



Sustainable Leadership Model as a Solution to Seasonal Church Services

Jhonderic Molle

Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Manado

Author Correspondence : jhondericmolle@gmail.com

Abstract. Contemporary church ministry is often trapped in a seasonal pattern, with increased activity only during major events like Christmas and Easter, while stagnating at other times. This phenomenon indicates a fundamental problem in leadership patterns that are not poverty-oriented. This article analyzes the roots of seasonal church ministry through a qualitative-descriptive approach and theological reflection based on Osmer's framework. Literature reviews by Barna, Maxwell, Banks & Ledbetter, as well as the leadership principles of Jesus Christ, show that seasonality is eliminated by reactive leadership that lacks a long-term vision, minimal spiritual training, and a weak ministerial cadre system. As a solution, this article offers a sustainable leadership model that emphasizes a year-round discipleship vision, ministerial training and regeneration, systematic ministry evaluation, and the spiritual example of leaders. This model is believed to help churches experience stable growth, establish a consistent ministry rhythm, and present relevant evidence to the world. Thus, sustainable leadership is a strategic and theological approach to addressing seasonal ministry and strengthening the mission of the church today.

Keywords Christian Leadership, Church Ministry, Sustainable Leadership, Ministry Management, Discipleship, Misio Dei, Seasonal Ministry.

I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of seasonal church ministry is a real challenge in today's church life. Many churches exhibit very high levels of ministry activity during major events like Christmas, Easter, or anniversaries, but experience a decline in participation and service initiatives after the celebrations are over. This pattern demonstrates a tendency for ministry to focus on moments rather than mission, and on events rather than processes. As a result, churches often lose continuity in ongoing ministry development, discipleship, and development. (Barna, 1997).

This phenomenon is inseparable from leadership patterns that are not yet oriented toward sustainability. George Barna emphasized that many church leaders today are trapped in "event-driven ministry," a ministry that focuses on short-term activities rather than building a long-term vision that grows over time (Barna, 1997). This results in the church often being ceremonially

active, but missionarily passive John C. Maxwell (1993) also states that true leaders are those who are able to move others towards sustainable change, not just temporary achievement. Thus, the seasonal service crisis is actually rooted in a crisis of ongoing leadership, namely the inability of leaders to cultivate a system of service that is continuously alive. The function of effective leadership should be directly related to the social situation in group life, which implies that every leader is within, not outside, the existing social situation. This means that the function of leadership is a social phenomenon because it must be realized in the interaction between individuals within the social situation of a group (Jermia Djadi, 2009).

From a theological perspective, true Christian leadership is sustainable leadership because it is rooted in God's mission (*Missio Dei*). Robert Banks dan Bernice Ledbetter (2004) emphasizes that Christian leadership is not centered on instant results, but rather on the long-term faithfulness and transformation God works through His leaders. The example of Jesus Christ is the foundation of this model. Jesus led not only through great teachings or miracles in a particular moment, but through a consistent process of developing disciples day after day (John 17:4; Matthew 28:19-20). Christ's leadership demonstrates that sustainable ministry is born from a commitment to the process, not from a reliance on momentum. Good Christian leadership is leadership that is ready to walk (in step) in God's light, not asking God to walk in our desired path. Being in step means we are willing to accept God's leadership, God's plan, and God's provisions in that path, by setting aside our ego, which means listening to God's voice rather than our own (Rita, 2019).

In the context of today's church, it is crucial to reformulate a sustainable and contextual leadership model that emphasizes not only celebration but also development. Sustainable leadership is a leadership pattern that is capable of maintaining mission continuity, ministerial regeneration, and the ongoing formation of the congregation's spiritual character (Greenleaf, 1997). Therefore, this article aims to analyze the causes of the emergence of seasonal church ministries and propose a sustainable leadership model as a theological and practical solution for the church today. This study integrates Christian leadership principles, ministry management theory, and contextual reflection on church dynamics, thereby contributing to the development of faithful, dynamic, and sustainable church ministries in light of God's mission.

II. METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with theological reflection methods. This approach was chosen because the research is not intended to measure quantitatively, but rather to understand and interpret the phenomenon of seasonal church ministry in light of the principles of sustainable Christian leadership.

According to Creswell (2013), Qualitative research focuses on understanding the meaning and

dynamics of a phenomenon in a real-life context. In this study, the author reflects on the dynamics of contemporary church leadership, as reflected in service patterns that tend to be active only during major events such as Christmas and Easter.

A theological reflective approach is used as described by Osmer (2008) which includes four stages: first, descriptive-empirical describes what happens in the practice of church leadership and ministry in the present; second, Interpretive, which interprets the causes of and the factors that influence the emergence of seasonal ministry; third, Normative, which assesses these phenomena in light of the Bible and the principles of leadership theology; fourth, Pragmatic, which offers practical steps for the development of sustainable leadership and Reviewing Leadership (Banks & Ledbetter, 2004). This literature review serves to construct a conceptual framework for effective and sustainable Christian leadership in the context of the church.

The data and reflections used in this study are sourced from general phenomenological observations of church life and theological analysis of the principles of Jesus Christ's leadership as revealed in the Gospels (Matthew 20:26-28; John 17:4). Through this approach, the study seeks to produce a theological synthesis that is relevant to the church today in developing a consistent and sustainable leadership model.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the Phenomenon of Seasonal Church Ministry

In the context of today's church ministry, it is often found that ministry activities experience a significant increase ahead of major celebrations such as Christmas and Easter. During these times, almost all of the church's resources are mobilized, from ministry personnel and budgets to program creativity. However, after the celebrations are over, church activities decline again and even stagnate. This phenomenon indicates a pattern of seasonal ministry, where ministry depends on momentum rather than a continuous mission..

Seasonal ministry indicates an incomplete understanding of the essence of the church as the living and dynamic body of Christ throughout time (Ephesians 4:11-13). The church is called not only to celebrate the work of Christ, but to live it out and continue it every day. When ministry focuses only on celebration, the church's mission becomes fragmented, and the discipleship of the congregation loses its continuity. In Barna (1997) terms, this phenomenon is the result of event driven ministry, which is ministry driven by events rather than by a spiritual vision rooted in the Word of God.

In addition, seasonal ministry often arises due to a lack of training and regeneration of ministers. The church prepares more "committees" than "spiritual leaders," so that the energy of ministry is absorbed in making programs successful, rather than in building the character of

ministers. As a result, the church appears active liturgically but passive missionarily, as expressed in *Evangelii Gaudium* (Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in the Modern World, 2013), which emphasizes the church as an active, not passive, missionary community. Pope Francis criticizes churches that are too focused on internal activities without external missionary involvement. He states that the church must "go forth" for evangelization, not just maintain liturgy.

Root of the Problem: Unsustainable Leadership

The problem of seasonal ministry is actually rooted in a model of unsustainable leadership. Many church leaders lead reactively when there are urgent needs or major events without having a long term vision for the direction of the congregation's development and growth. John C. Maxwell (1993) asserts that true leadership begins with the ability to lead oneself consistently before leading others. Without a personal commitment to spiritual growth and a clear vision for ministry, a leader tends to direct the church only toward temporary activities.

Unsustainable leadership is also often characterized by weak succession systems and a lack of ministry evaluation. Churches rarely follow up on new ministers, lack regular mentoring mechanisms, and are deficient in routine training. Greenleaf (1977), through the concept of servant leadership, emphasizes that true leaders not only manage but also shape the next generation of ministers. Thus, when churches fail to instill a spirit of continuous service, they are building a fragile culture of ministry.

From a theological perspective, unsustainable leadership patterns contradict the example of Jesus Christ. Jesus was not only present at major events such as miracles or public teachings, but He also maintained constant mentoring relationships with His disciples. He instilled values, corrected character, and nurtured their faith in a process (Mark 3:13-15; John 21:15-17). This model shows that true leadership is inclusive, relational, and sustainable.

Sustainable Leadership Model as a Solution

Sustainable leadership is a leadership model that not only emphasizes short-term achievements but also focuses on nurturing and sustaining ministry. Banks dan Ledbetter (2004) state that Christian leadership must be rooted in the ongoing relationship between faith, community, and God's calling throughout history. In the context of the church, this means that leadership must maintain a consistent rhythm of service that does not depend on seasonal celebrations.

There are several key principles of the sustainable leadership model that can be solutions for the church today:

- Long-term vision

Church leaders need to establish a vision for ministry that transcends the liturgical calendar. This vision should focus on discipleship and the spiritual growth of the congregation throughout the year (Matthew 28:19-20), so that the church not only celebrates rituals but also forms disciples of Christ who are active in the world mission. This emphasizes that the vision for ministry must be holistic, involving continuous discipleship (such as teaching, prayer, and social service) outside of the annual liturgical cycle, to ensure the spiritual growth of the congregation. Example: Each month, the congregation participates in "Discipleship Sunday," which includes workshops on Christian ethics and local charity projects, such as helping the homeless, which continue throughout the year without being tied to liturgical holidays. Congregations can also be involved in small groups that meet regularly for spiritual discussion, mentoring, and mission activities. Example: The church holds quarterly "Discipleship Retreats" outside of the liturgical season, followed by long-term projects such as educating children in poor communities, ensuring spiritual growth through practical action. Another thing is the need for year round social service, such as mental health or environmental education programs.

➤ Continuous training and regeneration

Sustainable leadership emphasizes regeneration. Every leader is called to train others to be able to continue the ministry (2 Timothy 2:2). The church needs to establish a system of regular mentoring and training for ministers and church members, so that leadership does not depend on a single individual, but on a community that continues to grow and is ready to face future challenges. This emphasizes that leadership regeneration through mentoring prevents stagnation and ensures the continuity of church ministry.

➤ Systematic and reflective ministry management

Sustainable leadership combines spirituality with strategic planning. The church needs to conduct periodic evaluations of programs and resources to remain relevant and effective, so that it can adapt to social changes and the needs of the congregation without losing the core of its faith. This can help the church to dynamically integrate prayer and spiritual reflection with strategic analysis of its desires. For example, the church conducts quarterly or annual evaluations of programs such as Bible classes or social activities, using a combination of congregational oversight and prayerful reflection. Example: The leadership team collects data on participation and impact (e.g., how many people are involved in social ministry), then adjusts the program based on feedback, while praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, as recommended in the Protestant church model in Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Church* (1995).

➤ Leaders as role models and spiritual mentors

Leaders must be able to direct others to follow them without coercion, whether through the lure of rewards or threats, but because of the authority and righteous and exemplary lifestyle of the

leader. So here it is clear that leadership is character, not , because of appearance, style, or technique (Fernando 2018). Leaders not only organize activities, but also build the character and spiritual motivation of other servants. Like Christ who served first, church leaders are called to lead with a servant's heart (Mark 10:45), thereby creating a culture of service that inspires the congregation to follow Christ's example in their daily lives. For example, leaders hold regular meetings where they share personal experiences of service, such as helping the poor and other examples that focus on monitoring spiritual guidance. This model requires a paradigm shift from being an "event leader" to a "process leader." By implementing a sustainable leadership model, the church can maintain continuity of service, foster the spiritual maturity of the congregation, and present a consistent testimony to the world. As Barna (1997) emphasized, "a living church is not a church that is busy with many activities, but a church that nurtures people who continue to grow in Christ." Therefore, sustainable leadership is not only about managerial effectiveness, but also faithfulness to God's call to serve without ceasing.

IV. CONCLUSION

Seasonal church ministry reflects a fundamental problem in leadership patterns that are not yet oriented toward sustainability. High church activity only during major moments such as Christmas and Easter shows that many church leaders and ministers do not yet have a focused and consistent long-term vision for ministry. In this context, the church appears ceremonially active but loses the rhythm of spiritual growth and continuity of mission throughout the year. Reflection shows that the root of the problem of seasonal ministry lies in a reactive, rather than reflective, leadership pattern; one that focuses on momentary activities rather than ongoing discipleship. This type of leadership is not in line with the leadership model of Jesus Christ, who exemplified faithfulness, discipline, and commitment to ongoing discipleship. Christ's example shows that true leadership is sustainable because it is rooted in God's mission (*Missio Dei*) that continues throughout history. Thus, today's church needs a model of sustainable leadership that integrates spirituality, long-term vision, and a consistent training system. Christian leaders are called not only to make big events successful, but to continuously build the faith and character of the congregation.

Sustainable leadership directs the church to move from a culture of "momentum" to a culture of "discipleship," from temporary activities to a continuously growing spiritual life. In practical terms, implementing a sustainable leadership model requires several steps:

- ✓ Establishing an annual vision and mission for ministry that is rooted in God's calling, not in traditional celebrations.
- ✓ Developing a system for training and regenerating ministers so that the spirit of ministry is maintained across generations.

- ✓ Conducting periodic evaluations and reflections to ensure that ministry remains relevant to the social context of the congregation.
- ✓ Encouraging church leaders to be spiritual role models who lead through service, not just supervision.

By applying these principles, the church can maintain continuity of service and nurture the overall spiritual life of the congregation. Sustainable leadership is not just an organizational strategy, but a tangible expression of obedience to Christ who calls the church to serve without ceasing (1 Corinthians 15:58). Through faithful and consistent leadership, the church can be a living witness to the world not only on holidays, but at all times and in all circumstances.

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