

The Synergistic Church

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Chapter 8

The Perichoretic System of Church Growth

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to explore how the Perichoretic Church may be understood and used to great advantage by the implementation of the Perichoretic System of Church Growth in the actual body life of the local church.

The Three Ministry Groups

The overall function of the Three Ministry Groups is to perform the ministry of the local church. Within this overall function each Ministry Group performs its own primary function. Therefore Church Leadership *cares* for the Pastorate and the General Congregation, the Pastorate *equips* Church Leadership and the General Congregation, and the General Congregation *does ministry* on behalf of Church Leadership and the Pastorate. When the local church performs its ministry reciprocally we say it is Synergistic in its functioning.

The One Church Body

While it is the function of the Three Ministry Groups to perform ministry, it is the function of the One Church Body to provide the *resources* for ministry. The local church is able to perform this function because it is made up of Members, who participate in the Ministry Groups, and in the One Body of Christ, at the same time. As such, local church Members perform two roles that are dialogic in their relationship to each other. In the first role, as participants in Ministry Groups, they determine the Direction of church ministry. In the second role, as Members of the One Body, they facilitate the subsequent Redirection of church ministry. It is as Members are able to perform these two roles at the same time, does the local church become Perichoretic in its functioning.

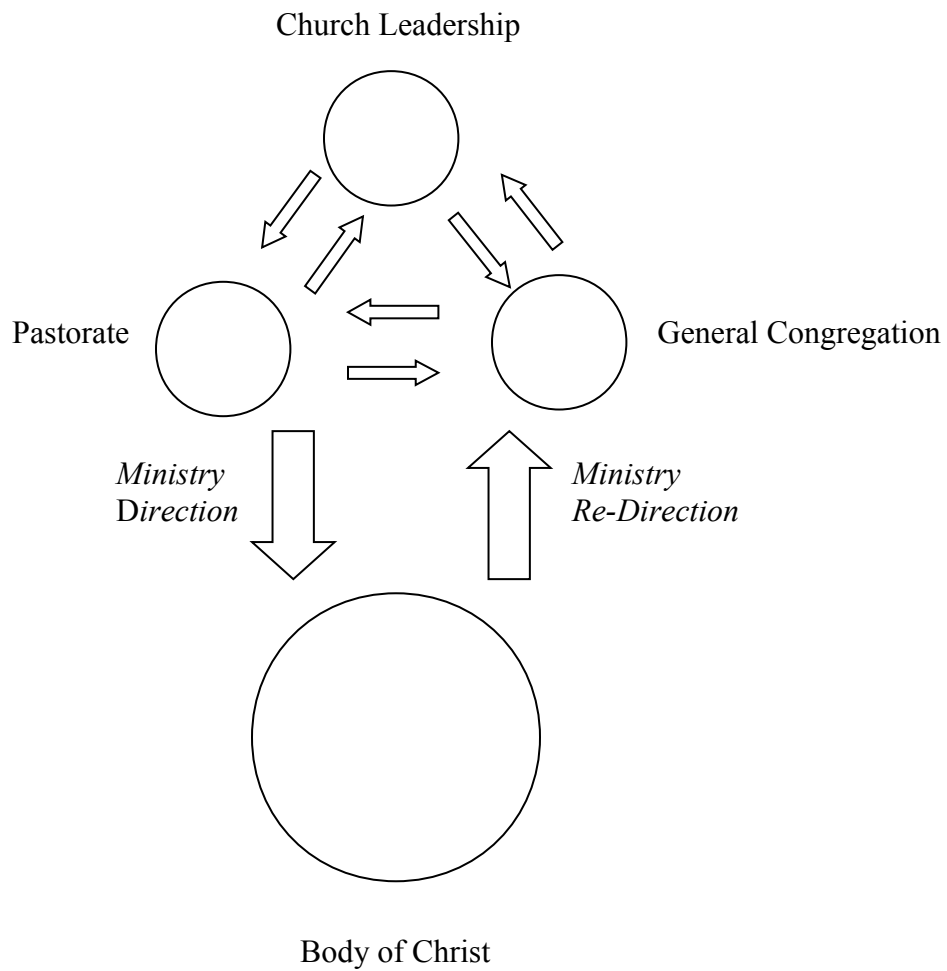
The Perichoretic System

It is this two-way dialogical relationship that makes up the core of the Perichoretic System. A Perichoretic System may be defined as the “interpenetration of two or more objects or natures”. As such, as the Three Ministry Groups and the One Church Body come into “dialogue” over the Ministry Direction and Ministry Redirection of the church, they interpenetrate each other. It is this dialogical relationship between the Three Ministry Groups and the One Body that enables the local church to be *resourced* for ministry.

The Perichoretic Cycle

The Perichoretic Cycle is the practice of the perichoresis of God by the local church over time. Specifically the Perichoretic Cycle consists in the perpetual *Direction* and *Redirection* of the activities of the Three Ministry Groups in the One Body of Christ.

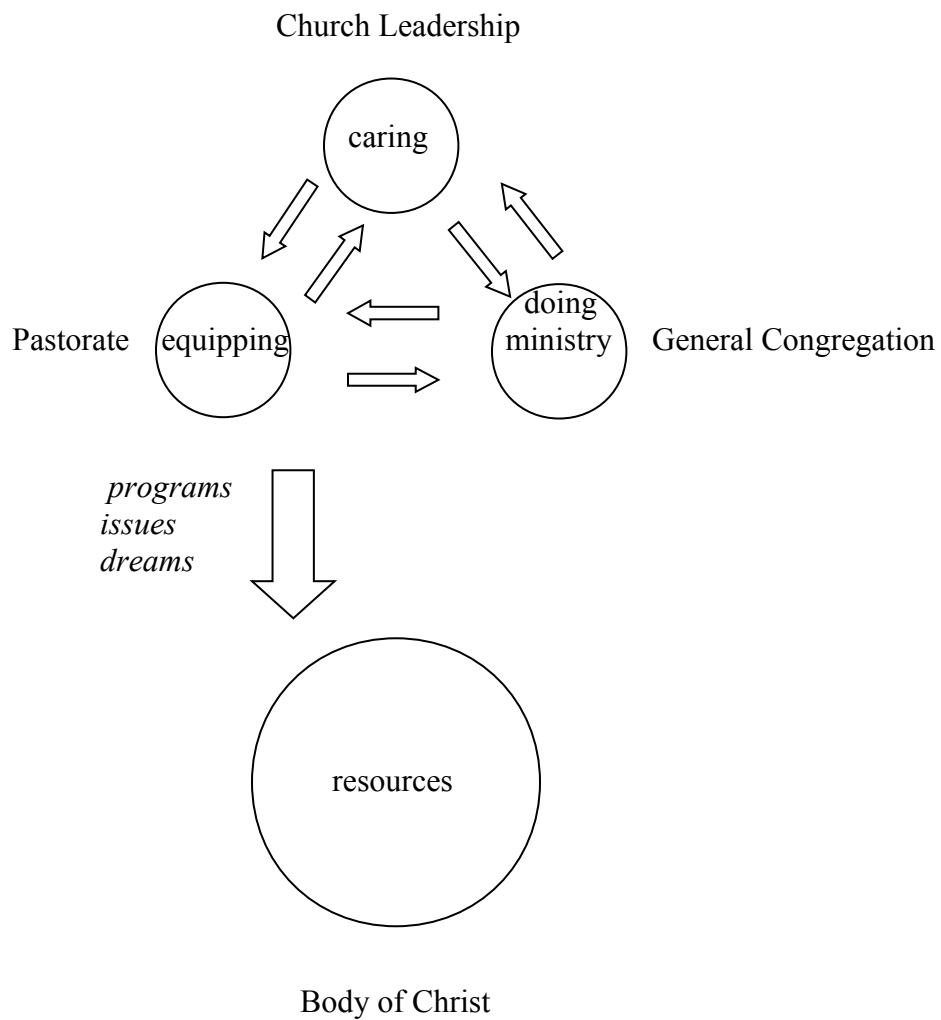
Perpetual Direction/Redirection:



Ministry Direction in the Church

As we have seen, it is the task of the Three Ministry Groups to provide the primary functioning of *caring*, *equipping* and *doing ministry* in the local church. Ministry Direction is the current *programs*, *issues* and *dreams* undertaken by the Three Ministry Groups as they seek to serve each other reciprocally. Thus the process of Ministry Direction is “top-down” in that the functions of *caring*, *equipping* and *doing ministry*, that come from the Three Ministry Groups, are extended “down” to the One Body of the corporate church as a whole.

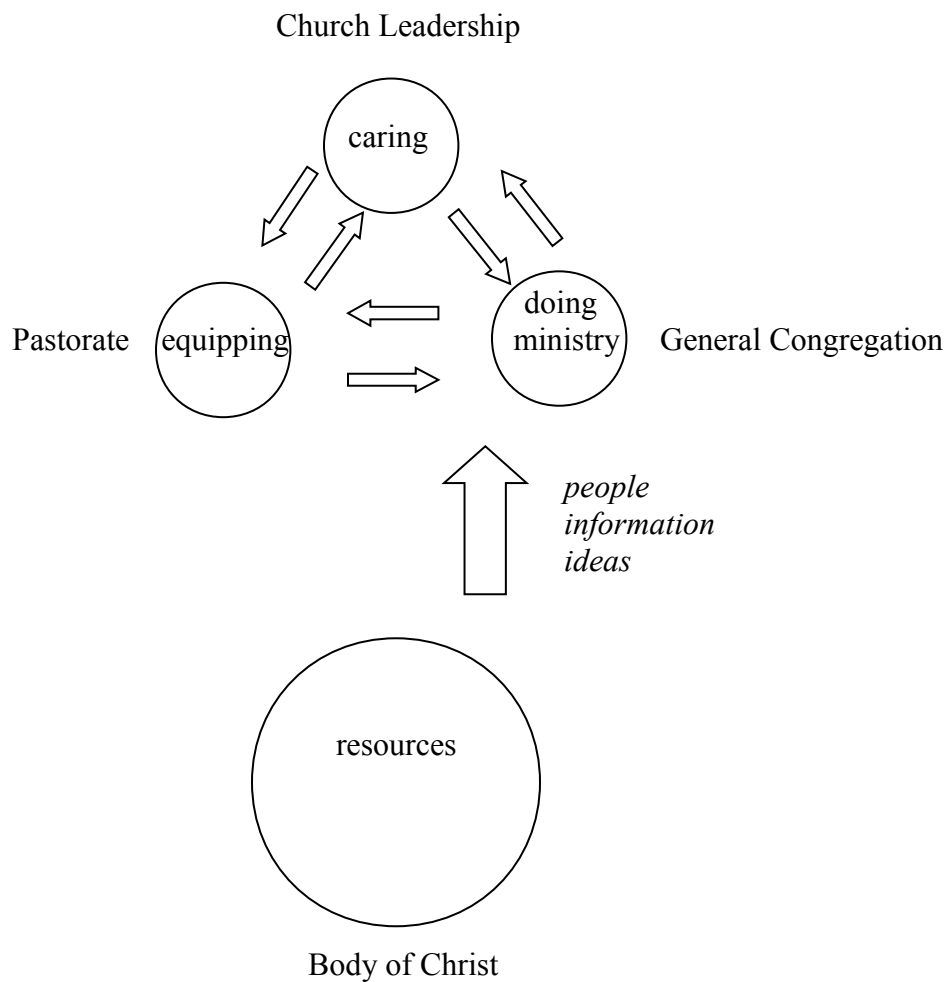
Top-Down Ministry Direction:



Ministry Re-Direction in the Church

But as time passes change occurs in the local church. Examples of this include people maturing spiritually and chronologically, people coming and going, and people gaining experience in doing ministry. Ministry Redirection represents the on-going influences of *people, information* and *ideas* that together make up the *resources* of the One Body of the corporate church. Thus the process of Ministry Redirection is “bottom-up” in that the supply of *people, information* and *ideas* that come from the One Body are extended “up” to the Three Ministry Groups to use as they are able.

Bottom-up Ministry Redirection:



Achieving Perichoretic Readiness

In addition to the One Body being in constant dialogue with all Three Ministry Groups, must it also be in constant dialogue with itself. The purpose for this self dialogue is for the Church Body to become “one” within itself, that is, to be in unity. This is done simply by Members being in communion with other Members. This is also done by Members in the midst of this communion being in prayer. For it is only when the Body knows itself, that is, with Members being in fellowship with one another, and knows the Head, that is, with Members being in fellowship with Christ, can it properly *resource* the Three Ministry Groups for effective ministry.

Being Perichoretically Intentional

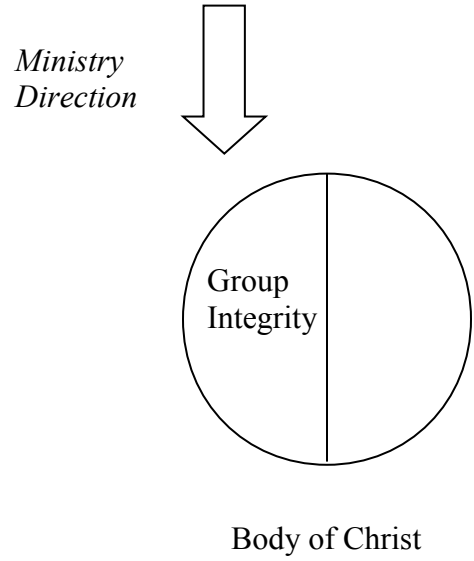
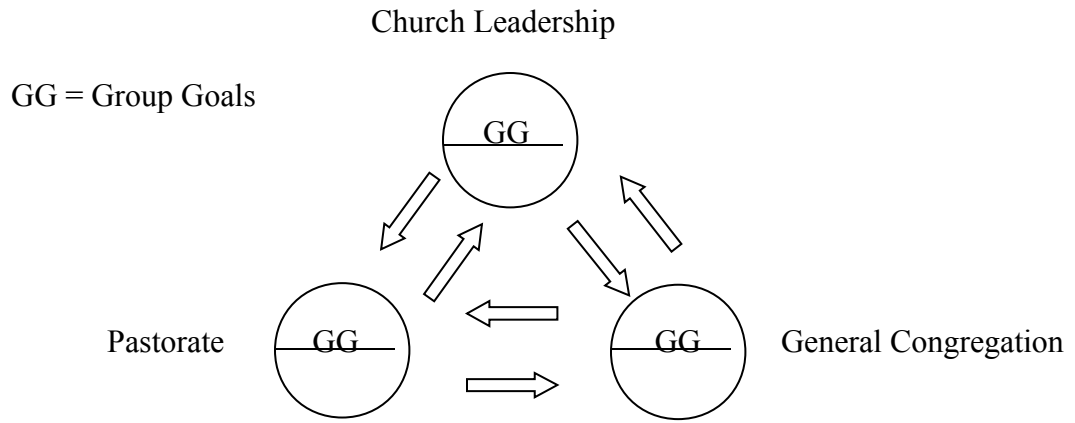
As such, not only must the local church be constantly vigilant concerning the proper performance of primary and secondary functioning so also must the local church be constantly vigilant in achieving and maintaining perichoretic readiness. This is done by taking every opportunity for the Three Ministry Groups to communicate with the One Body. This is also done by allowing the Members to process those communications with other Members in both public and private forums. And finally, this is done by the Three Ministry Groups giving every opportunity for Members to communicate their thoughts, feelings and motivations concerning the ministry challenges that have been presented to them.

Church Body Dialogic and Church Health

While Ministry Group Reciprocity represents the First General Mechanism of corporate church functioning, Church Body Dialogics is the Second General Mechanism, and as such, is also crucial for determining the functional health of the local church. The Church Body, like each Ministry Group, is comprised of two basic components. These components are 1) Group Goals and 2) Group Integrity. Group Integrity is, in turn, made up of two parts, its identity and the maintenance of that identity. Group Goals, on the other hand, represent the primary functioning of the Church Body. In the Perichoretic System, like in the Synergistic System, it is only when Group Integrity is healthy that it is able to perform its Group Goals, that is, its primary functioning. As the Three Ministry Groups *care, equip* and *do ministry* in the name of Christ, is the One Church Body built up to be able to *resource* the Three Ministry Groups under the guidance of Christ. We can, therefore, see that the identity of the local church as the Body of Christ, and the maintenance of that identity in doing the work of Christ, is directly dependent upon the on-going dialogue between the Three Ministry Groups and the One Body of Christ.

(See diagram on next page.)

Church Body Health:



Church Body Dialogic and Church Growth

But the significance of the Perichoretic System is not limited to the maintenance of Church Body health. In addition, the two-way dialogic relationship between the One Body and its Three Ministry Groups, also serves for activating Church Body growth. For as the Three Ministry Groups *care, equip* and *do ministry* in the name of Christ, in the present, is the One Body able to *resource* the Three Ministry Groups to do the work of Christ in the future. It is, therefore, this two-way dialogic relationship between the Three Ministry Groups and the One Body of Christ that facilitates all church growth.

Church Body Growth:

