

Millennial Leadership People, Participation, and Plurality

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Abstract

This study attempts to find and describe a leadership style for a church organization that matches the needs and expectations of the generation called “Millennials.” Lessons are drawn from the workplace where employing entities have had to adapt to the strengths, weaknesses, demands and expectations of a generation that carries particular cultural trends. Leaning on research from the employment context and adding insights from two major theories on leadership, conclusions are drawn on how to lead, involve, engage and include Millennials in the life of the church. Conclusions point in the direction of a “softer” and more “feminine” approach to leadership, emphasizing collaboration, consensus, cooperation, accepting personal autonomy and participation – displaying modesty and humility.

Prelude

Traveling and observing church life on different continents, particularly in different European settings, and watching delegates from around the world speaking and voting at General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church meetings, this writer has noted that the leadership styles in church entities tend to reflect local cultural norms and political structures. In societies with a history of strong hierarchical structures, church members often seem to expect strong and somewhat dominant leaders, whereas members in highly democratic communities with a tradition of collaboration, cooperation and consensus, expect a softer leadership style and want to be heard and to participate in decision-making. One example of this cultural correlation can be seen in the Seventh-day Adventist representatives from the Nordic countries’ (among others) stance on the issue of women’s ordination; feeling at liberty to

question the relevance and correctness of the votes in General Conference meetings; and assertively settling for alternative practises (cf. Scandinavian Unions of the SDA Church 2018). In *The return of the Vikings* (2018) Shern and Jeberg describe the general Nordic leadership style as emphasising collaboration, consensus, cooperation, accepting personal autonomy and participation – emphasising a feminine orientation; displaying modesty and humility (Shern and Jeberg 2018, 36–37). The pattern of strong individuals working in a diverse environment and still seeking cooperation might partly explain the actions of the Nordic unions in the debate over the ordination of women; one expects to be heard and be given some space. Variance, freedom to act on local convictions and some autonomy within the larger structure are expected. This behaviour might seem provocative and disloyal in the eyes of representatives from other cultures. It is one example of how church leadership tends to reflect leadership styles in society at large.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on what could be appropriate leadership styles in the western Seventh-day Adventist Church (hereafter SDA) now that the common culture has passed through postmodernism and is moving into post-postmodern times – an era still looking for a name.¹ A particular focus will be on the Millennial generation (born 1980–2000) which is setting cultural trends, tends to live by particular values, priorities and characteristics, and therefore also set expectations to leadership styles. Now that Millennials are more than one third of the workforce and many are moving into leadership and management, some new trends are observable in their leadership style and what they want from their leaders. In the following we will look at Millennials as they operate in the workplace and society in general and see if

¹ The terminologies used for describing what might replace postmodernism are multiple. A major anthology introducing several of these varying attempts is *Supplanting the Postmodern* edited by David Stavris and Nicholas Rudrum (2015). A variety of critics writing from perspectives of literature, art, architecture, movies, politics or other, name the cultural trends that seems to replace postmodernism as “Remodernism” (Childish and Thomson 2000; cf. Evans 2000), “Altermodernism” (Bourriaud 2009), “Metamodernism” (Vermeulen and den Akker 2010), “Renewalism” (Toth and Brooks 2007), “Performatism” (Eshelman 2008), “Hypermodernism” (Lipovetsky 2005), “Digimodernism” (Kirby 2009) and “Auto-modernism” (Samuels 2007). More terms can be added from other thinkers: Geo-modernism, Neo-modernism, Post-postmodern.

there are lessons to be learned for how the Church might incorporate them in its community and operation. There are plenty of primary sources describing trends among Millennials and there seems to be a strong consensus about general trends in that population segment.² As the primary purpose of this paper is reflection, there will only be limited reference to primary sources, and more interaction with secondary sources and authors who try to draw lessons from current research.

In the Western world the SDA young people tend to leave church attendance in their 20s. While Millennials are described as being more spiritual than their parent generation (McFarland and Jimenez 2017, 53, 58), churches are not able to connect to their spirituality³ and keep them involved in their life and ministry. The church needs to gain more understanding of how Millennials think, prioritise and live. Through this understanding, the Church might be able to form leadership styles and create structures that will engage.

At the risk of simplification, Millennials in the so-called “western world” are described as one. There are differences between young people in Europe, Australia and North America, but at the same time common trends are significant.⁴ It should be noted that there is a lot more published on Millennials in America than in Europe, particularly about their relationship to the Church.

This paper has three sections: (1) Summarise lessons from research on Millennials in society and the workplace. (2) Relate these observations to leadership theories. (3) Make an attempt to draw lessons from 1 and 2 and relate them to leadership in a church setting.

² The primary sources for the study of Millennials come in public statistical information, and in qualitative and quantitative studies. Only a few random samples can be mentioned here as a taster: “YouGov 2017 Survey on Religion;” “Office for National Statistics – Religion;” “What Is Your Religion?;” Suh and Russel 2015; Niemäla 2015; Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons 2010; Mäkinen et al. 2018; McClure 2016.

³ The challenge the church has in reaching Millennials was clearly demonstrated in a large study by “The Barna Institute” done on in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists; published in Jenkin and Martin 2014 a.

⁴ This similarity is evident in the primary sources. As this paper is of a more reflective kind, the demonstration of this fact will be left for another article. See also footnote 1.

2. Some Trends and Characteristics about Millennials in the Workplace

The following summary of the characteristics of Millennials by Anne P. Horan can prove helpful as an introduction to Millennials:

While millennials are considered coddled, conditioned to feel special while expecting affirmation for just participating, they are also resourceful, hard-working, service-oriented, technologically savvy, and ready to change the world This unique generation is at risk from aftershocks of indulgent parenting, unrealistic perspectives of adulthood portrayed through media, education preparing them to be students rather than workers, a cynicism fostered through postmodernism, and a culture of convenience over commitment Unlike prior generations, millennials have too many choices leading to inner conflict and indecisiveness These characteristics confound spiritual formation and prompt uncertainty and stress. (Horan 2017, 58–59)

The millennial generation comes with significant strengths. They are better educated than any generation before (McFarland and Jimenez 2017, 17), at least in the number of higher degrees granted (Hobart and Sendek 2014, 69). They are more ethnically diverse and are comfortable with diversity (ibid., 91). They bring to the table some positive social habits like teamwork, achievement, modesty and good conduct. In the words of William Strass: “Over the next decade, the millennial Generation will entirely recast the image of youth from downbeat and alienated to upbeat and engaged – with potentially seismic consequences for America.” (Pontier and DeVries 2017, 88)

In a similar fashion McFarland and Jimenez summarise the positive characteristics of Millennials to be huge in numbers, diverse in terms of ethnicity and belief, optimistic about changing the world, seeking for meaning in work and free time, setting realistic goals, relationally oriented, and wanting change for the better (McFarland and Jimenez 2017, 106).

The search for meaning and making a contribution also comes at a cost. Carolyn Wason expresses this in *Millennials and the Mission of God* (2017) where she describes the tendency of the Millennial to feel guilt and shame for everything that is not optimal. She says about herself: “I am twenty-six-years-old and I’m already tired” (cited in Bush and Wason 2017, 104).

A major work on Millennials in the workplace was done by Hobard and Sendek published in *Gen Y Now – Millennials and the Evolution of Leadership*

(Hobart and Sendek 2014) and they note several characteristics of that generation. Firstly, Millennials look for meaning in the workplace (ibid., 110). They are not happy to just “have a job” and do it for the income, but they need to see how their work makes a difference. They ask not only “what” about work but also the “why” (ibid., 17). Their view of work is that it is part of life and like all other aspects of existence it has to carry meaning. This is also confirmed by Paul Sohn, leadership coach, in *Quarter Life Calling* (2017) where he describes his own experience as a Millennial desperately searching for meaning beyond the consumerism of western societies (Sohn 2017, 1–10). The Millennials’ search for meaning is also demonstrated in their willingness to do volunteer work and seek employment in NGOs at a rate that goes far beyond that of their parents’ generation (Hobart and Sendek 2014, 54).

A second aspect of the search for meaning is that Millennials want to integrate all of life so that personal interests, family, hobbies, social life and work all have their proper part (ibid., 21). The aim of finding purpose, meaning and balance is often made possible through flexible working hours and for tasks to be done more or less anytime and anywhere, thanks to modern technology and media (ibid., 38–39).

Yet another aspect of the search for meaning is the expectation of possibilities for personal growth. Work has to be interesting and challenging and give opportunity for personal development (ibid., 51–52). If these criteria for meaning are not present in his or her environment, the Millennial will simply move on. There is little loyalty to the workplace, something that has become evident from the rapid turnover in employment for that generation. Millennials are opportunists and American research show that 70% of all Millennials will have changed jobs within the two first years of employment. Companies experience twice as high turnover of Millennial employees as compared with older generations (Pontier and DeVries 2017, 154).

Although Millennials often are individualistic and seek fulfilment for their life, they are not narcissistic, nor driven by egoism. They just want to be in a context where things are meaningful and they can have a sense of “changing the world” (ibid., 103–105). Bringing together the fact that Millennials are well educated and want to make a contribution makes collaboration and teamwork the natural work environment; all have a contribution to make (Hobart and Sendek 2015, 56).

Millennials are looking for relationships in the workplace. They want to be part of a team and expect to be heard and have frequent feedback in open communication (ibid., 17). Leaders of Millennials should try to create a “small company feel” even in a large organisation to facilitate for this need and mentality (ibid., 86). The sense of relationship in closeness to others and frequent communication is a high priority, a need and an expectation.

A Finnish qualitative study from 2018 of thirteen preservice teachers confirms the same priorities and values in a European setting. Four researchers connected to the University of Tampere found the following three areas the main concerns of younger teachers-to-be: The experience of time, the experience of reciprocal participation, and the experience of meaningfulness. The following quote relates to “the experience of time:”

The themes of possessing, investing, wasting and budgeting time were identified as primary issues in the data. Interviewees tended to consciously allocate time resources to their studies, work, families, hobbies and other activities and to schedule their lives with high efficacy and flexibility. (Mäkinen et al. 2018, 8)

The researchers concluded the following with a view to “the experience of reciprocal participation:”

Participants’ prior pedagogical knowledge was affected by their experience of the school as a social environment involving interpersonal relationships. While they expected teaching and learning to be a collaborative enterprise, many of them came into conflict with the locally situated and individualistic working culture around the triad of the STEP [= Secondary Teacher Educational Programme]. (Ibid., 9)

Millennial preservice teachers expected high levels of communication and clarity around expectations, tasks and other issues related to their work. They also expected to be included in the thought processes of the teaching team. They were not afraid to express anger or dissatisfaction when such expectations were not met (ibid., 10).

On the issue of “meaning” the researchers noted that

The interviewees presented themselves as people looking for value in every area of their lives, including their studies. They therefore expected the STEP to reveal the connections between their personal experiences, required tasks and real-life professional competencies. (Ibid., 11)

From the findings so far, six points of particular interest for a church setting can be highlighted:

- (1) Millennials want to find meaning in what they do – both in their private sphere and in their work. They are a generation that “want to change the world” and are willing to make sacrifices for a cause.
- (2) Millennials expect to be heard, know they have a contribution to make and want to be part of a team.
- (3) Millennials expect their work environment to leave room for authenticity and autonomous action. With an individualistic attitude Millennials expect acceptance. One belongs to the team to a large extent on one’s own terms.
- (4) A work environment needs to give opportunities for flexibility and growth. Together with the importance of meaning, these priorities count for more than the making of money (Hesselbein 2014, 6).
- (5) Millennials tend to be loyal to certain values and causes, but not to organizations and institutions. As noted above they tend to move on when better opportunities come along.
- (6) Social Media leads many (particularly younger) Millennials to a spontaneous lifestyle with an emphasis on personal relevance and a life organized around events rather than set routines (Twenge 2017)⁵.

How these different factors affect Millennials relationship to the Church will be discussed in the third section.

3. Two Leadership Models Relevant for Millennials

Two leadership theories that correspond to the expectations of Millennials can be mentioned here: The “Servant Leadership” model introduced by Robert K. Greenleaf in his two volumes (Greenleaf and Vaill 1998; Greenleaf 1977) and

⁵ The effects of social Media on youth thought and behaviour is discussed throughout this volume.

the later emphasis on vulnerability, humility and collaboration presented by Brené Brown in her latest book *Dare to Lead* (2018).

Greenleaf, executive officer at AT&T, presented his theories on “Servant Leadership” for the first time as early as the 1970s. It is interesting to note that more than forty years later several authors mention this model as fitting for the Millennial culture. Having studied three generational cohorts, Barbuto and Gottfredsson suggested that “servant leadership is likely the optimal leadership style for creating an organization rich in human capital development and for making an organization a preferred workplace for the Millennial generation” (Barbuto and Gottfredson 2016, 59). Robert Vecchiotti, writing on how current leadership styles have been formed largely by feminine values and priorities, notes that “The practice of servant leadership is having a resurgence prompting the question: Is the servant leadership model first proposed by Robert Greenleaf in a 1970 pamphlet ... the best fit for the Millennial cohort?” (Vecchiotti 2018, 43) The suggested answer is yes. A third example comes from the research done by Balda and Mora (2011) who, having gone through key characteristics of Millennials and their role in the workplace, mention the relevance of “transformational leadership” and connect this to Greenleaf’s theories. “Servant leadership fits within this broader understanding of the relationship between leaders and followers, looking at follower well-being and its relationship to overall performance” (Balda and Mora 2011, 19). Reflecting on the Millennial values of relationships, collaboration, communication and the common good, Balda and Mora suggest a slight twist in the name of the theory; stating that “service leader” might be an even better term than “servant leader.” (Ibid., 21)

The essence of Robert Greenleaf’s servant leadership theory is well summarised in the early pages of his first volume:

The servant-leader is servant first ... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions ... The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.

The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served.

The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as

persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (Greenleaf 1977, 13–14)

The emphasis on “softer” values in leadership are also displayed in Brené Brown’s recent volume *Dare to Lead* (2018).⁶ Central to her theory is that the way leaders respond to their fear of failure or rejection can be the greatest barrier to effective leadership. If leaders choose to put on an “armour” of protection rather than being vulnerable, relational and communicating openly, true leadership and personal development cannot happen. Brown lists a number of ways in which leaders put on armours of protection, power, authority and hierarchy rather than seeking understanding, collaboration and vulnerability through communication (Brown 2018, 76–77). It is the courage to be vulnerable that creates the type of atmosphere Millennials appreciate in the workplace; openness, recognition of one’s own shortcomings, the need for team work and collaboration, and authenticity in communication. The leader becomes more of a facilitator than a boss.

Arguing along the same lines as Brown, Thomas Maier et al. suggest the following preference among Millennials for leadership style:

Findings indicated Millennials value leaders that are more orientated toward people rather than task and organizational mission. In terms of value-centred leadership competencies, findings indicated Millennials place a higher degree of importance on value-centered leaders that are inclusive, collaborative and committed. (Maier et al. n. d., 382)⁷

Some would argue that the leadership style relevant for Millennials carries more “feminine” values whereas the leadership style coming out of the industrial revolution tended to carry the more masculine values of productivity, one-sided focus and hierarchical structures. Robert Vecchiotti describes this shift in “Contemporary Leadership: The Perspective of a Practitioner” (2018),

⁶ Brené Brown is research professor at the University of Houston, famous for her research on vulnerability and the 5th most viewed TED Talk ever.

⁷ See also Seel 2018, 142, and Bush and Wason 2017, 15.

and states that “new collaboration and teamwork, work-life balance, and continuous feedback and learning are added considerations” (Vecchiotti 2018, 40) in this development. Based on research he notes that

Many women leaders focus on employees and their development. They are willing to say ‘I do not know the answer.’ They are willing to focus on the long term and the short term. They are more collaborative than men and express their style as a process of nurturing and evolving to get business results. (Vecchiotti 2018, 41)

Having interviewed Millennials all over the world, Gerzema and D’Antonio report that both young men and women

... recognized aggressive and hierarchical management techniques as ‘masculine.’ Similarly, we found that they regarded generous, communicative leadership to be feminine. And in the context of a complex, highly connected work world, they saw great value in the feminine traits. (Gerzema and D’Antonio 2017, 64)

Gibbs and Bolger, reporting on changes in leadership styles in the “emerging church”⁸, note a shift towards a more organic view of leadership; leadership as a process with in a community. Space does not allow for a detailed discussion of their findings here, but the following sub-headings from their section on leadership, can illustrate that shift (Gibbs and Bolger 2005, 194–205):

- from stifling control to creative freedom;
- from the vision of the leader to the vision of all;
- from powerful group leaders to leaderless groups;
- from leadership based on willingness to leadership based on gifting;
- from leadership based on position to leadership based on passion;
- from authority based on position to influence based on track record;
- from closed leadership to open leadership;
- from leaders setting the agenda to congregational agenda setting;
- from exclusive decision making to inclusive consensus building.

⁸ “Emerging Church” is a term used to express a number of church plants or initiatives trying to connect Christian faith and community to a post-modern culture.

4. Possible Lessons for the Church

Based on the descriptions of Millennials above, we suggest six possible lessons for leadership in Church. The appreciation of a leadership style that is built on softer values and more “feminine” traits redefines the role of the local pastor or elder. Firstly, leadership is no longer based on authority or power coming out of an office or position, but is based on the ability to communicate, be real, be supportive and collaborate. Authority is given to the person who is trustworthy and can demonstrate competence. Trust comes from listening to others, involving others, being vulnerable and sharing responsibility. This model of leadership is more complex and asks for emotional health, maturity and humility. If the Church function as a hierarchical “machine,” demanding obedience to a “system,” it becomes a “beast” in the eyes of Millennials, and they are not interested in feeding such a beast. The more open pose recommended here must be reflected in preaching and teaching, in how communication is done, and meetings are conducted. Hierarchy is out – network is in.

Secondly, Millennials put people and relationships above institutions and set policies. Individualism with its strong emphasis on autonomy, respect, authenticity and vulnerability demand a flexible organisation that recognizes individual needs and the uniqueness of each (Ottesen 2014)⁹. Institutional traditions and set policies are questioned as Millennials want to be part of defining their own framework, routines, responsibilities, involvement and obligations. Policy is often seen as an artificial external power or authority speaking to the local group “from above.” The Millennial expects to be part of the discussion that sets the parameters for her or his own environment.

Thirdly, the new leadership style is about involvement and ownership. The church should not ask “What can we do *for* the Millennials?” but rather “What can we do *with* the Millennials?” They are knowledgeable and they want to be heard, included, and involved. They want to be part of a team and belong. Being a passive spectator is not interesting and kills the feeling of belonging (McFarland and Jimenez 2017, 84). Church leadership needs to happen in a

⁹ The issue of individualism is discussed at length in this chapter.

conversation where each individual is listened to with respect and where the group owns the decisions.

A fourth lesson for the Church is the fact that Millennials are looking for meaning; they have a desire to “change the world.” They want to make a practical difference. This desire does not correspond to the traditional denominational approach which tried to convince others of certain doctrinal positions or propositional truths. The words of Jesus in the parable of the last judgement (Matt. 25:31–46) where healing, helping, caring and connecting are central concepts, are the kinds of actions Millennials would like to be part of. Gabe Lyons writes about this in *The Next Christians* (2010). Based on the large study of Millennials, *UnChristian* (Kinnaman 2012), Lyons concludes that this generation can be characterised as the “Restorers.” The focus is on justice, beauty, environmental issues and equality. Millennials want to live in the world and be a blessing. “They [the next Christians] see themselves on a mission, partnering with God to breathe justice and mercy and peace and compassion and generosity into the world” (Lyons 2010, 59). Gabe Lyons describes the future Christians this way:

They no longer feel bound to wait for heaven or spend all of their time telling people what they should believe. Instead, they are participating with God in his restoration project for the whole world. (Lyons 2010, 53)

They see themselves on a mission, partnering with God to breathe justice and mercy and peace and compassion and generosity into the world. (Lyons 2010, 59)

McFarland and Jimenez argue that the Church should respond to this desire in young people and “send out Millennials as missionaries” and that a young person doing Christian service will see themselves as Christian in a more significant way than if they acknowledged and agreed to some dogmatic statements (McFarland and Jimenez 2017, 84).

Relating to the same sentiment, Pontier and DeVries point out that the best way the church can be relevant for Millennials is to help them find a way to change the world (Pontier and DeVries 2017, 106–107).

A typical Millennial might say: *Nothing’s wrong with the church. It still works fine. But the applications I need for my life are just different from a generation ago – so different, in fact, the church might be a mostly useless artefact. Sure, I can still go there to sing hymns and sit in class, but that is*

not exactly how I want to spend my time. (Ibid., 110; italics in the original)

This quote connects to the fifth lesson: Millennials have little or no loyalty to organisations or institutions (Hobart and Sendek 2014, 109; see also Pontier and DeVries 2017, 154). As observed above Millennials easily swap jobs if something better comes along. The Church can expect a similar attitude; even if strongly committed to Christian beliefs, the Millennial does not feel loyalty to the church institution or the programme of the Church unless it brings meaning to their lives. Combined with the high value Millennials put on their time, this makes regular church attendance a challenge. If coming to church does not bring a contribution to life and/or if they are not in some ways engaged themselves, they might choose to spend their time in another way. A leadership challenge in the church is therefore to engage young people in what they define as meaningful; finding areas where they can live out their discipleship for Christ within parameters that make sense to them. Often churches define commitment and belonging as proportionate to the level of attendance at weekend services. Some major rethinking might be needed at this point. Asking the Millennials how they would want to express their Christianity might set a new agenda for a local church, but might be just as Christian. There is more emphasis in Scripture about helping orphans, widows and immigrants than there is on meeting for worship services. Being a team, working in collaboration, listening to all and accepting diversity, the church can be a force for good in the world as it releases young people to live out their values.

A sixth lesson is the need for mentorships. Young people want to be involved, take ownership, and be heard. But they want to do this in a community and appreciate the experience of others – particularly that of people older than themselves. Many young people have grown up with little adult contact and appreciate relationships with the parent generation. Leadership for Millennials includes being a personal mentor – taking the time for deep conversations. McFarland and Jemenez state: “If young people have just a few adults who will come alongside them and encourage them to grow in their faith, there’s a much better chance they will remain in the church and be rooted in Jesus long into adulthood” (McFarland and Jimenez 2017, 67). Furthermore they discuss leadership through mentorship as a dialogue:

Discipleship in this new context [new spirituality] requires a great commitment to developing and mentoring leaders – and to allow younger leaders real opportunities to shape their churches and businesses. It also requires what we describe as “vocational discipleship,” the concept of helping Millennials understand their God-given purpose through work and also how to be faithful in the complexity of life’s callings. (Ibid., 85)

The desire among Millennials for adult mentors is confirmed through research done by *The Barna Institute* (Jenkin and Martin 2014b) and several other authors (Pontier and DeVries 2017, 134; see also pp. 31, 98, 133–134).

At this point it seems relevant to make a reflection on the developments in the worldwide SDA community as it relates to Millennials’ expectations of leadership.

Over the last several years, there has been a trend towards centralized power and decision-making in the worldwide SDA church. This has been of concern for many influential people in this denomination. A couple of examples would be William G. Johnsson (Johnsson 2017) and George R. Knight (Knight 2017). Some later initiatives coming from the world headquarters with compliance documents and committees working on compliance issues,¹⁰ illustrate a move towards control, the use of structural “muscles,” and an expected obedience to policy and a majority vote.

These trends are taking the Church in the opposite direction from Millennial values. They clash with the general acceptance of plurality as opposed to uniformity, individualism rather than institutionalised identity and personal authenticity as opposed to loyalty to a system. The trends in the world headquarters are bringing the church backwards in time rather than initiating fresh dialogue with current trends and other ways to do church. This is a development that might push even more Millennials away from church fellowship, particularly in the western world.

¹⁰ Cf. <https://spectrummagazine.org/news/2018/general-conference-issues-statement-compliance-committees>.

5. Conclusions

The worldwide church is in some ways at a crossroads. As a thoroughly “modern” institution still carrying many of the values and approaches of 19th century, it is struggling to survive in the “West.” There, Postmodernism brought a devastating challenge to Christianity and Adventism in the latter half of the 20th century. Later developments are still a challenge. Millennials live by values and priorities that do not always match those of the traditional Church. This has implications on so many levels, not least for leadership locally and worldwide. This reflection paper has looked at leadership issues in light of Millennial characteristics. Many other aspects of the Millennial challenge to the Church need attention. Here it is argued that leading Millennials requires the creation of community; building teams based on collaboration in a listening environment, communicating in an open fashion where it is normal to be authentic and vulnerable. Such environment would suit the typical Millennials and would be a place to express their Christian identity; not through the repetition and promotion of a set of dogma, but by being involved in activities that “change the world” and bring meaning to their own lives. Being part of the decision process and finding personal growth and development can make a church fellowship relevant to Millennial needs.

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Zusammenfassung

Diese Studie unternimmt einen Versuch, einen Leitungsstil für eine kirchliche Organisation zu finden und zu beschreiben, der den Bedürfnissen und Erwartungen der Generation der „Millennials“ entspricht. Es werden Lehren aus der Arbeitswelt gezogen, in der sich die Arbeitgeber an die Stärken, Schwächen, Forderungen und Erwartungen einer Generation anpassen mussten, die mit bestimmten kulturellen Trends verbunden ist. Auf der Grundlage von Forschungsergebnissen aus dem Beschäftigungskontext und unter Berücksichtigung von Erkenntnissen von zwei wichtigen Theorien über Leadership wird geschlussfolgert, wie die „Millennials“ geleitet, involviert, beschäftigt und in das Leben der Kirche einbezogen werden können. Die Schlussfolgerungen weisen auf einen „weicheren“ und „feminineren“ Führungsansatz, der Zusammenarbeit, Konsens, Kooperation, die Akzeptanz persönlicher Autonomie und Partizipation sowie Bescheidenheit und Demut in den Vordergrund stellt.

Résumé

Cette étude tente de trouver et de décrire un style de leadership pour une organisation ecclésiale qui correspond aux besoins et aux attentes de la génération appelée « Millennial ». Les leçons sont tirées du lieu de travail où les entités employeuses ont dû s'adapter aux forces, aux faiblesses, aux demandes et aux attentes d'une génération qui porte des tendances culturelles particulières. En s'appuyant sur la recherche du contexte de l'emploi et en ajoutant des idées de deux théories majeures sur le leadership, des conclusions sont tirées sur la manière de diriger, impliquer, engager et inclure les Millennials dans la vie de l'Eglise. Les conclusions pointent dans le sens d'une approche « plus douce » et plus « féminine » du leadership, mettant l'accent sur la collaboration, le consensus, la coopération, l'acceptation de l'autonomie et de la participation personnelles – faisant preuve de modestie et d'humilité.

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