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GLOBAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP STUDY

Moody Theological Seminary |
Global Leadership Center
October 23, 2026



STUDY SNAPSHOT

Goal Study the lived experience and development of local church leaders from 4 continents

Actual

14 Evangelical Protestant church leaders from 5 continents

12 men, 2 women



STUDY SNAPSHOT

Church Leader Urbanization 10 urban (4 multi-site); 2 suburban (2 multi-site); 2 rural (2 multi-site of which 1 is indigenous territory)

Africa Kenya (1 participant); South Africa (2)

Asia Hong Kong (1); India (2); Japan (1); Thailand (3)

Europe Scotland (1)

North America USA (2)

South America Amazon rainforest (1)



STUDY SNAPSHOT

Education Level

- 10 advanced ministry degrees (MDiv, DMin)
- 2 earning ministry credentials (1 GC; 1 MA)
- 2 no ministry credential (1 no credential)

Vocational Status

- 11 full-time ministry
- 3 poli-vocational ministry (tent-makers)



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ESSENCE OF GLOBAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Across continents, cultures, denominations, and ministry contexts, church leadership is experienced as a process of responding to God's call through humble service, spiritual formation, relational discipleship, and intentional development of future church leaders.



ESSENCE OF GLOBAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Effective church leaders prioritize character over status, view leadership as stewardship rather than authority, and seek to multiply disciples and leaders for the advancement of God's kingdom contextualized to their unique cultural contexts.

UNIVERSAL LEADER EXPERIENCES

<u>Regardless of Local Ministry Context</u>, Global Church Leaders Experienced:

1. Servant Leadership as the Defining Expression of Church Leadership
2. Concern for Future Generations of Church Leaders, Preparing Successors
3. Church Leadership as Fundamentally Reproductive: Disciple-Making & Leader Multiplication
4. Calling as a Process of Discernment and Surrender That Ends in Obedience, a Servant's Heart, Not Ambition

UNIVERSAL LEADER DEVELOPMENT

<u>Regardless of Local Ministry Context</u>, Church Leaders Were Prepared/Underprepared in the Following Ways:

1. Church Leadership Developed Through Relationships & Experience Rather Than Programs
2. Doctrinal Fidelity & Holy Living Developed Through Theological Education, Ministry Trained Mentors, and Ministry Practice
3. Leadership Effectiveness Flowed from Spiritual Vitality, Not Sense of Competence
4. Leadership Effectiveness Depended Upon Contextualizing Wisdom

GLOBAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP MODEL



ACTIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS

1

Shift from leader-centered to leader-developing ministry

2

Create structured mentoring pathways

3

Give emerging leaders real responsibility

4

Train character before competency

ACTIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS

1

Blend theological education with ministry practice

2

Access is the issue; expand non-traditional, low/no cost, and flexible training

3

Connect church leaders to leadership communities and coaching

4

Measure leader multiplication and transformation, not headcount alone



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FINDING #1: CHURCH LEADERSHIP IS SERVANTHOOD

"That's what I want to die being, a servant leader." - South American church leader

"Church leaders are servants." - Kenyan church leader

"We wanted to help the church by loving pastors." - Japanese church leader

Experience Church leadership is fundamentally about serving others rather than exercising authority. Regardless of context, participants consistently described their leadership as empowering, equipping, encouraging, supporting, and developing others rather than controlling them.

Essence Across contexts, leadership is most meaningful when facilitating the flourishing of others rather than increasing one's own influence.

FINDING #2: MULTIPLICATION & DISCIPLE-MAKING

“[Leadership exists] to multiply hidden leaders" - Indian church leader

"Workplaces, communities, and professions [are the ministry field]." - Kenyan church leader

"The church needs a [church leader] prep program… leadership apprenticeship…and preaching [opportunities]." - American church leader

Experience Every participant understood leadership as fundamentally reproductive. Effective leaders develop other leaders.

- Find–Train–Equip–Send–Sustain model
- Apprenticeship and mentoring emphasized

Essence Leadership is not measured by how many people follow a leader but by how many leaders a leader develops.



FINDING #3: CALLING & SPIRITUAL FORMATION

“It all unfolded for me very providentially." - Scottish church leader

“[I initially resisted]. I didn’t want to [go into ministry].” – South American church leader

“…an inward conviction, a confirmation of gifting, and affirmation of the local church." - American church leader

Experience Participants consistently described calling as something discovered through surrender rather than personal ambition.

- Prayer, Scripture study, and discernment are foundational.
- Character precedes platform.

Essence Calling is experienced as God's invitation that becomes clear through obedience, confirmation, and surrender.





FINDING #4: RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

"[My leadership was formed] just sitting down, talking, eating, and listening." – South American church leader

"[As a young man my mentor] took me under his wing." – American church leader

"Trust [young emerging leaders] with [leading] a Bible study. They will encounter conflict [and learn from that experience]." – Scottish church leader

Experience Leadership develops through mentoring relationships and ministry experience.

- Community and accountability are essential.

Essence The most significant leadership formation occurs person-to-person rather than institution-to-person.