



Transformational Leadership in the Presbyterian-Synodal System: A Study of KIBAID Church Based on 1 Corinthians 9

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ABSTRACT

The presbyteral synodal system was John Calvin's response to the Pope's enormous authority and doctrinal deviations. In general, churches that adhere to this system are Calvinist denominations with well-established organizations and large memberships. Unlike the KIBAID Church, which is an evangelical church still in its early stages, the role of an oriented leader is very much needed. This fact raises questions because the KIBAID Church adheres to the presbyterial-synodal system, in which pastors, elders, and deacons lead and make decisions together. The research question is how transformational leadership, grounded in 1 Corinthians 9, relates to the presbyterial-synodal system, which emphasizes collective leadership, while Paul was an authoritative leader. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and synodal presbyterialism. The method used is qualitative-descriptive research with a hermeneutical approach. The principle of synodal presbyterianism is that all presbyters have equal rights, resulting in lengthy bureaucracy and making it difficult for leaders to realize the church's vision as part of Christ's vision. This study offers a transformative presbyterial synodal model, combining presbyterial synodal and transformative leadership, based on 1 Corinthians 9, in which pastors exercise authority as transformative leaders through the concept of walking (sun hodos) with elders and deacons as team leaders.

Keywords: Christian Community, Church Leadership, Presbyterial, Synodal, Transformational Leadership

Article history

Submitted: May 16, 2025

Revised: April 20, 2026

Accepted: July 7, 2026

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How to cite this article:

Suanglangi, H. (2026). Transformational Leadership in the Presbyterian-Synodal System: A Study of KIBAID Church Based on 1 Corinthians 9. *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat*. 10(2):193-211. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v10i2.1061>

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INTRODUCTION

The New Testament portrays the early Christian community as a model of faith expressed through worship, discipleship, ministry, and leadership. It reflects the identity of the church (*ekklesia*) as both individual believers and a collective body called out of darkness into God's marvelous fellowship (1 Pet. 2:9; Gibaut, 2015). Adiprasetya (2023) emphasizes *diaklesia* as the church's existential outreach and mission, rather than merely a formal definition. Believers are united within the community by a common calling—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all (Eph. 4:5–6). Acts 4:32–37 highlights their distinctive characteristics—unity, love, and fellowship—which serve as a model of the ideal church.

Building upon the understanding that the church is fundamentally a community, it is subsequently organized through a management system. However, both its principles and approaches differ significantly from those of secular management. While the church on earth is manifested through institutional forms, it is not governed by a legal system created solely by human authority. Although the church as an institution has regulations governing ministry, governance, doctrine, worship, rituals, property, and finances, these regulations ultimately derive from theological convictions. Such theological foundations are then translated into norms of conduct and practices that are implemented within the framework of ecclesiology (Hill, 2016).

As an institution, the church inevitably adopts a particular leadership model that shapes its operations. This argument is supported by the fact that every church denomination has its own leadership structure, such as episcopal, congregational, papal, or presbyterian governance (Berkhof, 2021, p. 650). The presbyterian-synodal system integrates the concept of *presbuteros* (πρεσβύτερος), which literally means “elders” or mature leaders in age and character (Berkhof, 2021; Thayer et al., 2017), as the highest ecclesiastical office in the New Testament, comparable to the leaders of the synagogue. The term *synodal* is derived from the Greek words *syn* (“together”) and *hodos* (“way” or “journey”) (Angga & Firmanto, 2023). Together, these concepts describe a synergistic and reciprocal relationship among elders, deacons, and pastors who jointly lead the church through collective governance.

Presbyterian-synodal churches, such as the Toraja Church, GMIT, GPIB, GPM, and GMIM, trace their origins to the Calvinist *Gereformeerde Zendingsbond* (GZB). These churches developed a well-established elder-based leadership system that emphasizes Reformed theology and ecclesiology (de Jong, 2023; van den End, 1994). Global examples include the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) in the United States, both of which continue to uphold a strong Presbyterian tradition (Feldmeth et al., 2022, p. 4). In contrast, KIBAID emerged from the evangelistic ministry of Robert A. Jaffray of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), whose ministry was strongly influenced by A.B. Simpson. Through the pioneering efforts of Benyamin Bokko and La'lang at SAM (now Jaffray Theological Seminary), the movement established KIBAT (*Keperloean Indjil Bangsa Toradja*) in 1936 (Lewis, 2017; van den End, 2010). Because the C&MA's early focus was primarily on evangelistic mission, KIBAID did not initially develop a comprehensive presbyterian-synodal leadership structure. As a result, organizational and

church governance challenges emerged, reflecting a leadership system that has remained institutionally underdeveloped in several respects to the present day.

The presbyterian-synodal system excels in collective team leadership (*syn hodos*, meaning “walking together”), in which the church council—consisting of pastors, elders, and deacons—shares authority, as emphasized by Calvin (Sidianto et al., 2022). In Indonesia, this system has been implemented by Calvinist churches that originated from Dutch missionary efforts (van Harling, 2025, p. 21). One of its primary strengths is its ability to prevent personal authoritarianism, serving as a response to the centralized authority of the Roman Catholic Church. However, this system also has several weaknesses. Its multilayered bureaucracy, extending from the local church level to the synod, often slows decision-making (Darmadi & Paruntu, 2024; Siregar & Hermanto, 2023). In addition, external influences, such as donors or other interest groups, may exert significant influence, while broader congregational participation remains limited (Searing et al., 2025). For pastors serving smaller congregations, church council meetings can sometimes hinder rapid innovation and timely responses to local ministry needs. At the local church level, decisions must be made collectively by the presbyters. Such bureaucratic procedures often create unique challenges for pastors seeking to develop local congregations, particularly smaller churches, since agreements and mutual understandings must first be reached through deliberations within the church council. This governance structure was originally designed to prevent the concentration of power in the hands of a single individual in response to the conditions of the Roman Catholic Church at the time. Nevertheless, I contend that every form of church government possesses both strengths and weaknesses; therefore, its implementation should be adapted to the context and needs of each church.

KIBAID Church adopted the presbyterian-synodal system of church governance for several reasons. According to Rev. Titus Sampe (2025)—a former Synod Chairman for two terms and Synod Secretary for two terms, who was serving as Synod Secretary of KIBAID Church at the time—the church initially lacked a clearly defined system of governance. However, in 1990, the Directorate General of Protestant Christian Community Guidance of the Republic of Indonesia requested that the leadership of KIBAID Church formally specify its system of governance in its Articles of Association and Bylaws (AD/ART) or church constitution.

As a follow-up to this request, the 10th Synod Assembly in 1992 resolved and officially established the presbyterian-synodal system as the governing structure of the KIBAID Church, even though the church’s internal organizational needs did not primarily drive this decision. To this day, the church continues to adhere to this system. Rev. Markus Lingga (2025)—former Chairman of KIBAID Theological Seminary Makale, former Classis Chairman, and pastor within KIBAID Church—highlighted the difference in leadership patterns before the adoption of the presbyterian-synodal system. At that time, full authority rested with the congregation, indicating a congregational approach, although this model was not explicitly stated in official church documents.

Based on the background described above and considering that KIBAID Church adopts a presbyterian-synodal form of governance, the author argues that leadership is crucial to

enabling the organization to accelerate its development in response to contemporary challenges and to fulfill the *missio ecclesiae* as an implementation of the *missio Dei*. Furthermore, the KIBAID organization is still largely composed of local churches in the early stages of ministry and therefore requires pastors with strong leadership capacity. For this reason, when these smaller churches are required to operate within lengthy bureaucratic structures and collective decision-making processes, church growth may be hindered, and pastors may become limited to performing routine ministry functions rather than providing visionary leadership and organizational development.

Several previous studies have examined these two aspects. The presbyterian-synodal system, in particular, has been discussed by several scholars. First, Melial and Tarigan (2016) conducted a historical study of the presbyterian-synodal system as a form of church government, examining its implementation within the GBKP from 1941 to 2015 and its contemporary revitalization. Second, Sidianto et al. (2022) investigated presbyterian-synodal leadership in relation to pastoral ministry, particularly among GBI pastors. Third, Billing (2022) examined the importance of both initial and continuing formation for priests and bishops regarding synodality, arguing that such formation is essential for transforming ministry culture from a purely “governmental” model toward a more collaborative and participatory pastoral style. Fourth, Hendra (2023) studied the presbyterian-synodal system in the Toraja Church Region II and linked it to decision implementation and leadership mechanisms. Fifth, Luma et al. (2024) explored the challenges and decision-making processes within presbyterian-synodal church governance. Among these studies, the distinguishing feature of the present research is its focus on the presbyterian-synodal system within the KIBAID Church. To the best of the author’s knowledge, no previous study has specifically examined this issue within the KIBAID context.

Several scholars have also examined transformative leadership. First, Venter and Hermans (2020) studied the theoretical framework of transformative leadership in relation to the leadership competencies of pastors in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). Using a practice-oriented Delphi research methodology, the study sought to develop a consensus among leadership experts regarding a transformative leadership competency framework for pastors in the DRC in South Africa. Second, F.V. and Hermans (2020) investigated the determinants of spirituality and contingency situations in relation to transformational leadership. Third, Abolade (2024) examined a transformational leadership approach to supporting sustainable Christian mission engagement within communities. Fourth, Gunawan et al. (2022) explored transformational Christian leadership based on 2 Timothy 3:10 and related it to the role of Christian leaders in the era of disruption. Fifth, Sanjaya (2024) examined transformative leadership as an exploration of Christian values in the context of technological advancement in the digital age. Sixth, Tagwirei (2024) studied the revitalization of Christian leadership integrity, emphasizing the transformation of leaders from a position of being “served” to one of fully “serving.” What distinguishes the present study from the previous research is that transformative leadership is examined through Paul’s perspective in 1 Corinthians 9. Furthermore, no previous study has explored the relationship between these two leadership

models—transformative leadership and the presbyterian-synodal system. Therefore, the author argues that transformative presbyterian-synodal leadership offers a relevant response to the current condition of the KIBAIID Church. The analysis of Paul's commitments and statements inspires pastors and church leaders to become transformative leaders willing to initiate breakthroughs within the presbyterian-synodal system and to bring about organizational change that moves the church toward a more effective and sustainable future.

The research question of this study is: How is transformative leadership, as presented by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9, related to the presbyterian-synodal system, particularly about the role of leaders within that leadership structure? The objective of this research is to examine transformative leadership in light of 1 Corinthians 9 and, subsequently, to relate its principles to the presbyterian-synodal system.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study design focused on KIBAIID Church, combined with a biblical-theological study of 1 Corinthians 9. The research seeks to understand the situation under investigation by constructing participants' perspectives through open-ended interviews, observation, document analysis, and triangulation. These methods are used to examine and understand the views, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors of particular individuals or communities. According to Gilbert et al. (2018) qualitative and descriptive research approaches are often used together to analyze the meanings embedded within a phenomenon, thereby generating conceptually innovative contributions.

The primary literature used to examine the presbyterian-synodal system within the KIBAIID Church consists of the Church Order, the primary source, along with several supporting documents as secondary sources. In examining Paul's model of transformative leadership in 1 Corinthians 9, this study employs a hermeneutical approach that combines syntactical analysis derived from G.W. Bromilley's (1985) theory with semantic analysis within a biblical-theological framework. Furthermore, a historical-theological approach is employed to examine church governance systems, while systematic correlation and theological reflection are applied to analyze the presbyterian-synodal system. These approaches ultimately lead to conclusions that offer a new perspective on the subject. In analyzing the data, this study adopts Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework for establishing data trustworthiness. Several validation techniques are employed, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These criteria are applied to all sources used to examine the governance system of the KIBAIID Church.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Presbyterian-Synodalism as a System of Church Government

In 1541, John Calvin, at the request of the congregation of Geneva, developed a new ecclesiastical structure as outlined in the *Ordonnances Ecclésiastiques*. This church order document described four principal offices and their respective responsibilities (Elungan &

Tamaweol, 2024, p. 100). The first office, that of the pastor, was responsible for preaching the Word of God, administering the sacraments, and maintaining church discipline. The second office, the *docteur* (teacher), focused on the teaching of systematic theology, ranging from catechetical instruction to advanced theological education. The third office, the *ancien* (elder), provided moral oversight of the congregation and assisted pastors in matters of church discipline. The fourth office, the diaconate, was responsible for social ministry to the poor and the sick, including the collection and distribution of charitable assistance in partnership with Geneva's hospitals (Kimbal & Sumakul, 2021).

Calvin organized these offices into two structural entities: *La Vénérable Compagnie des Pasteurs*, a fellowship of pastors and teachers that met weekly, and *Le Consistoire* (the Consistory), a collaborative assembly of pastors and elders that met periodically to make ecclesiastical decisions (Kimbal & Sumakul, 2021). Within this Presbyterian-synodal framework, appointments were neither hierarchical nor autocratic but were carried out through a democratic election process. Berkhof (2021) identifies two dimensions of calling: an external calling, referring to the collective selection by the congregation to identify suitable candidates for the offices of elder or deacon; and an internal calling, referring to the divine conviction of the Holy Spirit that assures individuals of their intellectual, spiritual, and vocational qualifications.

A critical examination of this process reveals a theological tension. While church elections emphasize communal participation, reflecting the ethos of the Reformation, Paul's instructions to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:1–13) and Titus (Tit. 1:5–9) grant apostolic authority to church leaders to appoint qualified individuals according to specific criteria, without any explicit reference to universal voting by the congregation. Calvin's methodology combined communal participation with spiritual oversight, demonstrating a balance between *sola scriptura* and Geneva's local ecclesiastical context. This synthesis continues to provide an important framework for understanding church governance within the modern Reformed tradition.

Transformative Christian Leadership

The capacity of its leadership largely determines an organization's success. Reave (2005) argues that an organization's ability to achieve success is directly correlated with the quality of its leadership, making leadership the primary factor that distinguishes success from failure. Maxwell (2011) defines leadership as influence—nothing more, nothing less—whereby leaders gain followers through their ability to persuade others to embrace a shared vision.

Christian leadership encompasses two primary dimensions: the spiritual and missional dimensions (Mothoagae & Prior, 2014). The spiritual dimension is reflected in the leader's personal spiritual life, which inspires followers, while the missional dimension emphasizes the leader's responsibility to fulfill the divine mandate. The concept of transformative leadership was first introduced by Downton (1973) and later systematically developed by Burns (2008) in his work *Leadership*. Burns (2008) emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between leaders and followers, in which leaders draw on their followers' motivations to achieve shared goals while

simultaneously enhancing their followers' motivation, morality, and individual potential by attending to their needs.

Within the Christian context, transformative leadership is a fundamental pillar because leaders serve as agents of change who respond effectively to the challenges of their time (Ronda, 2019). Bass and Riggio (2006) explain that this approach motivates followers to move beyond conventional expectations, enabling them to achieve performance levels that exceed both planned targets and even their own expectations.

Bass (1985) identified four dimensions of transformative leadership based on interview analysis and questionnaire development. First, Idealized Influence. This dimension, often referred to as leadership charisma, positions the leader as a moral role model and a primary source of inspiration (Northouse, 2016). Leaders who demonstrate idealized influence exhibit high ethical standards, which are reflected in followers' perceptions and observations of their behavior. Maxwell (2011) describes this as "Level 5 Leadership"—the pinnacle of the leadership pyramid—where leaders not only achieve success but also inspire lasting transformation in others. Second, Inspirational Motivation. Leaders inspire awareness of shared values, stimulate the collective imagination, and foster emotional commitment to a common vision (Bass, 1985). Northouse (2016) further explains that such visionary communication enhances team spirit and strengthens the affective bonds among members. Third, Intellectual Stimulation. Leaders encourage innovation, creativity, and experimentation without penalizing mistakes, while actively involving followers in problem-solving processes. Every idea contributed by followers is valued, even when it differs from the leader's own perspective or vision (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Fourth, Individualized Consideration. Leaders serve as mentors, providing personal attention, addressing individual needs, and guiding followers to reach their fullest potential (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Transformative Leadership According to Paul

Exposition of 1 Corinthians 9

In constructing a model of transformative leadership based on Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 9, the author employs a syntactic and semantic analysis of several key phrases and terms to identify Paul's perspective and position on transformative leadership.

First, the phrase "Have I not seen Jesus?" (v. 1). The word "seen" is derived from the Greek term *έώρακα* (*heoraka*), which appears in the perfect tense (Strong, 2010, p. 3708), with the root word *ώραω* (*horaō*), meaning "to see," "to understand," "to recognize," "to experience," or "to visit" (Newman, 1993, p. 127). In this context, the author prefers to interpret the term as both "seeing" and "knowing" in relation to Jesus, since Paul's encounter with Jesus was intended not merely as a visual experience but as a means of recognizing and knowing Him. Schuler (2023) asserts that Paul identified himself as an apostle because of his calling through his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul had a personal encounter with Christ, which later resulted in writings that the Church continues to receive and use as the Word of God.

Second, the phrase “I am an apostle” (v. 2). The key term is derived from *εἰμι* (*eimi*). This word appears in several contexts where God reveals Himself, such as in the Septuagint (LXX) in Exodus 3:14, and is also used by Jesus in reference to Himself in John 8:58 (Bromilley, 1985). Schuler (2023) argues that Paul was called and appointed as an apostle, and that this calling was rooted in a Christophany. Paul affirms that he is truly an apostle of Christ to the Corinthian church. Smith (2008) comments that Paul sowed the seed of the gospel in fulfillment of his role and responsibility as an apostle. Thus, Paul emphasizes that he is an apostle entrusted with proclaiming the truth of God.

Third, the term “right” (vv. 12–15, 18). The key concept in these verses is the notion of rights. The word “right” is derived from *ἐξουσία* (*exousia*), which refers to the capacity to act as well as delegated authority (Bromilley, 1985). Smith (2008) asserts that Paul possessed the rights of an apostle, including the right to receive material support, just as those who serve at the altar are entitled to such support. The concept of rights lies at the heart of Paul’s argument, particularly concerning material support connected to his apostolic ministry. Furthermore, Paul employs the genitive form in verse 12 to emphasize their legitimate association with his apostolic office (Smith, 2008).

Paul discusses rights within the context of “ministry”, stating that he serves without exercising his rights as a preacher of the Gospel. Therefore, in verses 12b and 18, Paul uses the concept of rights in the dative sense, indicating that he chooses not to exercise those rights. In verse 15, Paul even declares that he would rather die than take advantage of them. Smith (2008) argues that, by virtue of his apostolic authority and the Lord Jesus' command (v. 14), Paul had the legitimate right to receive material support, including food. Nevertheless, Paul deliberately refrained from exercising this right so that nothing would hinder people from believing the Gospel. Paul also connects the issue of rights to the broader discussion concerning food offered to idols. He argues that believers should not always insist on exercising their rights if doing so could cause others to stumble in their faith, as discussed in 1 Corinthians 8:9. Paul concludes his discussion of apostolic rights with a rhetorical question: “What then is my reward?” His reward is that he can preach the Gospel free of charge and without exercising all his rights (1 Cor. 9:18).

Fourth, the expression “necessity is laid upon me” (v. 16). The key term comes from the Greek word *ἀνάγκη* (*anankē*), which means compulsion, constraint, or necessity. In this context, it refers to Paul’s unavoidable apostolic calling within God’s divine plan (Bromilley, 1985). Newman (1993) also defines *ἀνάγκη* as necessity, coercion, or being compelled by obligation.

According to Paul’s understanding, preaching the Gospel involves both the surrender of personal rights and the fulfillment of a mandatory divine obligation for every servant of Christ (Lintarwati et al., 2022, p. 86). Ellington (2017) asserts that in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul discusses himself and the Gospel more extensively than in other chapters because he intentionally integrates the message of the Gospel with his own life and ministry. According to Ellington (2017), Paul regarded personal example as crucial, recognizing that human life itself is an effective medium for communicating a message. Yet, in proclaiming the Gospel, he was required to present a model of life that challenged the prevailing mindset of the Corinthian

believers, thereby making his message even more compelling and significant. Ellington (2017) further argues that Paul's statement in Romans 1:16—that the Gospel is the power of God for salvation—is closely related to his declaration in 1 Corinthians 9:16. For Paul, therefore, preaching the Gospel was not a matter of personal pride or achievement but an obligation that had to be fulfilled. It was not merely a voluntary choice, as in the prophetic callings of Jeremiah or Ezekiel, but a divine mandate imposed upon him. This conviction is reflected in Paul's emphatic declaration: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" The expression conveys an absolute obligation that must be carried out without exception.

Fifth, the expression "made myself a servant" (*ἐδούλωσα*). This term is derived from the root word *δοῦλος* (*doulos*), meaning "slave" or "servant" (Newman, 1993). It serves as a key term in Paul's emphasis on life and ministry for the sake of the Gospel of Christ (vv. 19–23). Krause (1995) comments that Paul faced significant challenges because he lived between two highly contrasting cultures. Yet, in the exercise of his freedom, Paul voluntarily chose to become a servant to the believers in Corinth. This decision to serve all people was not an easy one; nevertheless, Paul embraced it in order to win as many people as possible for Christ (*τοὺς πλείονας*), so that they might come to faith. In this passage, Paul uses the verb "to win" (*κερδήσω*) five times. Rudolph (2012), however, offers a different interpretation from a socio-historical perspective. He argues that Paul employs nomistic language and emphasizes his contextualization among both Jewish and Gentile communities. Although the passage certainly reflects Paul's willingness to adapt himself to different groups, I contend that his actions represent a radical commitment to devoting himself to all people for the sake of Christ, at whatever cost.

Sixth, the phrase "without aim" (v. 26). This expression is derived from the Greek word *ἀδῆλως* (*adēlōs*), an adjective meaning "without a definite purpose" or "without a goal in mind" (Newman, 1993). In this context, Paul emphasizes that he does not act without purpose. He illustrates this point through the analogies of a runner who does not run aimlessly and a boxer who does not strike the air. Paul's statement underscores the importance of intentionality and clear purpose in ministry.

Seventh, the expression "exercise self-control" or "master it completely" (vv. 25, 27). This concept appears twice in the Indonesian Bible, in verses 25 and 27, but is expressed through two different Greek terms. In verse 25, the word *ἐγκρατεύεται* (*enkrateuetai*) refers to the practice of self-discipline or self-control. In verse 27, Paul uses the term *ὑπωπιάζω* (*hupōpiazō*), which means "to discipline harshly," "to subdue," or "to keep under control" (Newman, 1993). In addition, Paul employs the term *δουλαγωγῶ* (*doulagōgō*), meaning "to make it my slave," to describe his own life of submission and discipline. Through this expression, Paul portrays himself as one who willingly lives as a servant, subjecting himself to fulfil his apostolic calling (Bromilley, 1985). The terms *ὑπωπιάζω* (*hupōpiazō*) and *δουλαγωγῶ* (*doulagōgō*) together emphasize that Paul rigorously trains and disciplines his body, bringing it under control so that he may submit himself completely as a servant of Christ.

Characteristics of Transformative Leaders from Paul's Perspective

Based on the syntactical and semantic analysis of the key terms discussed above, the author identifies several characteristics of transformative leadership derived from Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 9:1–2, 11–16, and 19–27.

First, a transformative leader is one who has a personal faith experience with Christ (v. 1). Paul was a person who had encountered Christ personally. He had come to know Christ intimately (cf. Phil. 3:7–8), and one of the essential qualifications of an apostle was having encountered Christ. An encounter with Christ represents the practical outworking of knowing Him, resulting in a life marked by deep spirituality, which can only be found in Christ (Jones et al., 2018, p. 5). Venter and Hermans (2020), in their study of transformative leadership within the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, identify five key dimensions: spirituality, sense-making, visioning, relationships, and implementation. Among these dimensions, spirituality demonstrates the strongest relationship with transformative leadership. The author argues that although the study was conducted within the African context of the Democratic Republic of Congo, spirituality expressed through a personal knowledge of Christ remains the essence of all forms of leadership. Therefore, when Paul declares, “Have I not seen Jesus?”, he is expressing the spiritual dimension of his leadership—a transformative leader who has experienced a genuine encounter with Christ.

Second, a transformative leader possesses confidence in his or her calling. Paul firmly affirms that he is an apostle to the Corinthians and that the Corinthian congregation itself is the fruit of his apostolic ministry. When Paul defended himself against his critics, he was essentially expressing his conviction that he had genuinely received a calling from the Lord Jesus to become His apostle, grounded in his personal faith experience. Paul followed Christ because Christ is the way and the truth for all people, and it is especially important for a Christian leader to be a follower of Christ, since leaders are responsible for conveying that message to their followers (Boyer, 2021). Paul was fully confident in his apostolic identity and could therefore say, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1). To imitate Christ means that Paul had become a follower of Christ because he had personally encountered Him.

Third, a transformative leader is willing to make sacrifices. The greatest inspiration for any leader is to learn from Jesus. Jesus demonstrated His love for the Father and for His people through His self-sacrifice on the cross (Henson & Hemby, 2023). Therefore, for a leader who seeks to imitate Christ, sacrifice must become an integral part of leadership. The Apostle Paul chose not to exercise his right to earn his living through the preaching of the Gospel, as stated in verses 13–14. To avoid creating any obstacle to the proclamation of the Gospel, he willingly sacrificed his rights and supported himself financially.

Ganu (2018) categorizes courage into two forms: physical courage, which involves confronting physical risks and dangers, and moral courage, which may also involve personal costs or threats. Examples of leaders who demonstrated moral courage include Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, both of whom challenged the status quo and initiated transformative change. Paul exemplified this kind of moral courage by refusing to exercise his rights for personal gain.

His sacrifice was so profound that he declared, “I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast” (cf. 1 Cor. 9:15). Paul therefore exemplifies a leader with moral courage, one who does not prioritize personal gain but willingly sacrifices for a higher purpose.

Fourth, a transformative leader is committed to the truth of the Gospel (v. 16). Commitment speaks to the character of one’s life, particularly integrity grounded in truth. Chimakati (2024) argues that Paul presented himself as one who acted under divine authority rather than on the basis of human capacity, thereby demonstrating the credibility of his leadership. For Paul, preaching the Gospel was not a matter of choice but a necessity.

A leader must both live out and proclaim the truth of the Gospel. Truth must become a defining characteristic of a Christian leader, who not only proclaims it but also embodies it, because his or her life is grounded in that very truth (Jones et al., 2018). This aspect also highlights the importance of integrity and credibility, which form the foundation of effective leadership and constitute the essential value of a leader (Henson & Hemby, 2023). The author contends that truth is the source of a leader’s integrity and must be demonstrated through both proclamation and personal example. Paul emphasizes that he had sown spiritual seeds among the Corinthian believers and regarded the preaching of the Gospel as an unavoidable obligation. This is why he declared, “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (cf. 1 Cor. 9:16). Indeed, Paul was willing to become whatever was necessary in order to win people to Christ.

Fifth, a transformative leader is willing to pay the price for his or her calling. Paul’s statement becomes particularly inspiring when he expresses his willingness to serve all people for the sake of the Gospel of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19–23). By making himself a servant, Paul simultaneously adapted himself to those whom he served and identified with their circumstances (Andi et al., 2020). He deliberately positioned himself within both Jewish and Gentile contexts, willingly subjecting himself to all people so that the Gospel of Christ might be proclaimed and that they might be won to Christ. Paul’s example demonstrates that transformative leadership requires not only a commitment to a calling but also a willingness to bear the personal costs necessary to fulfill it effectively.

Richards (1997) argues that verses 19–23 serve as Paul’s affirmation of and commitment to the Gospel of Christ and his calling as an apostle of Christ. These verses reveal the motivation that shaped his entire ministry and simultaneously provide the framework for his ministry philosophy. According to Richards (1997), Paul regarded his ministry as a unique and privileged assignment from God, and the very act of carrying out that assignment was, in itself, his reward. Malcolm (2013) further explains that Paul’s actions demonstrate self-restraint, particularly his willingness to abstain from foods that might cause others to stumble. For this reason, Paul describes himself as a servant of all people, refusing to follow his own desires for the sake of Christ. The author views Paul’s statement as an example of “paying the price,” because he was willing to do whatever was necessary to fulfill his noble calling. A transformative leader, therefore, must remain focused on the mission rather than on personal interests or ambitions.

Sixth, a transformative leader is a leader who possesses a clear purpose and vision. Paul employs the analogy of an athletic competition, stating that although all runners participate in the race, only one receives the prize. Paul emphasizes that he does not run aimlessly and is not a boxer who strikes the air. This illustrates that a Christian leader must possess a clear purpose or vision that is aligned with God's vision. Ming (2022) argues that Saul failed before God because he was not sensitive to God's commands as the guiding purpose of his ministry and failed to place God above all else. Church organizations and Christian leaders are therefore called to pursue not their own personal visions but the vision of God.

Norheim (2023) observes that contemporary leadership theory emphasizes that vision and purpose are more important than organizational position or status. Leadership is not centered on a single individual; rather, the leader functions as a key member of a team. Leaders and followers cannot be separated because there can be no leader without followers. Norheim (2023) further develops an understanding of leadership as the practical expression of Christian living through Christological and ecclesiological perspectives, resulting in a model of leadership characterized by service, forgiveness, and love. Consequently, a leader must possess a vision rooted in and oriented toward the love of Christ.

Seventh, a transformative leader demonstrates self-control. Paul twice emphasizes the importance of self-control (cf. 1 Cor. 9:26–27). He intentionally disciplines himself because he recognizes that self-control is essential to effective leadership. Ronda (2019) argues that Christian leaders must cultivate spiritual discipline, particularly self-denial and self-control. These two qualities should become inseparable aspects of a leader's character and guiding principles for life. Regarding self-control, Ming (2022) again points to the failure of Saul's leadership as a lesson for contemporary church leadership. Saul failed because he did not exercise sufficient self-control to remain consistently attentive and obedient to the voice of God. For Christian leaders, self-control is indispensable for remaining aligned with God's will and purpose, especially because the temptation associated with power and authority can be exceedingly strong.

Transformative Presbyterian-Synodal Leadership in KIBAIID Church

Based on the two leadership models discussed previously—the presbyterian-synodal system and the characteristics of transformative leadership derived from 1 Corinthians 9—I propose these characteristics as a framework for pastors and shepherds within KIBAIID Church. This framework represents the integration of both leadership models, resulting in a form of transformative presbyterian-synodal leadership that can also serve as an inspiration for elders and deacons engaged in team leadership.

First, a transformative leader possesses a personal faith experience with Christ. The Apostle Paul's apostleship was grounded in his personal encounter with Jesus. In the context of KIBAIID Church, the position of pastor often comes under close scrutiny, and as a result, personal integrity can become weakened when the spiritual dimension is not sufficiently evident. Spirituality is a crucial factor that determines the effectiveness of pastors and shepherds as team leaders within KIBAIID Church. A leader who has resolved personal struggles and

matured spiritually will not focus merely on external matters but will lead from a deep relationship with Christ.

Second, a transformative leader possesses confidence in his or her calling. One of the challenges faced by pastors and shepherds in KIBAID Church is convincing the congregation that they have genuinely been called by God. In reality, some ministers have withdrawn from ministry, a condition that does not reflect transformative leadership. Doubts about a leader's calling can only be answered through commitment and confidence in that divine calling while leading the congregation. Such confidence must be rooted in God's call rather than in personal ambitions or other motivations.

Third, a transformative leader demonstrates the courage to sacrifice. Ministers within KIBAID Church possess diverse characteristics. Willingness to sacrifice and indifference often appear as two contrasting tendencies in the lives of church workers. The sacrifice of Christ should serve as the primary inspiration for pastors and shepherds in KIBAID Church, motivating them to make sacrifices in every aspect of their ministry as spiritual leaders. Paul embodied this characteristic because he made Christ the ultimate role model for his life and ministry.

Fourth, a transformative leader is committed to the truth of the Gospel. Although the degree of commitment may vary among pastors and shepherds, this characteristic must remain an essential and non-negotiable requirement for leaders within KIBAID Church. Such commitment includes obedience to the truth of Christ as the foundation of personal integrity, as well as dedication to proclaiming the truth of the Gospel as a divine obligation rather than a personal choice.

Fifth, a transformative leader is prepared to pay the price for his or her calling. The Apostle Paul declared his willingness to become whatever was necessary for the sake of the Gospel of Christ. This attitude should likewise characterize pastors and shepherds in KIBAID Church, particularly because there is sometimes a tendency toward a weak ministry mentality. Whether one is accepted, appreciated, or even rejected, a leader must remain prepared to face every circumstance with steadfast commitment to the calling entrusted by God.

Sixth, a transformative leader possesses a clear purpose and vision. In practice, the vision of pastors or shepherds within KIBAID Church is often not aligned with the vision of other presbyters, creating ambiguity among church leaders. In some cases, pastors focus solely on routine ministry activities to avoid conflict with other presbyters. Nevertheless, a leader's vision is critically important—particularly when that vision is rooted in God's calling and purpose for ministry. Just as the Apostle Paul did not box aimlessly or run without a goal, ministers within KIBAID Church should serve with a clear vision rather than merely carrying out routine responsibilities.

Seventh, a transformative leader exercises self-control. The Apostle Paul repeatedly emphasized self-control in his ministry. Pastors and shepherds within KIBAID Church often encounter conflicts with colleagues and congregation members due to self-control issues. For this reason, spiritual discipline is essential. As leaders, they must not be easily provoked,

swayed by circumstances, or carried along by the world's values. Instead, they must exercise self-control as servants of God and remain steadfast in their calling.

Within the context of KIBAID Church, which adopts a presbyterian-synodal system of governance, there must be sufficient space for pastors and shepherds to function as transformative leaders through the exercise of these characteristics. I contend that a system functions effectively only when it is properly implemented by the people who operate within it, and that a leadership model becomes effective only when its leaders perform their roles to the fullest extent. The system itself and the human role within that system cannot be separated. Olajide (2024), citing Peter Wagner, argues that church leadership plays a decisive role in determining whether a church grows or stagnates. Accordingly, the effectiveness and quality of leadership significantly influence the growth and development of the church.

CONCLUSION

The presbyterian-synodal system is a form of church government that emerged from the struggles of the sixteenth-century church through the thought of John Calvin. It offers a model of collective and collegial leadership in which pastors, elders, and deacons serve and lead together, remaining mutually accountable and interconnected in ministry. However, when this system is synthesized with the model of transformative leadership derived from the Apostle Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 9, it gives rise to what may be called transformative presbyterian-synodal leadership. In this model, the pastor serves as a key transformative leader—one who is inspirational and influential toward elders and deacons as fellow partners in team leadership. Within this framework, the pastor or shepherd functions as the primary leader of the leadership team by embodying the characteristics of Paul as a transformative leader. Through these qualities, the pastor becomes an inspirational and influential figure who positively shapes the ministry and leadership of elders and deacons.

These characteristics include: having a personal faith experience with Christ, possessing confidence in one's calling, demonstrating the courage to sacrifice, maintaining a commitment to the truth of the Gospel, being willing to pay the price for one's calling, having a clear purpose and vision, and exercising self-control. A leader who embodies these qualities should enrich team leadership through an inspirational and transformative influence.

Pastors and shepherds within KIBAID Church are therefore expected to cultivate the characteristics of the Apostle Paul described in 1 Corinthians 9 as essential traits of transformative leadership. Although they serve within a presbyterian-synodal system, which emphasizes team leadership, embodying these characteristics enables them to make meaningful contributions to the church and to lead the church in carrying out the *missio ecclesiae* as an expression of the *missio Dei*.

Because the presbyterian-synodal system is fundamentally a model of team leadership, this article argues that transformative leadership should animate and shape the presbyterian-synodal form of church governance, resulting in a truly transformative presbyterian-synodal leadership model. Such a model provides space for the pastor to function as a key leader,

exercising theological authority and guiding the church toward the *missio Dei*, the church's true mission, while continuing to lead collaboratively alongside elders and deacons within the framework of team leadership.

Competing interests

The author declares that there are no competing interests that could have influenced the research, its analysis, or the publication of this article.

Author contributions

H.S. is the sole author of this research article and was responsible for the conceptualization, research, analysis, and writing of the manuscript.

Ethical considerations

This study involved interviews with human participants. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the voluntary participation of the participants.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

The data used in this study are presented and discussed in the article, including information from the interviews conducted with the participants. Additional data may be obtained from the author upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and are the product of professional research. They do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency, or the publisher. The author is responsible for the results, findings, and content of this article.

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