

Healthy and Effective Church Governance:

how to provide structures that support (rather than hinder) ministry

Governance

MULTIPLY WORKSHOP

Leaders and Elders in the NT

- **'Elder'** is a general term with a specific usage in the early church adapted from both Israelite and communal usage
 - The term 'elder' has connotations of age and of tribal seniority, it is always plural, the elders being a collective council together
 - To watch and shepherd among the flock (Acts 20:17ff, 1 Peter 5)
 - Pastoral teaching, pastoral guidance, pastoral care
 - Spiritual maturity, personal maturity, relational maturity (cf 1 Tim 3, Titus 1:5-9).
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Leaders and Elders in the NT

- The '**leader**' terms we have in the NT carry a slightly different emphasis
 - They are used in connection to call, giftedness and commissioning to a task or place (Rom 12, 1 Cor 12, 1 Tim 4)
 - Tend to refer to individuals rather than a group.
 - Preparing God's people for service (Eph 4:11f)
 - Actively engaged in teaching, mobilising, equipping the people of God.
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Two Forms of Leadership

Most communities over centuries have recognised two different forms of leadership...

- **Leading from the front**

One is concerned with change, growth, expansion, development, reform, new directions, who we can become (these are the political, social and cultural leaders or executives) >>*Leadership*

- **Leading from among**

The other is concerned with community order, rules, rituals, processes of decision making, who we are, identity, justice and communal policies (tribal elders, councils, governors, parliaments) >>*Governance*

The way we do church changes

The twin roles of leadership and governance are primarily culturally defined...

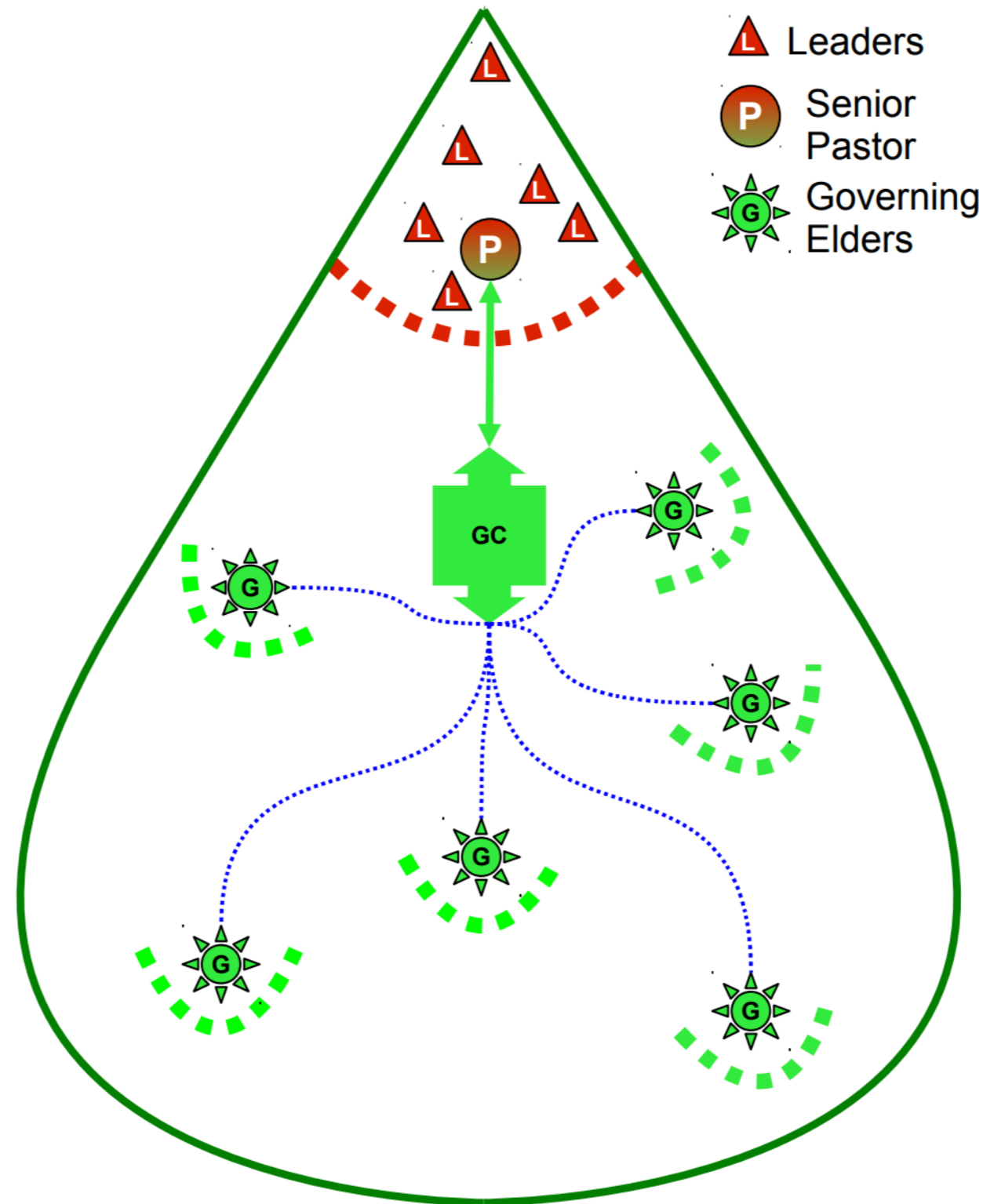
- They are **always** filled with the **character** qualities articulated in the NT, the **gifts** of the Holy Spirit and are shaped by the spiritual identity and call of the church to be the people of God
 - However **the way they work reflects the culture** of the community, the place and time in which they operate
 - It will also look different in different **size** churches.
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Leadership and Governance

- **May be solo**
 - **Often a paid full or part time vocation**
 - **Vision and energy for change**
 - **Appointed by the church community or governing body**
 - **Doesn't often stay long term**
 - **Always collective**
 - **Usually voluntary**
 - **Maturity and wisdom from local experience**
 - **Affirmed / elected by the church community**
 - **Usually long term commitment to the local church**
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The tear-drop model

- **Leaders lead from the front**
- **They seek to move the group forward**
- **They call people to change**
- **They run the risk of disconnection**



- **Governing elders lead from among the people**
- **They seek to support leaders and hold them to account**
- **They run the risk of resisting healthy change**

Effective Leadership needs good Governance

- **Effective Leadership** needs the wisdom, counsel and ultimately the support of a governance group to move a church toward growth and change. Governance validates and empowers but does not usually drive change
 - **Effective Leadership** needs to be connected to those who are listening collectively to God, to the church, to the community
 - **Effective Leadership** needs accountability and wise reflective feedback.
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Good Governance needs effective Leadership

- **Good Governance** needs effective leadership to move a church toward health and growth. While good governance will provide appropriate accountability to the identity, history and culture of the group, without effective leadership a church can become 'stuck'
 - **Good Governance** needs to listen to those that God has called into leadership to affirm, validate and support the shared vision that they often possess.
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5 ways Governing Elders empower Pastoral Leaders

- **Pray** for the pastoral leaders (for giftedness, courage, faith, love)
 - Engage the discussion of ministry **vision** – where we are going together and how are we going to get there
 - Work out a clear **position description** - expectations
 - Ensure **self care** for pastors and leaders - Sabbatical rhythms, support networks (mentor, coach, supervision, peer groups), budget for their professional growth
 - Facilitate careful and regular **reviews** including a governance self review with consistent group self regulation.
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5 ways Pastoral Leaders empower Governing Elders

- **Pray** for them (love and wisdom)
 - Engage the discussion of the congregation's **history, identity and values**
 - Communicate with them, **listen** to their reflections and listen with them to God and the congregation
 - Keep them on the **growing edge** - seminars and retreats, teamwork development, healthy church processes
 - Encourage regular **group development** - forming and checking a team covenant, teardrop discussion.
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Resource on web-site...

Healthy and Unhealthy Church Governance

UNHEALTHY APPROACHES TO ELDERSHIP and GOVERNANCE BY CHURCH BOARDS

1. **The Rubber Stamp Eldership** – mindless endorsement of every proposal from the pastor and ministry leaders; extreme “hands-off” passive approach.
2. **Gatekeepers** – suspicious, distrustful watchdogs, protecting the status quo, blocking pastoral or leadership initiatives.
3. **Keepers of the Peace** – highest goal is to keep everyone happy; peace at any price; often held hostage by “matriarchs and patriarchs”.
4. **Representative democracies** – see their primary function as representing “fairly” various groups (often factions) within the church; extreme emphasis on everyone having an equal voice on all issues.
5. **Micromanagers** – an extreme hands-on approach, seeking to direct the detailed operations of the church in every ministry area.

Resource on web-site... (p2)

HEALTHY APPROACHES TO ELDERSHIP and GOVERNANCE BY CHURCH BOARDS

1. **Establishing Direction, Policies and Priorities**

Policies function like the boundaries, goal posts and scoreboard on a sports field. They enable team members to know when they have stepped out of bounds, how much progress they have made and when they have kicked a goal. Key areas for establishing policies include:

- Church mission – purpose, vision, values and goals.
- Board function
- Board-Senior Pastor relationship

2. **Clearly Delegating Leadership**

The board empowers the pastor to lead the church forward.

- Calling a Pastor and appointing Key Governance Groups
- Senior pastor's position description and delegation
- Working with the Pastor to structure positions and appoint ministry leaders

3. **Monitoring Progress**

Leading the processes of reflecting on and discerning the direction of the church

- Spiritual health
- Ministry direction
- Financial integrity
- Pastoral performance

4. **Facilitating and communicating decisions**

Leading the church in its decision making processes.

Keeping consultation and communication channels clear.

Where does management fit in?

Where does management fit in?

- **LEADERSHIP - (DIRECTION)**
is about determining what needs to be done
- **GOVERNANCE - (PROCESS)**
is about ensuring this gets done in the right way
- **MANAGEMENT - (EXECUTION / FACILITATION)**
is about ensuring the job gets done

(Pete Davies calls these his 'rustic' definitions)

Every church needs leadership, governance and management, however...

- **This looks different in different churches - including different size churches!**
 - **Rarely does one group of people do all of these tasks well!**
 - **There is a natural default towards Management.**
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Governance check-up - 'Extremes' exercise

- 1. Fill out "Extremes" exercise individually**
 - 2. Share initial observations in your group**
 - 3. Reduce the areas to the top 5 work areas**
 - 4. Choose one of the areas and brainstorm some options to enhance this area**
 - 5. Allow another group to expand your list.**
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What about church size?

Two scenarios...

- **Church 1 (presently 50-60)**

- The Pastor has been there for 6 years

- The congregation doubled and then plateaued

- **Church 2 (presently 150-200)**

- The Pastor has been there for 12 years

- The congregation doubled and then plateaued

A church's functional style, its strengths and weaknesses and the roles of its lay and staff leaders will change dramatically as its size changes

Tim Keller

One of the most common reasons for
pastoral leadership mistakes is blindness to
the significance of church size

Tim Keller

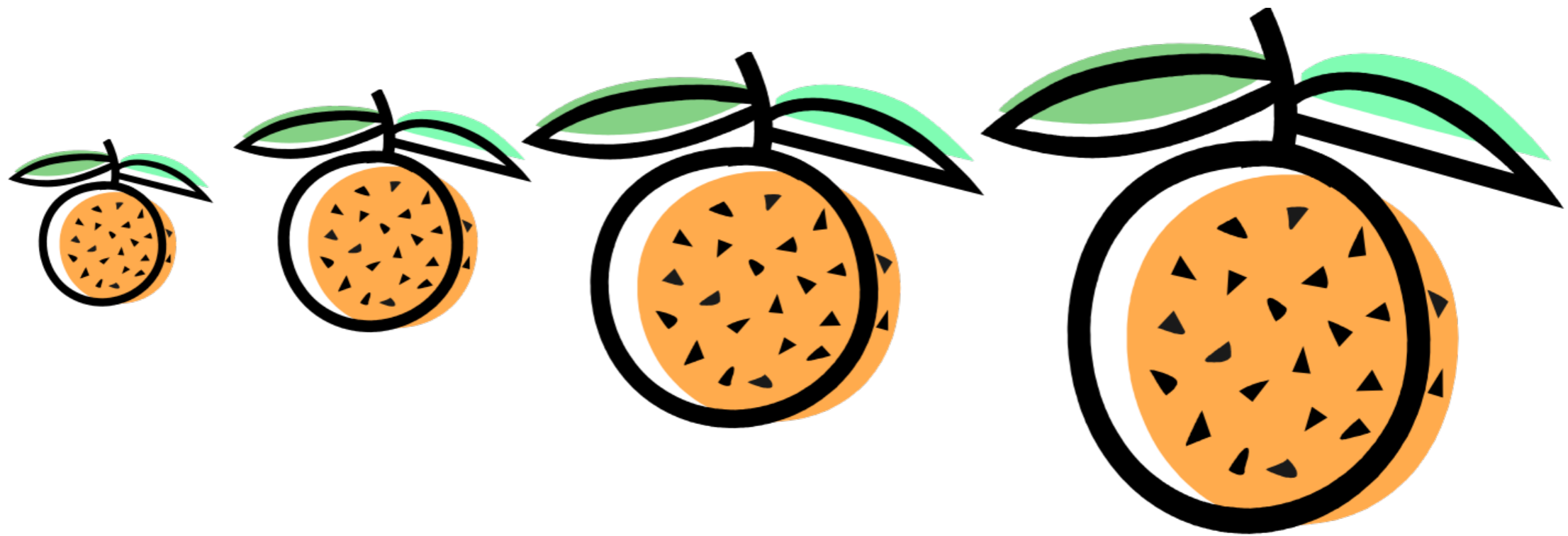
Church Sizes - Tim Keller:

- **Home Church (<40)**
 - **Small Church (50-200)**
 - **Medium Sized Church (200-450)**
 - **Large Church (400-800)**
 - **Very Large Church (1,000+)**
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Church Sizes - Arlin Rothauge:

- **Family Church/Home Church (50-60)**
 - **Pastoral Church (50-180)**
 - **Program Church (150-400)**
 - **Corporate Church (350+)**
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Congregational sizes - key concept



**The pathway to getting a grapefruit is not:
Cumquat – Mandarin – Orange – Grapefruit**

Family Church (<50-60)

- The church functions like an extended family or tribe - the group is held together by a shared history – storytelling and tradition is important
 - Communication is by word of mouth and information moves swiftly through the whole membership
 - Decisions are made informally by leading family members often patriarchs and matriarchs
 - Change is slow and only happens with the support of the whole membership.
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Family Church (<50-60)

Leadership

- Pastors in churches of this size are often bi-vocational or part-time, short term and somewhat peripheral to the church
 - They are often manipulated into a chaplaincy role and limited to liturgical leadership, pastoral care and preaching - they are certainly not considered to be change agents
 - Key lay leaders have significant relational power and may prefer not occupying formal roles.
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Pastoral Church (50-180)

- The church is one worshipping community, but not everyone knows each other
 - Communication is still informal, mostly word of mouth and relatively swift
 - The pastor is still primarily a shepherd and so at the centre of the church's identity and unity
 - A big attraction of this size of church is the sense of community.
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Pastoral Church (50-180)

Leadership

- The pastor is the central and primary leader of the church
 - The church is usually open to change and the pastor's leadership is central to growth
 - The pastor usually works closely with a group of key leaders who manage the congregation together
 - As the church grows, delegation and leadership development become a priority.
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Program Church (150-400)

- The church is now a multi-cell entity and so is more attractive to some but less attractive to others
 - The group is held together by a shared mission and vision
 - The church develops a range of programs to meet needs in both the church and the wider community
 - People find their identity in their areas of ministry.
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Program Church (150-400)

Leadership

- There is the beginning of a multiple-staff team. Often an Administrator and then Associate Pastors are appointed
 - The Senior Pastor's role changes to that of team leader, equipping, mentoring and supervising
 - The Senior Pastor provides vision and direction
 - The Church Leadership Team moves from management to governance. Ministry Leaders create teams for various church programs.
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Corporate Church (350+)

- A church of this size is a large scale organisation with a complex range of programs
 - The church is held together by excellent worship, music and public preaching
 - The roles of individual staff members become increasingly specialised
 - The whole organisation has a sense of momentum and direction
 - Decisions happen from the “top-down” from staff and lay leaders.
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Corporate Church (350+)

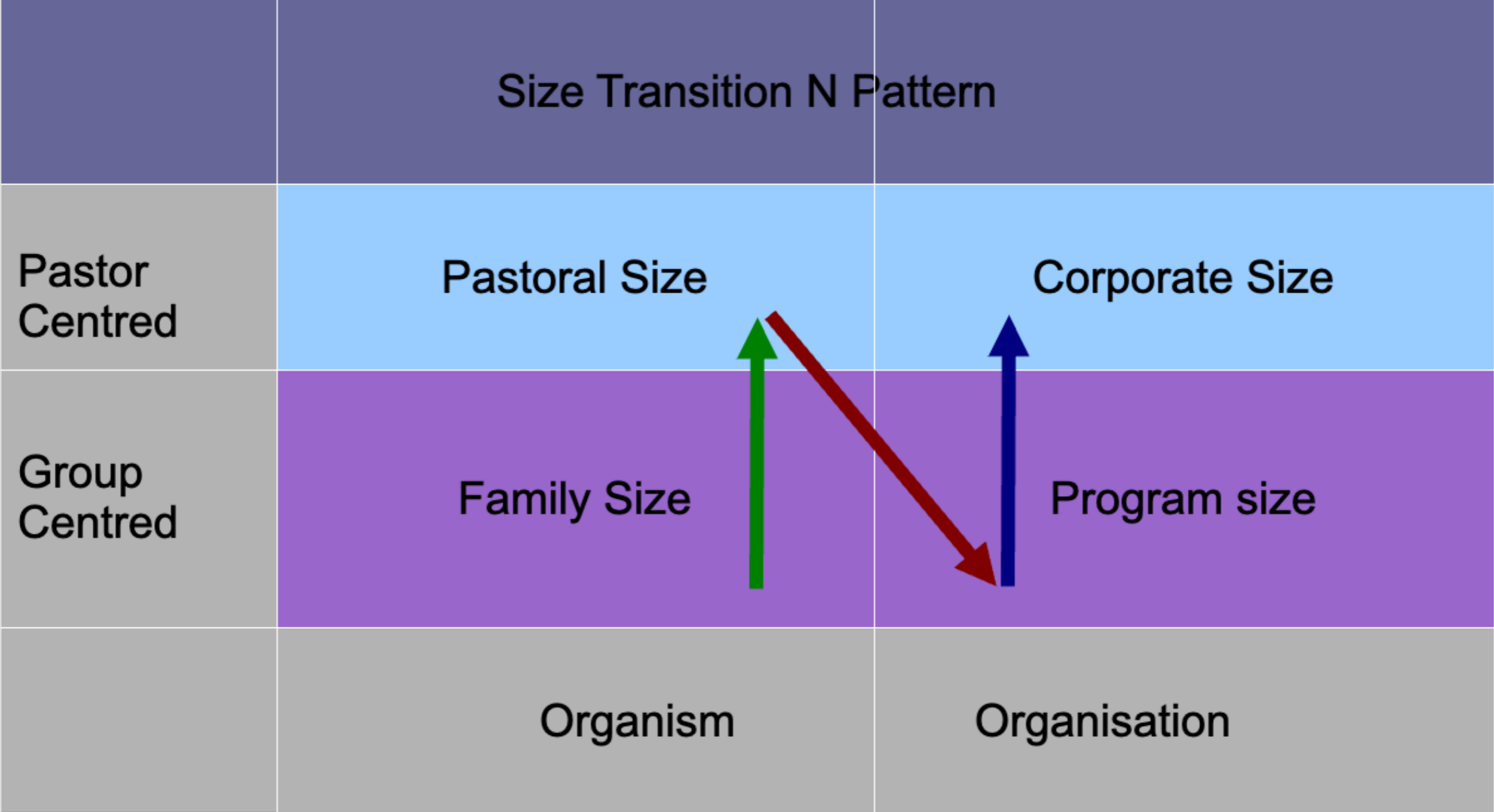
Leadership

- The Senior Pastor in a corporate church often has a high public profile
 - He/she concentrates on the public ministries of the church and the communicating of vision
 - Lay leaders have a well developed sense of church governance
 - There is wide involvement in a complex range of age, stage, and interest-based ministries.
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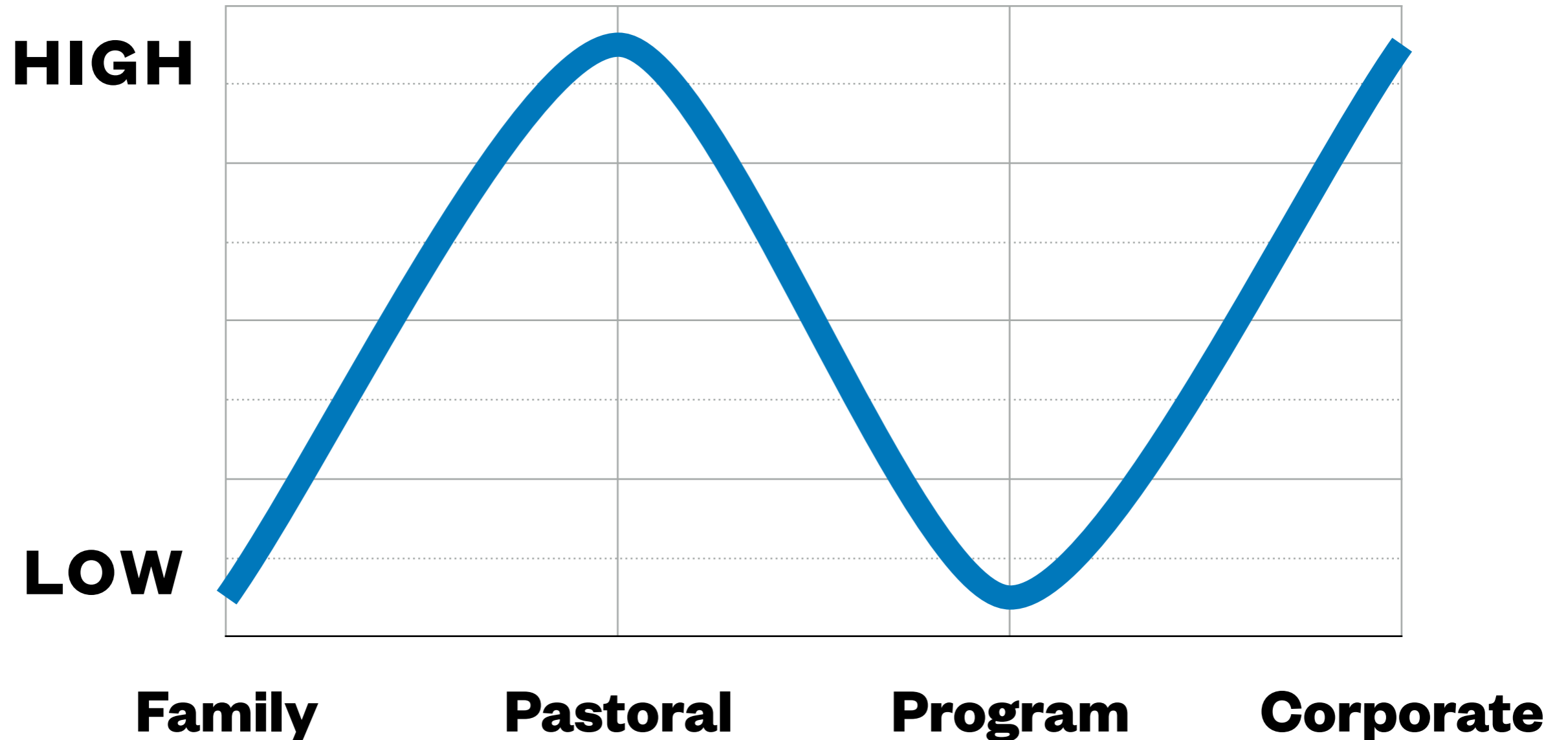
Clergy may be set up for failure when they move from effective work in one congregation and begin a new pastorate in a different-sized congregation...

...Few denominations pay attention to this transition in context of ministry; thus they fail to prepare their clergy adequately for a new style of pastoral leadership

Growth process



The pastoral visibility 'see-saw'



Three Emerging Tensions in Congregation Size Transition

- **The role of the pastor**
 - **The way communication happens**
 - **The way decisions are made**
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Congregational sizes

- **Churches must transition to new stages.**
 - ***It doesn't happen naturally and it can't happen without change!***
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Workshop - church size transitions

- Choose one of the churches represented in your group
- What size is the church (family, pastoral, program, corporate)?
- List some of the necessary changes to break through the ceiling to the next size up.

Consider:

- The role of the pastor
- The way communication happens
- The way decisions are made

Are there positive alternatives to a single church transitioning to become bigger?

We have been thinking about the importance of church size dynamics when a church is trying to grow bigger. In what sense is church size also an important factor when a church declines ?

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Extension - examples of breaking through the ceiling...

What does my **Family Church** need to do to break through the 50-60 persons ceiling and climb towards 100+?

How the Family Church grows

The Family Church grows through attraction to its warmth, relationships and people. However it can also be a personal relationship to the pastor that is the attraction for a new person.

The pastor can begin two or three new ministries, classes or groups as long as he/she has secured the support of one informal leader. Together they can begin new activities that will bring many new people into the church.

Shifts for a Family Church to break through the ceiling

1. Multiplication Options

- a willingness to question the unwritten policy that every member must have a face to face relationship with every other member
 - a move past the “This church is getting too big” or “too impersonal” complaints
 - a genuine welcoming of newcomers
 - more than one Sunday service, or putting more emphasis on small group ministry.
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Shifts for a Family Church to break through the ceiling

2. a willingness to pay the cost of an additional primary ministry staff person

- a full-time pastor cannot personally shepherd more than about 150–200 people without beginning to feel burned out
 - staffing must be for growth.
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Shifts for a Family Church to break through the ceiling

3. A willingness to let power shift away from the laity and even lay leaders to the staff

- new approaches to decision making are needed.
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Shifts for a Family Church to break through the ceiling

4. a willingness to become more formal and deliberate in assimilation and communication

- the church can no longer assume these functions will happen naturally or without planning
 - Communications have to become more deliberate instead of by word of mouth alone
 - Newcomers will have to be integrated more intentionally.
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Shifts for a Family Church to break through the ceiling

5. the willingness of both pastor and people for the pastor to do less shepherding and lead more

Shifts for a Family Church to break through the ceiling

6. Consider moving to a new space and facilities

- Will such a move be crucial to breaking the next growth barrier? A: sometimes, but not usually
 - Often what is needed is planning multiple worship services, staffing for growth, and adjusting attitudes and expectations in preparation for a new size culture.
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What does my **Program Church** need to do to break through the 300-350 persons ceiling and climb above 400?

How the Program Church grows

The Program Church grows through a “front door” approach. The key to its growth is the varied program of activities it offers, and what happens in the worship services – the quality of the preaching, the transcendence of the worship experience and so on.

Shifts for a Program Church to break through the ceiling

1. Multiplication Options

- multiple Sunday Services
 - a great small groups program
 - most people in small groups.
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Shifts for a Program Church to break through the ceiling

2. a growing staff team

- more specialized staff
 - staff who are able to attract and supervise others.
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Shifts for a Program Church to break through the ceiling

3. shifting decision-making power

- up to this size the emphasis was on decision making being increasingly done by the board, but now decision making must be increasingly delegated to the staff.
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Shifts for a Program Church to break through the ceiling

4. a willingness to become more formal and deliberate in assimilation and communication

- Assimilation, discipling and incorporation of newcomers must become even more well organised, highly detailed and supervised.
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Shifts for a Program Church to break through the ceiling

5. adapting the Senior Pastor's role

- The SP becomes even less accessible to do individual shepherding and concentrates even more on preaching, large group teaching, vision casting and strategising.
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