# Title:

# Lens for Interim Leadership in the Next Generation

**WORKSHOP PRESENTATION:**

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## 1. MY STORY:

During the 35th Annual Conference of the Interim Ministry Network, I was inspired by by Dr. Hannah Harvey's lecture on "*The art of storytelling"* When I learned about the power of a story. She inspired me to use this medium more frequently. Osmer (2008) said we need to answer four question in a practical theology study: (i) What is going on? (ii) Why is this going on? (iii) What ought to be going on? and (iv) How might we respond?

***What is going on?*** My story as a full time pastor stretches over 24 years. Brought up in a city (Kempton Park, Johannesburg) and studied in another city (Pretoria) we can carefully say I was born and raised a city boy.

January 1, 1993 - I started my journey as the pastor of Vaalwater Congregation. A very small congregation deep in the Bushveld – countryside, mostly farmers. No pastor for three years, financial crisis, no finances, no organized leadership and only eight members attending church. This was also the year that South Africans decided to unban the African National Congress and free Mr. Mandela and others. City boy now in the countryside, changing politics and big change in the congregation. What am I to do? I quickly realized that three degrees and seven years of fulltime Theology studies could not really help me with this challenge.

Then September 17, 1996 – my journey continued at 'n congregation even more deeply in die Bushveld. Brand-new congregation (Onverwacht) that I had to start from nothing with nothing. No leadership, no church building, no money. This was an isolated congregation in the sense that although it was rural, the members of this congregation were not farmers, but workers at the newly established coalmine (Groote Geluk) and power station (Matimba). With more experience and a passion for the local church I started my personal development. I've learned more about leadership, how to facilitate change and church growth.

Thence I was called back to the city, Pretoria. On January 1, 2006 I started serving at Oos-Moot congregation. Back in the city I realized that after 13 years change was also a reality in the congregations of the bigger city community. The changing world was a big factor. This was the time in South Africa when congregations tried to duplicate successful businesses. I became pastor of a congregation with great leadership ability, sufficient finances and a strong membership base. To them the structure of the church was very important. The leadership did not want to change and they did not realize that the congregation was ready for change. Missional church was the enemy. In this time I started lecturing at the African Institute for Missiology, The Reformed College for Theology and The University of Pretoria. I finished my Master's Degree in Practical Theology (working on natural church development strategies).

Since January 1, 2008 the Zuurfontein congregation has been my resident congregation. Back in the city where I was born and raised, Kempton Park – Johannesburg (close to the O.R. Thambo International Airport), though not the congregation that I grew up in - Zuurfontein is an inner city congregation whose demography has changed rapidly. It used to be a large white Afrikaans-speaking community with its members working mainly in different sectors of the government. Nowadays it is the dwelling-place of mostly Nigerians looking for a new beginning in South Africa. When I started as the new head pastor the previous pastor had just recently died from cancer. The congregation cared for him during his illness in the absence of his own family. They needed to move through the process of mourning, but they chose to ignore the reality. There were financial problems and new working relationships had to be established within the pastoral team. That led to the very unpleasant resignation of my fellow pastor. However finding new leadership and restructuring were crucial. During this time, I finished my diploma in Interim ministry at the Centre for Contextual Theology.

For the last three years I attended the Annual Conference of the Interim Ministry Network:

- 34th Annual Conference: New ways of being – Leading ministry in a transitional era. St. Louis, Missouri.
- 35th Annual Conference: Connect. Linthicum, Maryland.
- 36th Annual Conference: Leadership the next generation. Las Vegas, Nevada.

***What is going on?*** I love the local church! I believe that nothing has the potential to change the world, like the local church fully realizing her missional identity. We have to remind ourselves that the church was Jesus' idea. In Scripture He promised that He would maintain His church. His church! Not the church I desire, but His church.

Dr. Marva Mitchell (2001) wrote an excellent book: *It takes a church to raise a village.* I the book she explained an old African proverb; "*It takes a village to raise a child*" In that hypothetical village the child was provided with leadership and knowledge towards an expected way of living. Unfortunately, over the last few generations we have experienced the deterioration of the village. Now, she said it will take a church to raise a village.

Even though we might say it is not about the numbers, the numbers do make an impact. The denomination that I am part of is down to half the numbers of 1993. Congregations used to have a full-time pastor. There were enough members and enough money to take care of that. Pastors used to change congregations every few years, nowadays they mostly stay till retirement (average 20+ years). When they retire, the congregation is on life-support, with very big challenges. We know all the reasons for a post-church culture, but for the Afrikaans-speaking people on the Southern tip of Africa there are other challenges too. Birth percentages have dropped with 72% and studies have shown that more and more Afrikaans-speaking South Africans are living abroad. And of those staying in South Africa 400 000 are now living in squatter camps.

| SA's POPULATION: CENSUS 2011 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Population group** | **Number** | **% of total** |
| African | 41 000 938 | 79.2% |
| White | 4 586 838 | 8.9% |
| Coloured | 4 615 401 | 8.9% |
| Indian/Asian | 1 286 930 | 2.5% |
| Other | 280 454 | 0.5% |
| TOTAL | 51 770 560 | 100% |

***What ought to be going on?*** In the next generation we will need church leaders who are capable and committed to taking on the challenges facing them. That is my story. I have studied the differences in approach and developed ‘n holistic process. To explain this holistic process, I will be using a “story”, a metaphor.

Sharing the experience of interim ministry as practiced in South Africa and abroad requires one to understand the processes used at three institutions where interim pastors are trained. Each uses a different lens. At one, they use the lens of Identity-Driven Churches – Centre For Contextual Ministry, University of Pretoria & Shepherd; University of The Free State. At another they use the lens of the four Practical Theology Questions of Osmer, P.R. – Communitas, University of Stellenbosch and the Interim Ministry Network in the United States of America uses the Five Focus Points. To define, develop and deploy interim pastors, one has to uses all of these lenses.

Robert E. Quinn (1996) said the story of leadership in the next generation should not only be told, but the story should become the way of life.

## 2. USING THE OPTICAL WORLD:

Using the optical world, the interim becomes the optician, the congregation becomes the patient, and the Divine Calling of the local parish becomes the eyechart. Using the various lenses, the optician can develop prescription eyewear for the congregation to see their Divine Calling and be better equipped to define, develop and deploy as a missional church.

***The optician = The Intentional Interim Minister***: This is not the purpose of the presentation so I will only quote from the work of Grape (1997) and share one or two other thoughts.

"Proven experience as a pastor, or the equivalent.
Intentionality (a sense that interim service is a vocational choice, long-term or limited term).
Tolerance for uncertainty in job security and term of service.
Sensitivity to the dynamics of termination, death, and grief.
Interim pastor training or certification.
Training or experience in group process.
Sensitivity to varied community norms.
Willingness to work with the presbytery and receive its oversight.
Flexibility and adaptability in liturgical practice.
The ability to use varied leadership styles in differing situations.
Skill in working effectively with the congregation's other staff, if any.
The ability to motivate people.

> The ability to initiate work quickly and relate quickly to new people and new situations.
> The ability to diagnose organizations and develop strategies for working with them in contract negotiation; in problem solving, reconciliation and healing; and in dealing with conflict openly and comfortably."
>
> (Grape. 1997: 20-21)

This is indeed a unique, skilled, experienced individual. Therefor I choose the IMN version: **INTENTIONA**L INTERIM MINISTER.

In the South African Context Interim Ministry has been implemented for the last 10 years. This is a very slow and painful experience. Congregations are so harded because of their preconceived notions that they do not want to use an Interim. They feel that they will be better off calling a new pastor as soon as possible. I then did some research and discovered the reason for this: In one instance the National Synod proposed an Interim Minister for the vacancy in a parish, focusing on the person of the Interim Minister. That fact caused the local congregation to be negative: why are they forcing this person on us? I therefor believe we need to focus on the process of Interim Ministry and what it can support the congregation with … Indeed, *the parish is the issue*.

***The patient = The parish is the issue***: This is not the main purpose of the presentation so I will only quote from the work of Mead (2015) and share one or two other thoughts.

Loren Mead said after all these years of defining, developing and deploying interim pastors he still believed it was all about the local church. According to him no congregation were the same, not even in the same denomination. It was all about contexts. No congregation could copy another congregation's way of doing and just pass it onto their local congregation.

The optician (intentional interim minister) only takes in to consideration what he has learned from the patient in front of him. The prescription eyewear for the patient can only fit that specific patient. No person's eyes are the same as any others' no two congregations are identical. Paul is writing different letters with different recommendations to the various congregations. There is no one-size-fits-all. We need to take into account the rapid pace of change in congregational life.

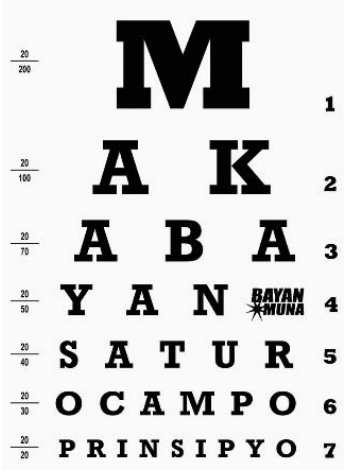
> "Later, much later, I got an image for what was going on. It was as if a whole bunch of boats were in a shallow harbor, and the tide started going out. Those in each boat were panicking. Some were trying to push their boat through the mud to deeper water; some were throwing heavy stuff overboard; some were giving up and walking to shore; some were praying to find enough water to stay afloat as long as they could. Classic siloing; each facing its own problem, growing more and more hysterical about it. Nobody noticing that" (Mead: 2015)

***The Phoropter = the process***. Looking at the video we will see the optician working skillfully with the phoropter to develop prescription eyewear for the patient. The phoropter is an instrument with different lenses = a skillful process facilitated by a trained optician (intentional interim minister)

In my view the phoropter is the process using different lenses: (i) the four questions of Osmer, (ii) the identity driven church and (iii) five focus points. Sliding one over the other, not using only one lens for all the different patients. A holistic process to the benefit of the patient. A process that is holistic recognizes how the process of interim ministry is interconnected.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36uqf9GwUdw

***The Eyechart = the missional identity of the local church***. This is not the main purpose of the presentation so I will only quote from the work of Nel (2015) and share one or two other thoughts. Intentional Interim Ministry in my view is as much Missiology as Practical Theology. The process is Practical Theology and the purpose is Missiology. Although we can distinguish between the two study fields, we cannot completely divide.




Nel (2015) says "I depart from the conviction that the church is either missional or it is not a church … Church means to be God's missional people in his world." Newbigin (1995) agrees.

Nel (2015) continues "It is not so much the case that God has a mission for the church in the world, as that God has 'n church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God's mission.

> "So when I speak of mission, I am thinking of all that God is doing in his great purpose for the whole of creation and all that he calls us to do in cooperation with that purpose … But when I speak of mission I am thinking of the multitude of activities that God's people can engage in, by means of which they participate in God's mission."
>
> Wright (2010)

***The Prescription eyewear = result of the interim proses, seeing the missional identity of a local church***.

Look at the picture: What do you see? I see good looking, happy and youthful people. The optician would be very happy to see this result after all the hard work and processes have been put in place. Job accomplished!

If the eyewear is the ability to see the missional identity of my church, the church would again appeal to the local community. A good looking church is a well looked after facility, but even more, it is a church that look after its community. Knowing that you make a difference will make you happy end it will even attract more youthful members.

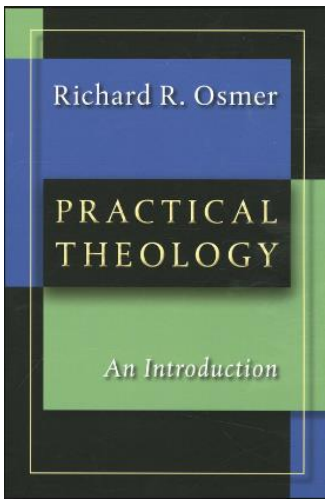
David Kinnaman (2011) names six “disconnections”: (i) overprotective, (ii) shallow, (iii) anti-science, (iv) repressive, (v) exclusive and (vi) doubtful. These are the reasons why youthful people disconnect from the church. All of these are about the lack of missional identity. The prescription eyewear can help the local church to develop a church with happy, youthful members.

The prescription eyewear also has very much to do with the ability to discern, develop and deploy a mission and vision statement. For this you can read the work of a previous speaker at the conference, Will Mancini (2008)

## 3. LENSES:

Once again it is not the purpose of this workshop to discuss the full insight of each lens. I would rather name them and maybe say one or two things about it.

### 3.1 LENS ONE: FOUR QUESTIONS OF OSMER

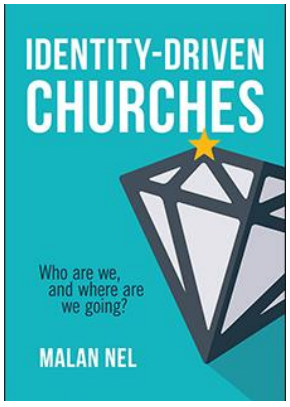


Osmer (2008) says “Practical theological interpretation involves four key tasks: the descriptive-empirical, the interpretive, the normative, and the pragmatic.” (i) What is going on? (ii) Why is this going on? (iii) What ought to be going on? (iv) How might we respond?”

> “The descriptive-empirical task. Gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts.
> The interpretive task. Drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring.
> The normative task. Using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from good practice.
> The pragmatic task. Determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the talk back emerging when they are enacted.”
>
> (Osmer 2008: 4-5)

These are not four questions to be asked and answered in ‘n specific chronological order. “..., it is helpful to think of practical theological interpretation as more like a spiral than a circle. It constantly circles back to tasks that have already been explored” (Osmer. 2008: 11). “Systems are nestled within systems.” (Osmer, 2008: 17). Capra (1996) said we could think more of a cobweb or even the world wide web.

## 3.2 LENS TWO: IDENTITY-DRIVEN CHURCH



Nel (2015) said this process was about building up the local church. By that he means a missional congregation. As already explained it is a matter of being and not just doing. He explored what it meant to "build up" a local church by naming his lenses in the process:

(i) *Motivation, unfreezing, and developing a mission statement*:

Inadequate motivation will stall the process. A motivated congregation will function as God's team – doing and being God's Church. To unfreeze a congregation, the intentional interim minister should realize the importance of building relationships. The facilitator should use compassion, community, hope, challenge, reasonability and commitment to motivate the vacant congregation towards developing a missional identity. It will also be important to understand conflict and the way to use it in a positive manner.

(ii) *Congregational analysis*:

This helps the vacant congregation to understand who they are at the particular moment in time. Whatever questionnaire you use the congregation should be enabled to analyze and weigh its functioning as a missional congregation.

Harris (1981) listed eight conditions that made an honest analysis desirable: insufficient income, a need for better communication, change in leadership, changes in the community, internal tension about liturgical changes and social questions, awareness of a decline, inability to draw and keep new members, serious estrangement between pastors, leadership and members.

> "The basic motivation that makes evaluation worthwhile and satisfying is the desire to strengthen personal ties, the willingness to risk the pain of criticism, the desire to make change – change that

really matter, the desire to restore a sense of achievement in the members and desire to find out what it is really about.

(Harris: 1981)

(iii) *Congregational strategic planning:*

Knudsen (1979) said most churches still did not plan to fulfil their function purposefully. The absence of planning is often defended or justified with theological arguments.

Planning follows a careful congregational analysis, pinpointing the strong and weak points. It includes a drafting of how the congregation understands its missional-identity. Drafting objectives to being in mission, choosing strategic steps to reach the objectives. This includes schedules, methods, resources and responsible people.

*(iv) Implementing the strategic plan:*

"When the starting-point and finish line have been determined and drafted to the best of the congregation's ability, the way the finish line is to be reached, should be chosen and outlined. The most important questions in this phase are the following:
What avenues are available?
What methods are best in this context?
What procedure should be followed?
What resources, aids and human resources are available?
What way forward is the most faithful to the gospel?"

Ten Have (1973)

*(v) Evaluating, stabilizing and repetition:*

It is only logical that the process would be evaluated. Evaluation should take place in every phase.

The purpose of evaluations is to ascertain how effective the process is, how attainable the objectives have been and whether they have been reached: also to make the necessary adjustments where applicable.

Without evaluation, stabilization, and repetition the whole process would be jeopardized. The intentional interim minister can use these lenses in a circle to help a vacant congregation discover their missional identity.

### 3.3 LENS THREE: FIVE FOCUS POINTS

I am not going to spend a lot of time on this lens, because most of you would be trained in this. You will for instance know the history of the development of this process from the five developmental tasks {(i) coming to terms with history, (ii) renewing denominational linkage, (iii) allowing needed leadership changes, (iv) discovering a new identity, and (v) commitment to new directions in ministry} to the five focus points {(i) heritage, (ii) mission, (iii) connection, (iv) leadership, and (i\v) change}.

The Centre for Congregational Health has a very informative video: http://healthychurch.org/interim-ministry/#video

## 4. CONCLUSION:

This study brought me to the folowwing conclusions:

(i) If you have to pick a process (lens) for a short-term interim – The four questions of Osmer,

(ii) If you have to pick a process (lens) for a mid-term interim – The five focus points.

(iii) If you have to pick a proses (lens) for a long-term interim – The Identity Driven process are applicable.

However, I would rather see a skilled optician (intentional interim minister) go to work with his phoropter using al the lenses (and the phase involved). Thus realizing that the patient (vacant local church) is unique and different from any other. Help them see the eyechart (missional identity) by developing unique prescription eyewear (process).

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