



# Seven steps to a healthy, effective leadership team

Fr Daniel Serratore is the Parish Priest of St Benedict’s Parish in Burwood. Over recent years, St Benedict’s has developed a strong leadership team who are enthusiastically embracing the hope of Pope Francis ‘that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are’ (*Evangelii Gaudium*, § 25).

Why do some leaders get the best out of people, inspire great vision and bring tremendous value to the community, while others struggle to manage their community and maintain the status quo? This question led Fr Dan to explore how he might shift his approach to parish leadership and thereby dramatically transform the mission of his community.

Fr Dan’s goal is to lead in such a way that he creates other leaders, who in turn create leaders themselves. He does this through team-based leadership.

Here are Fr Dan’s seven steps to leading in a team:

## 1. Start with why

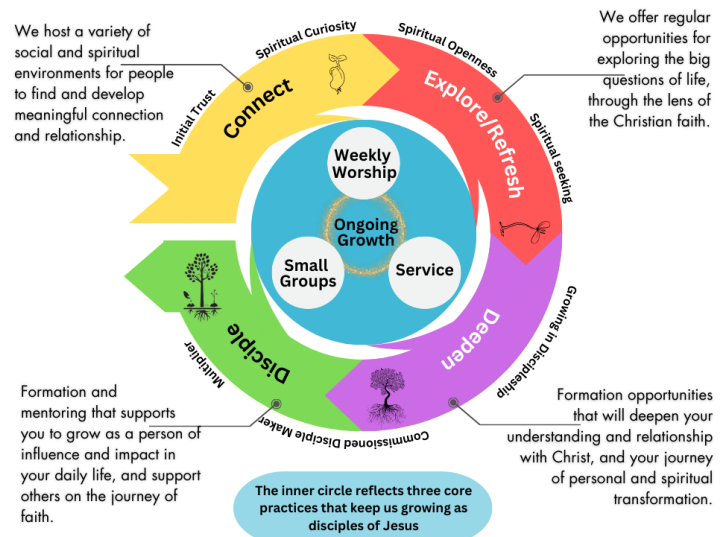
A clear ‘why’ provokes passion in people, bringing focus and clarity to everything we do. It can also help sustain us when things get tough. As the Church, we all share the same ‘why’ as we follow Jesus’ Great Commission: ‘Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe everything I have commanded you’ (Matthew 28:19). But each parish should clarify their unique ‘why’ using their own language and with their own emphasis.

## 2. Define your mission

Once you have clarified your ‘why’, you can then develop your core mission, a summary of how you live out your ‘why’—a short, aspirational statement of who and what your community wants to become. With consultation, discussion and prayer, St Benedict’s settled on this mission statement: ‘A nurturing community of faith growing together in the love, life and mission of Jesus’.

## 3. Develop your strategy

Your strategy is your ‘how’: what will you do to take people on a journey to ‘flourishing in Christ’, to whole-hearted missionary discipleship? St Benedict’s developed a ‘Discipleship Pathway’—a ‘living’ document that they refer to frequently, and which helps them to remain focused on their mission and to determine what they do and don’t do.



## 4. Find your people

Focus on looking for people in your community who have a passion for your mission, who are hungry to grow and who work well in a team. Having a clear vision and mission helps to attract the right people. Even people with little ministry experience can become incredible contributors if they are passionate about your 'why'.

## 5. Find the balance between delegation and support

In his development as a leader, a key learning for Fr Dan was understanding the difference between delegating tasks and delegating responsibility. When delegating tasks, responsibility remains with the leader; when delegating responsibility, you decide together on the outcome required, then the leader gives the team member the trust, freedom and responsibility to have a go.

As a leader, it is important to get the right balance between delegating and supporting, so that your people have the emotional and practical support they need to keep growing in their roles. During your regular one-on-one meetings, make sure you:

- clarify desired outcomes together
- provide the resources needed
- offer regular feedback, encouragement and pastoral support.

## 6. Build a family culture

Your team should be a place where people want to be, with a strong and healthy culture built upon friendship. As a leader, be intentional about investing time, energy and money to build relational capital with your team. Some ways to do this include:

- sharing highs and lows at meetings—building vulnerability
- praying together at every meeting
- having a staff retreat
- sharing meals together
- creating a comfortable office and meeting atmosphere.

## 7. Have great meetings

Meetings can either suck the life out of people or they can be a way in which we reinforce our mission and inspire clarity, focus and teamwork. Running a good meeting is an art. We need to create an environment where people feel safe to share, contribute, challenge, oppose, celebrate and support. A good meeting will draw each person to actively contribute.

At St Benedict's, the weekly leadership team meeting runs for two hours and includes:

- team contributions to create the agenda and prioritise items
- sharing a high and low from the week
- worship and/or prayer
- leadership input (growing leadership ability by discussing a podcast or article distributed before the meeting)
- discussion of one of the parish values and how it is being brought to life in the parish
- celebration of achievements
- a review of action items from the last meeting (encouraging accountability)
- discussion and/or resolution of agenda items.

In summary, Fr Dan suggests that as leaders we ask ourselves:

- How am I helping people to see and get excited about a better version of reality (the kingdom of God)?
- How am I articulating a clear discipleship pathway, which draws people into closer relationship with Jesus?
- How am I identifying the hidden potential in others and helping them to access and express that potential?
- How am I keeping people focused and accountable and encouraged?

## Helpful leadership resources

- Dave Ferguson and Warren Bird, *Hero Maker: Five Essential Practices for Leaders to Multiply Leaders*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018.
- Simon Sinek, *Start with Why*, London: Penguin, 2011.
- Liz Wiseman, *Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter*, New York: HarperCollins, 2017.