



Leading By Heart: A Transformational Leadership Paradigm within the Gereja Toraja

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Abstract: *Leadership within the church context is not solely anchored in formal authority, but rather in the capacity to inspire, serve, and transform congregants. Transformational leadership paradigm, rooted in the principle of "leading by heart," offers a spiritual approach to nurturing faith communities. It emphasizes accountability, emotional stability, the development of others, vigilance against temptations like wealth, affection, and power, and reverence for God as foundations for authentic relationships. Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology through library research, this study analyses ecclesiastical leadership practices. The findings indicate that heart-centred leadership fosters an inclusive, compassionate communal climate. The implications extend to all ministers in the Gereja Toraja, calling them to shepherd the faithful as agents of transformation. By leading by heart, the church becomes a vibrant space where Christ's love is tangibly manifested through transformative actions, relationships, and service.*

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1. Introduction

Leadership is a social phenomenon inherent in human life since the dawn of civilization, particularly as humans began to form communities and live collectively. Over time, the concept of leadership has encompassed multiple dimensions and can be analysed through various approaches, depending on the perspective used. Amid the currents of globalization that increasingly emphasize openness and interconnectedness, understanding diverse leadership approaches is crucial. Furthermore, the fundamental dynamics of global change influence leadership practices, bringing dual implications—both opportunities and challenges.

Conceptually, leadership can be understood as a process in which an individual influences and directs others to carry out specific tasks to achieve predetermined, shared goals. Within this framework, leadership focuses on strategic actions taken by leaders through interpersonal influence. This influence aims to clarify the organization's vision, motivate members, and foster a productive, conducive work culture. On the other hand, leadership can also be viewed as a personal attribute, namely a set of characteristics and



competencies inherent in a leader. From this perspective, a leader is an individual who has the capacity to influence others through integrity, communication skills, emotional intelligence, and professional expertise. A leader's success in carrying out their role depends largely on the extent to which they establish credibility and are accepted as a worthy figure to be followed and emulated by those they lead.

In the context of church life, which continues to experience social, cultural, and spiritual change, leadership can no longer be understood solely as an administrative function. Leadership within the church demands a deeper, relational, and transformative approach, that is one rooted in the heart. The paradigm of "leading by heart" is a theological and practical approach that places love, empathy, and service at the heart of community transformation. In the Christian tradition, Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of heart-centered leadership, as affirmed in Mark 10:45, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Leading by heart is not a distinct form of leadership but rather an essential attitude a leader must embody to exercise leadership with sincerity and compassion. Such leadership transforms individuals and shapes communities that live in love, justice, and hope.

Robert K. Greenleaf, the pioneer of the concept of *servant leadership*, stated that "servant leaders are those who first choose to serve, and then consciously choose to lead."¹ In the context of the church, this approach becomes increasingly relevant when leaders act not only as visionaries but also as bearers of love and hope in a diverse congregation. James MacGregor Burns² introduced the theory of transformative leadership that emphasizes the importance of leaders in inspiring and motivating followers to reach their highest potential. Transformative leadership in the church is about structural change and profound spiritual and relational change. The paradigm of transformative leadership, rooted in the heart, requires leaders to possess spiritual sensitivity, moral integrity, and the ability to build healthy relationships. Tim Gregory, in his book *Transformational Pastoral Leadership*, emphasizes that effective church leaders are those who integrate biblical principles with relevant social approaches, resulting in spiritual growth and maturity within the congregation.³ This kind of leadership relies on rhetorical skills or organizational strategies, as well as spirituality and genuine service.

In a study conducted by L. Venter and CAM Hermans⁴ on transformative leadership competencies in the Dutch Reformed Church, it was found that the five main competencies

¹Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 2002), 1-37.

²James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1978), 241-310.

³Tim Gregory, *Transformational Pastoral Leadership: Ushering in Lasting Growth and Maturity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 133-141.

⁴L. Venter and CAM Hermans, "A framework of five transformative leadership competencies for church leaders in the DRC". *Acta Theologica*, Vol.40 suppl.30 Bloemfontein, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.Sup30.7>

that church leaders must possess are spirituality, the ability to develop a vision, healthy relationships, implementation skills, and the ability to understand context. These five competencies show that effective leadership in the church community cannot be separated from the dimension of the heart, namely love, empathy, and sincere service. This viewpoint is in line with the view of Bentley deBardelaben-Phillips⁵ who stated that heart-centered leadership is leadership that is able to overcome fear with love and build an inclusive and hopeful community.

In the context of the Gereja Toraja, which has strong cultural and spiritual roots, the paradigm of leading by heart becomes increasingly important. The Gereja Toraja functions as a religious institution and as a social and cultural space that shapes the community's collective identity. Therefore, church leadership must be able to bridge Gospel values and local wisdom and respond to the challenges of the times with a transformative approach. Kesumawati and Joni Manumpak Parulian Gultom write that church leaders must be able to guide the congregation toward a shared vision through concrete actions rooted in love and service.⁶

Leading from the heart also has implications for the congregation's character formation. Love is a force that moves people to act beyond self-interest. In the church context, leaders who lead from the heart will encourage congregants to live in love, serve others, and be witnesses of Christ in the world. Leadership rooted in love and service has a significant impact on the spiritual growth and well-being of the community. A church led by the heart will become an agent of social change, bringing the values of the Kingdom of God into the lives of its people. A. Nicolaidis and GM Naidoo, in their article "*Considering Transformative Leadership from a Christian Vantage Point*," emphasize that church leaders must be able to build a strong ethos of service, encourage active congregational participation, and create space for spiritual and social growth.⁷ Such leadership will produce a church community that is inclusive, dynamic, and relevant to the current context.

In practice, transformative leadership rooted in the heart requires deep spiritual formation. Reliable Christian leaders are those with stable character, extensive knowledge, and strong social skills. This formation does not occur instantly, but through a continuous process of spiritual formation, service, and theological reflection. Therefore,

⁵Bentley deBardelaben-Phillips, "Heart-Centered Leadership". *Witness for Justice. Issue #1246 / March 6, 2025.* [wfi030625.pdf](https://doi.org/10.71364/ny9dea85)

⁶Kesumawati and Joni Manumpak Parulian Gultom, Effective Pastoral Leadership in Church Growth and Renewal. *Journal of the American Institute.* Vol. 2 No. 2 (2025). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.71364/ny9dea85>

⁷A. Nicolaidis and GM Naidoo, "Considering Transformative Leadership from a Christian Vantage Point". *Pharos Journal of Theology.* Volume 106 Issue 1 - (2025). <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.106.1>

theological education and leadership training must emphasize the importance of spirituality, love, and service as the core of church leadership.

In the era of globalization and digitalization, the challenges facing the church are increasingly complex. Church leaders are required to possess adaptive capacity, effective communication skills, and sensitivity to social dynamics. However, amidst this complexity, the principle of leading with the heart remains a solid foundation. As Matthew James Engel stated in his dissertation, *Navigating the In-Between*, church leadership must be able to navigate times of transition with clear vision, deep empathy, and a commitment to authentic service.⁸ Field observations reveal several leadership practices within local churches that require improvement. These issues include, firstly, the centralization of power among a few influential individuals within the congregation, which creates an impression of authoritarianism. Secondly, church leaders often fail to understand their members' struggles, emotional needs, or social conditions, resulting in ministries that feel dry and irrelevant. Thirdly, a lack of transparency in decision-making—particularly regarding financial matters, ministry direction, or internal conflicts—can lead to distrust. Fourthly, leaders who are not actively present in accompanying their congregation's spiritual growth demonstrate a lack of genuine pastoral care.⁹ The "Leading by Heart" paradigm is not merely idealism, but a relevant, transformative, and contextual leadership approach within the church community. It combines theological principles, spiritual values, and practical strategies to shape a community that thrives on love and service. In light of the Gospel and the challenges of our times, this kind of leadership is the calling and responsibility of every church leader who desires to bring God's Kingdom to the world. Several previous studies have explored the concept of leading with the heart. First, in the journal article titled "*Building Heart-Centered Leadership to Improve Managerial Performance*" by Darmansyah Siregar et al., heart-centered leadership is described as an approach that enhances self-efficacy and communication effectiveness within organizations. Conducted at PT Perkebunan Nusantara III (Persero), the study found that heart-centered leadership indirectly influences managerial performance by improving self-efficacy.¹⁰ Second, in the journal *Spiritual Leadership: Leading with the Heart Based on Religious Ethics* by Muzakkir, heart-centered leadership is regarded as a form of spiritual

⁸Matthew James Engel, *Navigating the In-Between: Transformational Practices in the Church's Liminal Spaces*. Dissertation, Liberty University, 2024.

⁹BPS Gereja Toraja, *Himpunan Keputusan SSA XXV* (Rantepao: BPS Gereja Toraja, 2021), 62, 87, 88, 115; *Tata Gereja Toraja* (Rantepao: BPS Gereja Toraja, 2017), 23.

¹⁰Darmansyah Siregar, Zulkarnain Lubis, Vivi Gusrini Rahmadani, Muhammad Reza Aulia, dan Mehaga Bastanta Sinulingga, "Membangun Kepemimpinan dengan Hati untuk Meningkatkan Kinerja Manajerial Melalui Efikasi Diri dan Efektivitas Komunikasi di PT Perkebunan Nusantara III (Persero)," *Jurnal Optimalisasi*, Universitas Teuku Umar, diakses 26 September 2025, <https://jurnal.utu.ac.id/joptimalisasi/article/download/10374/pdf>.

leadership that emphasizes human values, ethics, and wisdom.¹¹ However, this study will specifically examine leadership within the church context, particularly among church leaders in the Gereja Toraja.

2. Research Method

With a reflective academic approach, this study employs library research as the primary foundation for exploring, analyzing, and formulating a transformative leadership paradigm rooted in Christian values within the church community. This method was chosen due to the conceptual nature of the study, in which understanding of church leadership is shaped by empirical data and constructs derived from scientific literature. The literature selected for this study meets several criteria: direct relevance to the theme of leadership, particularly Christian leadership; contextual alignment with organizations or institutions comparable to the church, such as educational or religious settings; and the inclusion of primary resources. The literature is analyzed using a thematic approach, identifying key themes such as spiritual values, empathy, authentic communication, and their impact on performance. A comparative analysis is conducted to examine similarities and differences among sources and to assess how each contributes to understanding the concept of "leading by heart" in the church context. Validity is maintained through source triangulation by comparing findings across literature originating from different disciplines and contexts.

A literature review allows researchers to explore various leadership theories, both general ones, such as transformational theory, and specific ones within the context of the church and spirituality. In the analysis, researchers critically review the literature, identify the main principles underlying transformative leadership, and explore their relevance in the church context, particularly within the Gereja Toraja. Researchers also compare various leadership approaches proposed by experts and then formulate a contextual and applicable synthesis. This approach allows researchers to develop a deep understanding of how heart-rooted leadership can become a relevant and transformative paradigm in contemporary church ministry.

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3. Results and Discussion

The Essence of Transformational Leadership

¹¹Muzakkir, "Spiritual Leadership: Memimpin dengan Hati Berlandaskan Etika Religius," *Jurnal Alkaffah*, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, diakses 26 September 2025, <https://jurnalalkaffah.or.id/index.php/alkaffah/article/download/23/24/44>.

Leadership, in an organizational context, plays a central role in the change process. Leaders occupy a strategic and dominant position because they are responsible for formulating the organization's structure, atmosphere, goals, and direction. Furthermore, leadership is also viewed as a distinctive ability, so that an individual is naturally recognized as a leader by those around him. In this regard, a leader's authority becomes a force capable of mobilizing the individuals he leads to achieve common goals. Another aspect of leadership is its ability to foster loyalty among followers. This view emphasizes the direct relationship between leaders and those led, in which leaders play a role in fostering obedience and commitment. Leadership also encompasses managerial activities such as developing job descriptions and providing appreciation and constructive criticism to team members. Furthermore, leadership is a persuasive process aimed at persuading others to implement the leader's vision. From a more sociological perspective, leadership can also emerge spontaneously in response to the existence of a group or organization.

Kenneth O. Gangel defines leadership as the comprehensive ability to move, influence, motivate, invite, direct, advise, guide, give orders, prohibit, even impose sanctions, and develop the individuals led so that they can work effectively and efficiently to achieve administrative goals. He emphasizes that leadership is not just a structural function, but also a dynamic process that involves interpersonal interaction and holistic human resource management.¹²

Transformational leadership is a leadership paradigm that goes beyond mere administrative management or routine supervision. It is the art and skill of inspiring profound change, in both individuals and organizations, through a powerful vision, integrity, and meaningful relationships between leaders and followers. In this model, leaders not only influence behaviour but also shape collective values and commitment toward a higher purpose.

James MacGregor Burns, the first person to introduce the term, defined transformative leadership as a process in which leaders and followers enhance each other's motivation and morale.¹³ Transformative leaders focus on achieving goals as well as on the personal and professional growth of those they lead. Bernard M. Bass developed this concept by emphasizing four key components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Leaders who integrate these four elements can create a dynamic and vibrant work environment, where each individual feels valued and encouraged to contribute their best.¹⁴

¹²Kenneth O. Gangel, *Developing Christian Educational Leaders* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 1998), 100.

¹³James MacGregor Burns, 20-21.

¹⁴Bernard M. Bass, *Transformational Leadership: Industrial, Military, and Educational Impact* (New Jersey, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 5-7.

According to Asmani¹⁵, a leader is an individual who has the capacity to influence others in a work context, with an approach based on power. Power is the ability to direct and influence others' actions regarding tasks that must be completed. Asmani identifies that sources of power can come from various aspects, including rewards, coercion, expertise, references, laws, and charisma. He also highlights the existence of spiritual or sacred sources of power, such as claims that power comes from God, often associated with bloodlines, heirlooms, or inheritance, as is common in royal systems.

In church leadership practice, a transformative approach serves as a strategic foundation for shaping the direction of ministry. Transformative leaders must be catalysts for change. They are expected to inspire congregations, foster collective hope, and formulate a transcendent and inclusive vision for the future. Thus, church leadership is oriented toward managing structures and also toward building a dynamic and transformative community of faith.

Leading By Heart

In the context of the church, particularly the Gereja Toraja, the need for leaders who lead from the heart is becoming increasingly urgent. This kind of leadership is theologically and sociologically relevant because it can reach and touch various levels of the congregation. This simple yet firm leadership style has a unique appeal, as it can build trust and emotional closeness with congregants from diverse backgrounds. Heart-based leadership can be explained through a three-dimensional, complementary approach: *Head, Heart, and Hand*. The head dimension refers to a leader's intellectual capacity to formulate visions and strategies. Heart reflects sincerity, commitment, and noble intentions that serve as the moral foundation for every leadership action. Hand symbolizes the ability to execute, real work, and the courage to realize the ideas and values believed in. These three elements, when synergized harmoniously, will give birth to consistent, repetitive habits that ultimately shape authentic and transformative leadership character.

In practice, ideal church leaders are those who are sensitive to the struggles and aspirations of their congregation. They present themselves not as authoritarian figures, but as servants who listen, understand, and embrace. This kind of leadership is not driven by material motivations or personal gain, but by a noble calling to realize larger spiritual and social ideals.

Transformative leaders in the Gereja Toraja exemplify risk and challenge. They are at the forefront when facing difficulties, but choose to stay behind when sharing results

¹⁵Jamal Ma'mur Asmani, *Management and Leadership of Professional Education*. (Yogyakarta: DIVA, 2009), 92.

or rewards. This attitude reflects the essence of servant leadership, which is a crucial foundation for building an inclusive, empowered, and transformative church.

The dimensions of leading by heart are:

Firstly, responsible church leadership. In the landscape of church leadership, working responsibly is not merely about carrying out administrative tasks, but also about reflecting a leader's spiritual depth and moral integrity. A leader who leads from the heart is not only a guiding figure but also an individual who dares to take a firm stand for the common good. He or she does not hesitate to correct mistakes made within their community, with the intention of building and restoring. As Leroy Eims emphasized, responsible leaders are open to criticism as part of the organizational growth process.¹⁶ The primary characteristic of a responsible leader is strong conviction. A leader with conviction is not easily swayed by external pressure or majority opinion. He or she is not merely a "robot" acting under the direction of others, but rather a leader who thinks independently, clearly, and dares to make decisions that sometimes deviate from the mainstream. In the church context, particularly within the Gereja Toraja, this attitude is crucial because the decisions made often involve profound spiritual and moral values. The firmness in saying "no" and the ability to guide the congregation through difficulties, as expressed by Paul G. Stoltz, are clear evidence of leadership rooted in the heart and responsibility.¹⁷

Responsible church leaders are also characterized by practical intelligence, the ability to navigate the complexities of life and ministry within a specific sociocultural context. Robert J. Sternberg, in Neil J. Salkind, explains that practical intelligence includes the ability to adapt, shape, and choose environments that align with life's purpose.¹⁸ In church leadership, this means leaders can balance analytical skills, creativity, and concrete action to address the congregation's needs and the challenges of ministry.

Responsibility in church leadership does not stop at good intentions, but must be realized in concrete performance. Stephan J. Motowidlo defines performance as the organizational value expected from individual actions.¹⁹ Meanwhile, John Mills emphasizes that performance includes the ability to act, achieve, and demonstrate skills and responsibility.²⁰ A leader's performance can be seen in work discipline, service

¹⁶Leroy Eims, *12 Characteristics of Effective Leadership*, translated by C. Th. Enni Sasanti (Bandung: Kalam Hidup, 1981), 11-24.

¹⁷Paul G. Stoltz, *Adversity Quotient: Turning Obstacles into Opportunities* (Jakarta: Grasindo Widiasarana Indonesia, 2000), 287.

¹⁸Robert J. Sternberg, *Encyclopedia of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 1 & 2, eds. Neil J. Salkind (California, London: Sage Publications, 2008), 989.

¹⁹Stephan J. Motowidlo, *Handbook of Psychology*, Vol. 12, eds. Walter C. Borman, Daniel R. Ilgen, and Richard J. Klimoski (Canada: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 40.

²⁰John Mills, et.al. *Competing Through Competences* (Cambridge, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9.

initiative, and specific contributions in their field. Performance is about results and how the process is carried out with dedication and integrity.

Responsible church leadership is courageous, grounded in conviction, and produces a real impact in the lives of the congregation. Leaders who lead from the heart not only direct but also live out Christian values in every decision and action. They set an example of decisiveness, openness, and hard work, building the church not as a mere institution, but as a living, growing community that strengthens one another in love and responsibility.

Secondly, demonstrates stability in emotional management. Within the framework of transformative leadership, particularly in church ministry, especially in the Gereja Toraja, emotional maturity is an inseparable foundation of a leader's character. Leaders with emotional stability are less easily provoked by interpersonal conflict and are less likely to harbour grudges against congregation members or ministry colleagues.²¹ Such emotional immaturity can cause tension and create an unhealthy ministry atmosphere. Conversely, emotionally mature leaders can transform experiences, including mistakes and challenges, into constructive learning and development tools for the communities they lead.

Transformative leadership demands analytical skills, creativity, and practical skills in managing organizational dynamics. Emil H. Tambunan emphasized that leaders with emotional stability will position themselves as servants.²² From this perspective, leadership is not about domination, but rather a commitment to serve those who are marginalized and forgotten, as expressed by Senjaya. This attitude of service opens up abroad space for participation for the congregation, including in the decision-making process, thus creating inclusive and dialogical leadership.²³

The leader is always at the forefront in demonstrating integrity and taking appropriate action. Myron Rush stated that servant leadership is realized through real examples.²⁴ In the context of the Gereja Toraja, this is reflected in how leaders actively engage with the congregation to achieve a shared vision. Service is carried out with an open heart, not driven by material incentives or regulatory pressure, but rather by a spiritual calling and commitment to Christian values.

In general, emotional maturity in leadership can be recognized through a sincere, dedicated, and high-integrity attitude toward the organization being led. Transformative leaders do not treat their congregations as objects but rather as partners who are

²¹Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics* (Michigan, MI: Baker, 2004), 120.

²²Emil H. Tambunan, *12 Keys to Success in Management and Leadership* (Bandung: Indonesia Publishing House, 1991), 46.

²³Senjaya, *Christian Leadership* (Yogyakarta: Kairos, 2004), 89-90.

²⁴Myron Rush, *New Leader*, trans. Rev. AJ Syauta (Jakarta: Immanuel, n.d.), 23.

respected and empowered to develop to their full potential. This kind of leadership fosters a warm, loving, and mutually supportive relationship between the leaders and those they lead. In the Gereja Toraja, this approach is not only theologically relevant but also culturally contextual, reflecting the collective spirit and family values that are characteristic of Toraja society.

Thirdly, human resource development. In church leadership, especially when grounded in the principles of service and love, the ability to develop others is one of the main indicators of transformative leadership. Leaders who lead with heart focus not only on achieving the institutional vision, but also on the personal growth of each individual they lead. This development is realized through sincere encouragement and actions that are not based on personal interests, but rather by a commitment to awaken new enthusiasm, courage, and hope in others, as emphasized by Charles R. Swindoll.²⁵

Transformative church leadership also demands openness as a primary requirement for building healthy and inclusive relationships. Diana L. Eck, as quoted by Antone Hope, states that diversity is not a barrier to building acceptance between individuals, but rather an opportunity for mutual give and take for mutual transformation.²⁶ This openness is manifested through a willingness to dialogue, which allows leaders to deeply understand the conditions and struggles of others, thus creating relationships free from prejudice.

Leaders who lead from the heart recognize and acknowledge others' potential and actively help them develop their capacities. They serve as a source of encouragement for those who have experienced failure and as a supporter, helping them rise and continue their journey of service. Recognizing individual strengths, successes, and development is an integral part of a constructive and empowering leadership style.

Peter F. Haddon identifies several strategies for developing others that are relevant to church leadership. These include leading by example, paying special attention to individual accomplishments, offering open praise and private criticism, setting clear goals, and sharing tasks fairly.²⁷ A positive attitude that treats others as partners in ministry is the key to build healthy and productive relationships.

Communication is a central element in this development process. Kathryn Dindia emphasizes that the quality of relationships is largely determined by the quality of communication.²⁸ Meanwhile, L. Edna Rogers and Valentin Escudero state that

²⁵Charles R. Swindoll, *Solidify Your Beliefs*, trans. Yahya R (Surabaya: Yakin, tt), 49.

²⁶Hope S. Antone, *Contextual Christian Education*, translated by Maryam Sutanto (Jakarta: Gunung Mulia, 2010), 43.

²⁷Peter F. Haddon, *Mastering Personal and Interpersonal Skills* (London: Thorogood, 1999), 204-209.

²⁸Kathryn Dindia, "Definitions and Perspectives on Relational Maintenance Communications" in *Maintaining Relationships Through Communication*, eds. Daniel J. Canary and Marianne Dainton (London, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 1.

communication is the core of social relationships, an interactive process that shapes, builds, and directs the dynamics of relationships within a community.²⁹ In the church context, open and empathetic communication is a key tool in building a community that supports and grows together.

Church leaders who lead with their hearts provide a visionary presence and develop others, including those they serve. Through relationships built on love, trust, and active involvement, they can give clear shape and direction to the church organization they lead. This kind of leadership builds structure and fosters a vibrant and transformative community spirit.

Fourthly, beware of the three main temptations. In the practice of church leadership, particularly that grounded in a spirituality of service and love, leaders who lead from the heart must possess high moral sensitivity and integrity. One form of this sensitivity is an awareness of three primary temptations that often threaten the purity and effectiveness of leadership: wealth, deviant love, and power. If unchecked, these three aspects can damage the relationship between leaders and congregations and obscure the purpose of the church's ministry as a community of faith. The temptation of wealth. In many contexts, money is often referred to as the "king of the world," possessing extraordinary allure. In organizational leadership, including in churches, money can be a tempting tool for influencing behaviour and decisions. For example, incentives or other forms of compensation can encourage compliance, but without ethics and clarity of purpose, they can create transactional and manipulative relationships. Leaders who lead with their hearts will not use money as the primary instrument in building loyalty, but instead rely on example and trust. Rampant corruption in various sectors reflects a dulled conscience. The true leaders will not use positions and opportunities for personal gain, either covertly or overtly. Bribery for position or influence is a form of abuse of responsibility that contradicts Christian values. Transformative church leadership demands adherence to the principles of honesty and responsible resource management for the glory of God and the welfare of the congregation.

The temptation of love. Love is a divine gift that should be exercised according to God's will. However, when love is misused, it can turn into a destructive temptation. In the context of church leadership, moral integrity in personal relationships is crucial. Hanlee Barnette emphasizes the importance of sexual purity before and after marriage.³⁰ When leaders fail to maintain ethical boundaries in relationships, the potential for deviations such as adultery and infidelity can arise.

²⁹L. Edna Rogers and Valentin Escudero, "Theoretical Foundations" in *Relational Communication*, eds. Edna Rogers and Valentin Escudero (New Jersey, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 3.

³⁰Henlee H. Barnette, *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1961), 117.

Daniel Ronda³¹ and Richard M. Gula³² identify various factors that lead leaders, including church leaders, to fall into this temptation, such as ego conquest, social pressure, weak religious commitment, and sexual addiction. Leaders who lead from the heart maintain the sanctity of relationships and do not use closeness or position to fulfil personal desires. They recognize that every action has broad spiritual and social implications, and therefore, choose to live in faithfulness and self-control.

The temptation of power. Power in church leadership should be used to build, not to subjugate. However, the temptation to abuse power often manifests itself in the form of domination and exploitation. Unaware leaders can use their authority to impose their will or create unhealthy dependencies, practices that hinder productivity and undermine the dignity of those they lead.

Furthermore, the desire to gain power through unethical means, such as buying positions or manipulating the system, violates the principles of servant leadership. True church leaders do not justify any means for power, but rather position themselves as humble servants committed to the truth. Leadership that leads from the heart will always prioritize justice, participation, and respect for others as a concrete manifestation of Christ's love.

Transformative church leadership requires vigilance against temptations that can undermine the integrity and spirituality of ministry. By leading from the heart, a leader protects himself from deviation and sets a moral and spiritual example for the community he leads. In the context of the Gereja Toraja and other churches, this kind of leadership is a crucial foundation for building a strong, clean, and effective church for the glory of God and the congregation's well-being.

Fear of God as the Foundation of Church Leadership

In church leadership, the quality of a leader's relationship with God is a fundamental element that determines the direction and integrity of his or her ministry. Leadership rooted in the heart cannot be separated from a fear of God, which is reflected in total dependence on Him. This dependence is not merely a religious expression, but rather an existential recognition that humans, as finite and fallen creatures, are incapable of producing true goodness without divine help. In this relationship, humans recognize their limitations, while God is present as the absolute source of truth, goodness, and power.

God is the moral and spiritual standard for every leader's actions. He is not only the organizer and maintainer of creation, but also determines the direction of the lives of His people. Therefore, church leaders who lead from the heart will place themselves

³¹Daniel Ronda, *Leadership Wisdom* (Bandung: Kalam Hidup, 2011), 109.

³²Richard M. Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1996), 94-96.

under God's sovereignty, surrendering their entire lives and ministries to divine leadership. Like the ancestors of the faith and the nation of Israel, who experienced God's inclusion in their life history, leaders who fear God no longer live according to their own will but submit completely to God's will as be revealed in the Word and spiritual experience.

The fear of God in church leadership is not a ritual to be displayed, but rather a deep awareness integrated into daily life. Leaders who live in submission to God will demonstrate their dependence through prayer and sincere gratitude. They recognize that their entire existence and the success of their ministry are rooted in God's love and faithful presence. In light of Galatians 2:20, leaders who lead from the heart no longer live for themselves, but for Christ, the centre and direction of their lives.

This kind of leadership gives birth to authentic and impactful spirituality. When a church leader places God as the centre of authority and source of wisdom, every decision, action, and relationship they build will reflect the values of God's kingdom. They do not seek recognition but rather serve with humility and spiritual sensitivity. Fear of the Lord becomes a transformative force that shapes character, strengthens integrity, and guides leaders in responsibly and lovingly carrying out their divine calling.

4. Conclusion

Heart-led leadership demands more than administrative skills or spiritual rhetoric. It demands integrity, sincerity, and moral courage rooted in a God-fearing heart. Leaders who lead with their hearts are responsible, emotionally mature, and able to develop others through healthy and loving relationships. They are present as visionaries and also as humble servants, role models, and guides in difficult times.

In carrying out their duties, true church leaders are aware of the primary temptations, riches, deviant love, and power, that can corrupt the purity of ministry. They choose to live in submission to God, making prayer and spiritual dependence the centre of their strength. With practical acumen and deep spirituality, they can make sound decisions, build inclusive communities, and direct the church organization toward noble goals.

This kind of leadership not only builds a strong church structure but also fosters a congregation that thrives on love, trust, and active participation. Amidst the complexities of today, the Gereja Toraja and other churches need leaders who lead not only with their heads but also with their hearts and hands, creating a vision of ministry that is vibrant, impactful, and Christ-centred.

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