to take risks for the sake of their faith amongst the practitioners of dwelling in the Word. Over time dwelling in the Word shapes a group’s collective imagination. It defines who they are in relationship to one another and sometimes who they are over against everyone else in the world.
- Word-dwelling develops the skill of interpreting the Word with others and provides a language for sharing thoughts with each other. Although it is a metaphoric dwelling, it manages to create a sense of community and shared culture. Certain words begin to remind the dwellers of certain things and verbal shorthand develops.
- The sharing with another is the first filter for esoteric, way-out interpretations of Scripture.
- Honest reporting and fair access to the conversation builds trust.

7 A Hermeneutic of Love

I agree with Meylahn that the church is a hermeneutical space of listening and discerning. But this underscores the importance of reflecting on the nature of appropriate hermeneutics. Heath (2008) writes, in *The mystic way of Evangelism*, that the church will have to learn to look differently at the world. We need to look with a hermeneutic of love. A hermeneutic of love brings together the essential characteristics of a missional spirituality as well as a lens for discernment. The argument flows in the same direction in Helland and Hjalmarson's (2011, loc. 524) conviction that Christian spirituality is relational and formed in love. Faithful presence must be shaped by love. Sparks et al. (2014, p. 82) also makes a strong point that God is love, and mission is the loving expression of God being God: "Your longing to be a church comprised of love and faithful presence needs to be the primary motivation for the mission of the church."

When we dwell in culture and the world, as part of deep contextualisation, a hermeneutic of love changes the approach. Heath asks:

What if we looked at our world... 'with pity and not with blame'? What if we heard God's call to evangelize out of love instead of fear, hope instead of judgment? What if we saw sin for the complex mixture it is, grounded in wounds and unmet needs? What if we automatically tried to see the 'total fact' of others? In short, what would it mean to read our world with a hermeneutic of love? (Heath 2008, p. 119).

I was surprised to read Friedman's response to the age of complexity and accelerations. He labels this as a time of unprecedented freedom: "Cyberspace is the place we are all connected and no one is in charge" (Friedman 2016, p. 339). Complexity and accelerations create vast new ungoverned spaces with super-empowered individuals. It is a world where a small group of individuals are able to kill, not only another person or thousands of others, but are able to kill everyone. It is a time of daunting freedom and responsibility. Hyper-connectivity and cyberspace changed the perception of freedom. Friedman (2016, p. 339) states that there is no place where you encounter the freedom to choose more than in cyberspace. It is a place where all mankind can be unified and be totally free (Friedman 2016, p. 340). It reminds me of Haight's (2014, loc. 1825) argument that God bestowed on humans freedom and creativity through the mechanism of evolution. Created reality is an open system that includes a vast range of possibilities and unpredictable novelty. This brings mankind before a moral fork of epic proportions—"where one of us could kill all of us and all of us could fix everything if we really decided to do so" (Friedman 2016, p. 342). Friedman's answer to this challenge? He pleads that we need to find a way to get more people to practise the Golden Rule—love your neighbour as you love yourself, or do to others as you would wish them to do to you (Friedman 2016, p. 348). He echoes much of the sentiment of Heath and countless other wise people. To love others constitutes a simple effective moral guide, able to guide us in the most complex situations. It is ever adaptive and applicable to every imaginable situation. Friedman (2016, p. 348) reasons: "When the world is already complex, you don't want to make it more complicated. Make it simple." A hermeneutic of love forms the basis of a missional spirituality and guides discernment in the ever more complex world.

Deep contextualisation reminds us that this open system is a network in which human beings are an intrinsic part of the evolutionary network of life and the incomprehensible cosmos. We need to listen to and discern God's loving presence in the whole of creation and we need to seek "Christ's crucifixion in that context which opens what is for the kingdom still to come" (Meylahn 2012, p. 72). A hermeneutic of love allows deep contextualisation—embracing the age of complexity and acceleration. Niemandt (2016b, p. 6) argues that Christian joy is an embodied awareness of holy presence and extravagant love, and pleads that Christians must become an embodying presence of Christ's love (a contextualisation of God's presence). Love, and not faith, is indeed the final criterion for missional leadership.

8 Conclusion

Complexity and the age of accelerations impact on the church, society at large and thus also on leadership. This research focussed on missional leadership, defined as *the Spirit-led transformation of people and institutions by means of meaningful relations to participate in God's mission*. Missional leadership recognises the fact that big systems have "traders" and "gatekeepers" that determine the flow of ideas, the pace of transformation and orientation on the identity of systems. Gatekeepers are the guardians of the *status quo*. They must ensure stability, fidelity and control. Leadership in an age of accelerations needs the posture of traders. Traders are at the forefront of change. They are the "innovators" and "early adopters." Missionaries are typical traders, focused on finding creative solutions.

Discernment and spirituality are of the utmost importance, because spiritual leadership involves spiritual discernment and faith formation and discipleship. Missional spirituality is the discovery of God's rhythms, and the ability to align one's life to those rhythms. It is about rhythms of life, or habits, which integrate the sacred and secular. A number of habits for a transformative, missional spirituality were developed. Discernment connects leadership, communal life and missional spirituality, especially in the safe space of worship and liturgy. A hermeneutic of love allows deep contextualisation—embracing the age of complexity and acceleration.

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