

Visionary Leadership for a Flourishing Africa: A Theological Engagement with Agenda 2063 (AA2063) through the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC)

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Abstract

Visionary leadership that is theologically grounded and contextually relevant is crucial for the African Church's contribution to the continent's holistic development. In this article, we explore how the Church can embody a biblically informed and prophetically engaged vision aligned with Africa's strategic aspirations, particularly as articulated in the African Union's Agenda 2063 (AA2063). Bridging leadership theory, contextual theology, and African governance frameworks, the study addresses a critical gap: the absence of models that integrate theological vision with socio-political transformation. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, our article examines the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) and its operationalization of a biblical vision through ministries in education, healthcare, and peacebuilding. Primary data was drawn from institutional documents, leadership interviews, and programme evaluations. The findings demonstrate that when a theological vision is deliberately contextualized and institutionally embodied, it can catalyse sustainable transformation, even amidst political and socio-economic instability. Based on these insights, we propose an interdisciplinary framework for participatory visioning, theological engagement, and alignment with national and continental development goals. We further conclude that the African Church, to remain credible and impactful, must reclaim its prophetic vocation by advancing a vision of justice, dignity, and communal flourishing that resonates with both the biblical concept of shalom and the aspiration of "the Africa We Want," reimagined as "the Africa God desires."

Keywords: Visionary Leadership, Contextual Theology, African Development, Agenda 2063 (AA2063), Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC), Ecclesial Governance.

Introduction

When we truly engage with the message of the Bible, it becomes clear that God desires *shalom* for his creation, which includes health, security, tranquillity, and welfare, amongst others (Zodhiates 1990).

This shalom is God's vision of wholeness, justice, peace, and flourishing for all people and the universe
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both in the present and in the future (Jeremiah 29:11; Isaiah 65:17-25). This desire of God is not a distant ideal. It is a divine imperative that calls all of God's people today to an active engagement in societal renewal (Wright 2010). Africa, like other regions, struggles with significant challenges: political instability marked by "high warning" or "very high alert" status for 23 nations in the 2022 Fragile States Index (FFP 2022); deeply rooted socio-economic inequalities often linked to colonial legacies and governance deficits (Adejumobi 2015); and the urgent need for moral and spiritual direction. Across the African continent, the church holds a vital place in shaping both spiritual and social life. This means that the church is not just there to keep a certain rhythm but to intentionally champion meaningful societal change. This perspective constrains the church to cultivate a vision that is deeply rooted in spiritual insight while at the same time actively responding to Africa's real-world challenges and opportunities.

The African Union's Agenda 2063 (AA2063) (AA2063) provides a crucial continental framework that envisions an "integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena" (African Union Commission 2015). In the spirit of this agenda, the realization of this ambitious blueprint requires transformative leadership at all levels. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) explicitly identifies transformative leadership, characterized by attributes including vision, innovativeness, people-centeredness, public participation, and prudent management, as central for achieving Africa's developmental aspirations (APRM 2019).

The African Church, which is well established in local communities and has a history of being a custodian of moral values and ethical governance (Bujo 2001), has with it the distinct potential to contribute to transformative leadership, social justice, development, and communal solidarity (Katangole 2017; Kalu 2008; Sanneh 2008; and Kaunda 2020). To fully play this role, the African church must take up its role to listen, to discern, and to act with a clear vision that reflects God's purpose for the continent. Such a vision ought to tie in with legitimate human aspirations for justice, dignity, and prosperity captured in frameworks like the Africa Agenda 2063 (AA2063) (AA2063) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the literature addresses theological leadership or social and political transformation separately, not many studies provide an integrated model that brings together theological vision with Africa's continental frameworks like the AA2063. Therefore, this article seeks to address that gap in the literature.

The emerging field of African Public Theology (Agang et al. 2020, 15) has fully engaged Agenda 2063, calling churches to action, asking the question, 'isn't all theology public?'. In response to the place of theology in the public sphere, Resane (2022) contends that African theology, as a discipline, is vocal in the public domain. Theology as God's presence was never a private discipline but a public practice. Its vocal and assertive nature was never intended to be a secret exercise. Furthermore, Resane (2022) citing (Dickson 1984, 199) contends that African theology, being rooted in its cultural context, becomes a public theology. Religion, in general, is 'incarnated in a culture' and this public theology clarifies biblical

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theology within the public sphere. As theology, it remains active in the public affairs of African experiences.

The central question to be answered in this article is: How can the African Church discern and embody the vision God desires for Africa through transformative, visionary leadership today? A qualitative, interdisciplinary approach is employed that weaves together theological reflection on Scripture (e.g., Proverbs 29:18; Habakkuk 2:2-3), insights from leadership scholarship, analysis of the APRM framework, and a grounded case study of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC). This study has employed a qualitative, theological-critical case study design. Data was drawn from document analysis, semi-structured interviews with the leadership of the CBC, and thematic evaluation of ministry initiatives of different sectors within the organization. This approach proposes a model for visionary church leadership that is capable of shaping a more just, peaceful, and prosperous Africa.

The Theology and Theory of Visionary Leadership

Vision as a Theological and Leadership Imperative

It is hard to properly read the wisdom literature in the Bible and miss the connection between God's guidance and societal well-being. For example, the Hebrew *ḥāzôn* in Proverbs 29:18 signifies prophetic revelation. This prophetic revelation is the God-given direction for the community of God's people to restrain them from derailing (Firth 2011). According to Habakkuk 2:2-3, this prophetic revelation or vision is supposed to be well understood by the people of God to the point where they are able to act accordingly (Smith 2007). Vision, therefore, is not a human construct but a response to what God has revealed in his word. Such a revelation demands clarity so that the people of God can understand and own its application as required by God (Wright 2018).

In addition to the prophetic and theological foundations of vision, effective visionary leadership must incorporate relational and developmental dynamics emphasized in team-leadership literature (Clarke 2018). The ability to coach, delegate, and nurture teams is critical for translating vision into sustainable team or church practice. Plueddemann (2012) offers a crucial corrective to universalising leadership models by underscoring the necessity of balancing biblical fidelity with cultural flexibility. His theology of leadership helps us situate 'vision' not merely as future projection but as a cross-cultural interpretive act. In the section "getting people to work together", Plueddemann (2012) highlighted that most visionary, faith-driven, and successful leaders are plagued with relationship problems, citing case study His insights on developing vision and strategy in multi-cultural ministry contexts are particularly useful when constructing participatory, contextually intelligible visions for CBC.

Leadership scholarship equally reiterates this theological understanding of vision powerfully. Nanus (1992) defines vision as "a realistic, credible, attractive future for your organization," and argues that

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vision is the most potent “engine” that drives long-term success since it brings together collective energies and resources to create meaningful progress. Kouzes and Posner (2017), on their part, talk of “envisioning the future,” presenting it as a core leadership skill that is closely tied to what they refer to as “modeling the way.” Envisioning the future and modeling the way is where leaders embody and reinforce shared values among the constituents.

Vision and revelation are distinct concepts. Vision often involves human imagination, aspiration, or spiritual insight, while revelation is God’s authoritative self-disclosure. Baird (1985) argues that not every vision is divine revelation, and Nürnberger (2017) sees vision as mediated human imagination and reflection, while revelation is rooted in divine agency that discloses truth. This study’s visionary leadership framework speaks to human theological imagination and direction, but ultimately, God’s revealed Word holds ultimate authority.

In the same manner, Kotter (1996) brings out the key role of vision in driving change because vision offers clarity, motivation, and unity to help organizations overcome inertia and move forward. Peter Senge (1990) is known for championing “Building Shared Vision” as a core discipline of learning organizations. According to Senge (1990), vision is co-creating “pictures of the future” to bring about genuine commitment among the members of the organization that goes beyond mere compliance. While Greenleaf’s servant leadership model (1977) focuses less on vision, its core principle of leaders serving others’ growth and building community implicitly requires a compelling ideal of a just and flourishing community. Eaton, Bridgman and Cummings (2024) assert that transformational leaders are visionaries who engage with followers’ higher-level needs and inspire them to achieve extraordinary outcomes for their organisations. These perspectives converge to assert that visionary leadership offers a compelling, future-oriented image that energizes, aligns, and transforms.

Vision in the APRM Framework

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) clearly presents vision as a pivotal aspect of transformative leadership within the specific challenges and aspirations of the African continent. The APRM Foundation wants to see the full actualisation of transformative leadership and practice for the Africa we all want (APRM 2020), thereby directly linking leadership vision to the pan-African goals of AA2063. The Africa Governance Report (APRM 2019) clearly lists vision as the first among the five core attributes of transformative leadership, alongside innovation, people-centeredness, public participation, and prudent management. This APRM framework recognises that in the African context, which is often plagued by short-term measures and fragmented policy, a clear, compelling, and inclusive vision is crucial for facing this complexity and sustaining long-term transformation efforts.

The APRM advocates that national visions align with continental and global frameworks (AA2063, SDGs) to ensure coherence and leverage collaboration (APRM 2019). National visions like Cameroon’s

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2035 vision of emergence, Kenya's Vision 2030, and Rwanda's Vision 2050 demonstrate attempts at such alignment. Furthermore, the APRM emphasizes that inclusive vision-building processes of engaging civil society, regional representatives, and citizens strengthen legitimacy and promote broad-based ownership, which is crucial for implementation (APRM 2013). Agenda 2063 (AA2063) itself enshrines transformative leadership as a specific goal (a goal in Aspiration 3), demanding “capable institutions and transformative leadership in place at all levels” (African Union Commission 2015). Thus, within the APRM and AU perspectives, visionary leadership, as discussed here, is not merely desirable but it is a developmental necessity for achieving Africa's shared future.

Core Components of an Effective Vision

There is a meeting point in biblical and secular scholarship when it comes to the discourse on the key elements that render a leadership vision effective. These elements resonate well with the AA2063 perspective. The focus of this discussion on components of an effective vision shall be done in relation to the African Christian organization. The selection of visionary leadership as the guiding framework for this study arises from both contextual and theological considerations. As Pali (2016,192–195) argues in his analysis of leadership transitions in Practical Theology, the adoption of a leadership model must not be arbitrary or derivative, but must emerge from the lived realities, theological commitments, and institutional capacities of the church in question.

First of all, vision has to be anchored in biblical theology. The vision of an entity that is conscious of its agency in God's mission must arise from and resonate with core biblical values and God's revealed purposes for justice, peace, and human dignity (Amos 3:7; Micah 6:8; Wright 2018). This means that such a vision must go beyond secular ends to integrate and frame the future of the African entity within God's redemptive plan. Thus, an effective vision for a Christian organization and church in Africa has to be grounded in what the Bible teaches.

Secondly, vision has to be contextual and holistic. Contextually, a vision of the church organization is to respond truly to the cultural, socio-economic, and political realities of its geographical setting (Mbiti 1969). A vision will have to equally embrace holistic flourishing by integrating spiritual formation, social justice, economic empowerment, and ecological care to avoid compartmentalized approaches to addressing life issues (Bediako 2004; Bosch 2011). An effective vision will therefore respond to the real-life questions that the affected people are seeking answers for and should address the whole person.

Thirdly, vision has to tie with public agendas. The vision of the church organization is to align with national and global agendas in a strategic way. The alignment ought to be strategic because not everything in the public agenda can be championed by the church. Examples of these agendas include Cameroon's Vision 2035, AA2063, SDGs, etc. Such a vision will enhance the church's impact on society

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and promote God-honoring partnerships. The vision that aligns with public agendas legitimizes the role of the church in social transformation (Carbone 2019).

Furthermore, vision has to have participatory ownership. In the organization, vision ought to be shared (Kouzes and Posner 2017). The sense of a shared vision is not only that the leader catches the vision and casts it, but that the vision is co-created and owned by the constituents. For the church organization, coming out with such a vision requires inclusive processes that engage the clergy, laity, women, youth, urban, rural, and marginalized voices, thereby building a collective commitment (Senge 1990; APRM 2013; Cooperrider and Whitney 2005). Members of the organization are to be part of the conception of the vision so that they can own it and naturally partake in running with it down to implementation.

Pali (2016) further notes that a leadership model must account for the institutional capacity and denominational identity of the church. Visionary leadership, unlike revolutionary or purely transformational approaches, does not require dismantling existing polity structures but works within them to inspire renewal. It offers a bridge between inherited governance systems and aspirational change, making it well-suited to denominational bodies such as the CBC. In aligning with continental frameworks like the African Union's Agenda 2063, visionary leadership provides an integrative lens for engaging missional public theology, enabling the church not only to envision "the Africa We Want" but also to prophetically articulate "the Africa God desires." This approach reflects Pali's emphasis on transformative intent, methodological reflexivity, and symbolic resonance as criteria for meaningful leadership engagement in African church contexts.

Moreover, vision has to include action and accountability. A vision that will compel constituents to action has to have with it concrete strategies, plans, resource allocation, and measurable outcomes. There ought to be a way of knowing how far the vision is being pursued, and that necessitates vigorous monitoring and evaluation frameworks (Kotter 1996; Nanus 1992; Swart 2020).

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a Method of Envisioning

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strengths-based methodology that is well-suited for vision co-creation and vision sharing, especially in evangelical Christianity, which believes in the priesthood of all believers. AI is equally compatible with the African society that upholds communalism as a value. AI focuses on what gives life to a system rather than looking for what is not working. AI has a 4-D cycle (Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny) whereby the "Dream" phase is all about envisioning and co-creation. In this dream phase, stakeholders collaboratively imagine the organization or community at its fullest potential (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005). AI's "many voices" principle brings about a broad-based stakeholder inclusion and ensures that the vision reflects diverse strengths and aspirations (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005).

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This method of envisioning focuses on past successes and shared hopes that promote generative dialogue and excitement among members of the church community. AI, therefore, brings about a shared vision grounded in collective wisdom in a more concrete way that leads to deep ownership of the vision. For the African Church, AI opens up a thoughtful and collaborative path toward conceiving and imagining an Africa that aligns with God's purposes. The distinctiveness of AI is that instead of focusing on what is lacking, it encourages a hope-filled mindset that draws strength from the continent's spiritual heritage, and the resources already present within communities. AI equally helps the constituents to see with new eyes and to work together to shape a future rooted in faith and possibility (Ephesians 3:20).

An Aspiration for the Africa God Desires

AA2063 as an African-Owned Vision for Transformation

Agenda 2063 (AA2063) was formally adopted in 2013 and represents a landmark “blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future” (African Union Commission 2015). Rooted firmly in Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance, this agenda is explicitly framed as an “endogenous plan for transformation” driven by an African agency seeking to reclaim the continent's narrative and destiny (African Union Development Agency 2024). The core vision of this agenda is bold, namely, an integrated, prosperous, peaceful Africa driven by empowered citizens, united under Pan-African ideals, characterized by good governance, respect for human rights, and vibrant cultural identity. One crucial point in this agenda is that it pledges inclusivity, where no child, woman, or man will be left behind or excluded (African Union Commission 2015).

The agenda explicitly identifies women and youth as “drivers of change” with full rights and leadership roles. The AA2063 was conceived not by a top-down approach but collaboratively (Lasun 2016). Diverse stakeholders across Africa were engaged to ensure ownership and legitimacy. These stakeholders were consulted through national and regional dialogues, civil society forums, and expert panels so that perspectives from governments, youth, women, the diaspora, and the private sector counted (African Union 2015).

AA2063 is not merely a compilation of seven abstract aspirations! This agenda has with it a detailed implementation plan. Successive ten-year implementation plans (e.g., 2014-2023, 2024-2033) show an outline of specific targets, flagship projects (like the African Continental Free Trade Area - AfCFTA), and some monitoring frameworks. The Second Ten-Year Plan (2024-2033) introduces ambitious “moonshot” targets, such as all AU member states achieving middle-income status by 2033 and demonstrating a commitment to translating vision into measurable outcomes (African Union 2024). Studies confirm that there is a high degree of alignment (over 85%) between AA2063 priorities and the UN SDGs and therefore promote a “Two Agendas, One Plan” approach for coherent national planning (United Nations **Disclaimer:** The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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Economic Commission for Africa - UNECA 2023; Ghana National Development Planning Commission - NDPC 2023).

The Church as Custodian of Prophetic Vision

The concept of the “Africa that God desires” is an attempt to reframe the AA2063 within the divine vision of shalom, a society of justice, holiness, and collective flourishing. The concept draws inspiration from Agenda 2063 (AA2063)’s slogan, ‘The Africa We Want,’ but reimagines it theologically. It centres God’s vision of shalom (Jer. 29:11) and asserts the Church’s responsibility to actively discern and advance that God-honouring vision for the continent. This perspective asserts that the role of the church in Africa has to go far beyond the endorsement of secular policies! The church has to intentionally discern and proclaim the purposes of God for the continent (Katongole 2011). Reminiscent of AA2063, Goodwill Shana, as the president of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), corroborates Katangole in his 2025 General Assembly opening address by calling on the African church to embody a transformative presence that shapes societies in line with the values of the kingdom of God (CDI Staff 2025).

The embodiment of a transformative presence has to breed a prophetic vision for the church in Africa. This prophetic vision dares to pay the price of critiquing structural injustices while it affirms hope, and at the same time echoes Isaiah’s imagery of a reconciled society (Isaiah 2:2-4). Scholars like Maluleke (2016) argue that the African Church fulfils its custodial role by “speaking truth to power” which is a tradition evident in the church’s historical resistance to colonialism and apartheid (Sanneh 2008). Thus, the Church’s engagement with AA2063 becomes an act of faithful disruption that ties human efforts with divine righteousness (Anderson 2000).

Convergence and Critical Engagement

Significant theological alignments exist between the core values of AA2063 (unity, prosperity, peace, inclusivity, sustainability, and self-determination) and a biblically informed vision of wholeness or shalom. The church in Africa can and should find points of strategic alignment to leverage its institutional capacity (schools, hospitals, and development agencies) and moral authority and contribute to these shared goals, as seen in Ghanaian churches advocating for SDG-aligned anti-corruption reforms (UNDP Ghana 2022).

Prophetic engagement by the church also calls for critical analysis. The church must highlight gaps between aspiration and reality, such as the under-representation of women in African governance. It is reported that only 25% of AU parliamentary seats in 2023 were occupied by women (AU 2023) despite AA2063’s commitments. This discussion of under-representation again comes with some theological nuances since there are theological perspectives that do not support women in public leadership,

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especially in frontline roles (Piper and Grudem 1991; Wilson 1995; Oduyoye 1995; Phiri 1997; van Klinken 2011; Dube 2012; Chitando 2012; van Klinken 2013).

Also, the church must challenge models of development that prioritize elite enrichment over poverty eradication or environmental sustainability and advocate instead for Jubilee-inspired economic justice (Leviticus 25; Katongole 2017). The church can equally draw on feminist and liberation theologies to envision a society that truly includes the marginalized in all developmental endeavours (Oduyoye 2001). Thus, the vision of the African church is not an uncritical alignment with public agendas but a discerning partnership and a prophetic witness within the continental project. The process of discernment will involve the proper interpretation of Scripture, prayer and fasting, communal wisdom, listening to the Spirit, and contextual awareness (Atwebembeire n.d.; Kgatle 2021).

The Case of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC)

The Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) (CBC), with over 1,500 congregations, extensive educational (68 primary schools, 12 secondary institutions, and two seminaries), and healthcare networks (16 hospitals, 26 health centres and 53 Primary Health Care Units), provides a compelling model of theological vision translated into transformative action amidst Cameroon's complex socio-political landscape. The complex sociopolitical landscape is characterized by the protracted Boko Haram insurgency in the North of the country, the Anti-balaka rebels who intermittently threaten from the East, and the ongoing Anglophone Crisis in the Northwest and the Southwest Regions of the country for almost a decade now.

Theologically Grounded Visionary Leadership

The long-standing mission of the CBC states that she exists to “proclaim the gospel wholistically in Cameroon and beyond, in obedience to the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ, as led by the Holy Spirit.” This is done with the vision to see a “living fellowship of churches” that strengthen one another and “reflect the love of Christ in Cameroon and beyond” (CBC Constitution 2023). The CBC runs many schools, health facilities, and developmental projects and programs to realize its “holistic” mission. Through these institutions and endeavours, the church serves millions of Cameroonians beyond verbal proclamation by responding to their physical and psychosocial needs. As this is done, the dream is that one day, all her congregations will be reflecting the love of Christ in all these services, even beyond the boundaries of Cameroon.

We interviewed the sitting CBC Executive President, the Reverend Doctor Teke John Ekema, to glean his leadership direction for the organization. One of the outcomes of this interview was the declaration that 2025 was a “Year of Jubilee” reminiscent of Leviticus 25. This framing invokes themes such as debt cancellation, land restoration, liberation, and societal reset. These themes directly confront the

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contemporary injustices like economic exploitation and land dispossession, which affect the marginalized communities in Cameroon (ICG 2023). These articulations ground the current CBC leader's vision of "forgiveness, reconciliation, peace, and holistic development" within God's covenantal promises that are to position the church as an agent of divine restoration. The leader took over at a time when the organization was experiencing stormy leadership transitions at various levels.

To the Executive President, it was time to "return the church to her holistic mission." This theological vision shapes the CBC's entire institutional footprint, which views ministries not as separate services but as integrated expressions of God's desire for comprehensive human flourishing in a holistic mission (Bosch 2011). In taking the church toward this direction, its leadership concurs with the assertion that if we must realize the Africa God wants, we must first realize the church God wants (CDI Staff 2025). These findings from the interview with CBC's leadership illustrate how the organization's theological vision is institutionally embedded and socially transformative.

Prophetic Engagement in Crisis

Among the various forces contributing to socio-political instability in Cameroon, the Anglophone Crisis has the most significant impact on the CBC, as the Anglophone Regions are where the organization has the highest number of churches and institutions. This particular crisis, stemming from grievances over marginalization and demanding greater autonomy or secession, has caused severe humanitarian suffering. The CBC actively embraced its prophetic role alongside other denominations like the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the Roman Catholic Church to demand an inclusive national dialogue, the release of political detainees, decentralized governance, the respect for the Anglophone educational and legal heritage, a ceasefire, and a civilian oversight of security forces (Ecumenical Coalition 2023).

These three denominations signed a joint statement welcoming Canadian mediation and calling for negotiations guided by "truth, justice, love, and equity" (ibid.). In all of these, the CBC positioned itself as an independent moral voice advocating for peace that is rooted in justice and being an embodiment of Micah 6:8. This public stance demonstrates the church's willingness to speak truth to power amidst conflict (CBC General Council Declaration 2019).

Operationalisation of Vision through Holistic Ministries

The CBC's vision goes beyond rhetoric to concrete programs. The CBC runs the Peace and Transformation Initiative, education and empowerment, healthcare as justice, and participatory visioning. The Peace and Transformation Initiative (PTI) was launched in 2022 to explicitly address trauma from the Anglophone Crisis. This initiative trains pastors and community leaders in trauma healing, conflict resolution (integrating biblical principles and local customs), and peacebuilding

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techniques, to restore community wholeness and rebuild a culture of peace (Hohn 2023). By 2024, the CBC had trained over 350 pastors (CBC Executive President's Report 2024) through the initiative, resulting in an increase in trauma healing programs reported across affected regions (CBC 2024).

Education and empowerment are achieved through the CBC schools, which, over the decades, have provided quality education to tens of thousands of Cameroonians, mostly in underserved areas. Being pioneers in education in Cameroon since the 1800s, thousands of functional citizens of Cameroon are products of the CBC educational establishments. Also, recognizing the youth as a mission force reminiscent of the aspirations of the AA2063, the CBC Women's Department (CBCWD) runs and funds vocational training programs specifically for girls and young women in conflict-affected zones in the Northwest and in the Adamawa Region of Cameroon. This has gone a long way to foster economic empowerment and resilience (CBC Women's Director's Report 2024).

The CBC Health Services (CBCHS) provides healthcare as justice. This is not how the CBC directly frames it on her documents, but that is what that service ultimately depicts. The CBCHS network of 16 hospitals, 26 health centres, and 53 primary health care units in eight out of 10 Regions of the country, as well as community-based services, serves over 1,000,000 patients annually (CBCHS Director's 2023 Report). They provide essential services, including maternal health, often in partnership with the government (Manga and Tanyi 2021), both in the cities and in hard-to-reach areas, thereby exemplifying care for the vulnerable.

The CBC equally practices participatory visioning at different levels. The local congregations each have a board of deacons and a "Christian Meeting" (or church in conference) that brainstorms and endorses all plans and programs of the church. Educational and health institutions have boards of governors and management boards, respectively, and all institutions are under Departments that also have departmental boards. Guided by the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the congregational system of church governance, no one champion (leader) imposes a vision on any entity of the CBC (CBC Constitution 2023).

At the beginning of the year or towards the end of the year, entities go on vision retreats, and they utilize methodologies that are likened to Appreciative Inquiry's "Dream" phase to carry out communal discernment of God's desire and direction for their particular ministries. This is done to ensure that a broader ownership of the vision happens beyond the leadership (CBC Church Handbook 2014; CBC Uniform Internal Rules for Fields and Associations 2014).

Modelling Inclusivity

The CBC demonstrates a commitment to inclusive leadership by including women in key roles. The position of the CBC Vice Chairperson has been occupied by women for almost two decades now. The

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CBC has women's and youth departments headed by a director each, who is a woman and a youth, respectively. These two are members of the CBC central administration. Women and youth are represented in all standing and ad hoc committees that are set up. Article 19(2)(e)(e) of the CBC Constitution (2023) strongly provides for "spiritual affirmative action," whereby inclusive leadership within the Convention is upheld. This reflects the Ubuntu ethic and the theological conviction ensuing from Galatians 3:28, which together ensure that diverse perspectives shape the Convention's future.

This study explores transformative leadership within the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services (CBCHS) using a qualitative case study approach grounded in the constructivist research paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Data was collected through interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, analysed thematically within the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) framework (Braune and Clarke 2006). The study prioritised lived experiences and utilised AI-powered tools for conceptualisation and analysis, ensuring academic integrity.

The study sample included senior leaders from the Socio-Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disability Program, senior hospital administrators from various areas, and a focus group of grassroots leaders (Creswell 2013; Krueger and Casey 2015)

Table 1: Key findings of the study

Key Finding	Supporting Evidence
1. theologically grounded vision catalyzes transformation	CBC's theological vision shaped holistic ministries addressing both spiritual and socio-economic needs.
2. participatory visioning enhances ownership and impact	Vision retreats and inclusive decision-making processes ensure grassroots co-ownership of vision.
3. church can act as a credible prophetic voice	CBC's public advocacy during the Anglophone Crisis demonstrates its prophetic stance rooted in justice.
4. church visionary leadership must align with continental development goals	The proposed praxis framework links Scripture, leadership theory, and Agenda 2063 principles.
5. cbc models holistic mission through sectoral engagement	CBC provides education, healthcare, empowerment, and peacebuilding initiatives grounded in vision.
6. inclusivity strengthens institutional integrity	Women and youth actively participate in leadership roles; constitutional provisions support inclusivity.
7. strategic and spiritual challenges must be surmounted	Solutions include vision funds, interchurch cooperation, and reinterpretation of key scriptures for civic engagement and prophetic resilience.

Source: Compiled by researchers from empirical data, CBC reports, and leadership interviews

A Proposed Praxis of Envisioning for an African Church

Drawing from the biblical imperatives above, leadership theory, and the CBC case study, a proposal is here made to serve as a praxis framework by which an African church can cultivate visionary, transformative leadership that advances both God's purposes and contextual relevance.

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Unlike existing church development models, this framework uniquely integrates a participatory theological approach, appreciative inquiry, and the continental visioning mechanism, namely, the AA2063. This makes the model adaptable across African church contexts.

Table 1: Praxis Framework for Visionary Church Leadership in an African Context

Principle	Theological Foundation	Leadership Theory Link	Church Structures for Action
Participatory Discernment/Dreaming	The Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–27); African Theology	Senge (Shared Vision); AI (Dream Phase)	• Annual AI-inspired visioning retreats at institutional and national levels (including women and youths) • Feedback Platforms (e.g., Church WhatsApp groups, online surveys, follow-up meetings)
Critical Civic Engagement	Salt & Light (Matt. 5:13–16); God's requirement for justice (Mic. 6:8)	APRM (Participatory Governance); Transformative Leadership	• Church-State Forums to dialogue with policymakers • Policy Engagement Committees for advocacy training • Justice mobilization campaigns from pulpits and in the public
Decentralized Resource Justice and Action	Jubilee Concept (Lev. 25); Stewardship Theology	Kotter (Empowering Action); Ubuntu Economics (Mbigi)	• Church Vision Fund sourced from members, and partners • Distributed Vision Grants for appropriate initiatives • Youth Innovation Workshops to support faith-informed entrepreneurship
Holistic Capacity Building	Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37–39); Whole-person Discipleship	Holistic Mission Paradigm; Senge (Personal Mastery)	• Vision-Driven Leadership Training in theological institutions • Ministry Alignment Inspections assessing coherence with vision • Integrated ministry models combining worship, service, and advocacy
Monitoring, Learning, and Accountability	Bearing Fruit (John 15:8); Faithful Stewardship	APRM (Effectiveness); Swart (Spiritual Capital Metrics)	• Vision Alignment Checklist using key indicators • Annual Public Impact Reports to enhance transparency • Learning Areas to adapt strategies from field experience

Source: Generated by Researchers¹

¹ The source data is from a PhD study in its final stages conducted by Ngalla Godlove, supervised by Dr CJ Ntseno. The study is titled *Navigating the Dynamics of Transformative Leadership: An Appreciative*
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The Discern-Dream-Design-Deploy Cycle for Vision Execution

For visionary leadership to morph from concepts to tangible transformation within the African church contexts, a purposeful and spiritually rooted implementation strategy is essential. This study proposes the Discern–Dream–Design–Deploy (4D) cycle as an effective ecclesiastical framework for developing and implementing vision. This cycle is inspired by the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) model that emphasizes appreciative discovery and collaborative design. It is distinctly tailored to embody the biblical spirituality, theological commitments, and social obligations of the African church. This proposed 4D model uniquely blends biblical discernment, AI's dream phase, and strategic deployment.

Discernment

The church's vision should begin not solely from organizational analysis of what works but also from spiritual awareness of God's intentions. Discernment, as used here, asserts that before contemplating the future, we must first engage in reflectively listening to God, to Scripture, and to the actual experiences of our communities. Discernment constitutes the theological essence of visionary leadership. The process commences with deliberate listening to God's voice through communal prayer, thoughtful engagement with Scripture, fasting, and collective thought. This goes beyond mere strategic planning and includes spiritual mindfulness. God will honour his word and reveal his plans to his people, as Amos 3:7 states, "The Sovereign Lord does nothing without disclosing his plan to his servants, the prophets."

During this phase of discernment, church leaders and members are encouraged to be contemplative in their thinking, seeking what God is communicating to them regarding their circumstances and which areas the Spirit is currently active within their community. This phase entails not only heeding God's voice but also attending to the pleas, aspirations, and challenges of the people, particularly the marginalized, the youth, and the vulnerable (Acts 6:1–7). Discernment thus constitutes a way of spiritual and cultural analysis that prioritizes justice and compassion as the core of God's redemptive mission in the hands of the African church. This way, discernment goes beyond the Appreciative Inquiry's Discovery phase that seeks to celebrate only what gives life and what works in an entity, since some things can work to the detriment of others.

Dream

The completion of discernment gives way for the church community to transition to the dreaming phase. This is a cooperative envisioning process in which congregations and leadership conceptualize the

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future that God intends for them, their communities, and the nation. This future is not a human vision, but a Spirit-inspired ambition melded by biblical hope, theological beliefs, and collective imagination.

This approach ought to be inclusive and participatory, engaging women, youth, elders, clergy, professionals, and laypersons. This phase may take the form of retreats, agenda-setting forums, or focus group meetings. Instruments from the “Dream” phase of Appreciative Inquiry may be adapted to align with a missional theology that aspires to the flourishing (shalom) of all individuals. The primary inquiry during this dream phase is for the church to envision how “the Africa God desires” is represented inside their community.

Design

After discerning and envisioning, the next step is to formulate realistic strategies that will actualize the collective goal. This entails establishing cross-functional teams to convert the vision into strategies, programs, and different levels of collaboration. The design phase must address inquiries such as what specific actions are required? What resources are required? How shall we collaborate among ourselves? Who are our external collaborators? What competencies must we develop?

This phase pertains to the stewardship of diligently managing the gifts, individuals, and institutions entrusted to the church to realize its divinely appointed vision. This is where the linkage with overarching public development objectives, such as Agenda 2063 (AA2063) and the Sustainable Development Goals, comes in. Here, churches will need to ensure their vision matches significantly and strategically with national and continental objectives while at the same time preserving theological integrity and a prophetic voice. This phase covers the creation of monitoring instruments, including a vision alignment checklist, to assess progress and guarantee accountability.

Deployment

Deployment represents the execution phase, wherein vision transforms into mission-in-action. This is where churches initiate programs, develop community leaders, and provide resources to actualize the vision. Deployment necessitates bravery, collaboration, and dedication. Kotter (1996) and Rousseau and ten Have (2022) assert that enabling widespread action and achieving short-term as well as phased victories are essential for maintaining momentum.

Deployment is far from being a time of perfection and finality! It is rather a time of capacity enhancement, ongoing impact evaluation, and adaptive feedback mechanisms to facilitate modification and progress. The actions of this phase go in line with what the prophet Habakkuk said: “Document the vision; articulate it clearly... so that a runner may comprehend it” (Hab. 2:2). Thus, the church becomes an embodiment of transformation that actualizes its faith through actions that promote justice, peace, dignity, and prosperity for all individuals.

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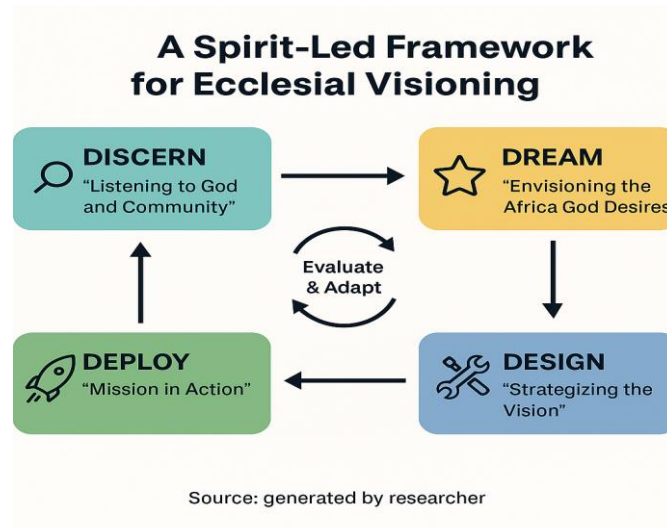
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Summary of the 4-D Cycle for Envisioning

Stage	Description	Biblical-Theological Anchors	African Leadership Integration
Discern	Spirit-led listening to God's will and communal realities	<i>Amos 3:7, Acts 6:1–7, James 1:5</i>	Grounded in African communal spirituality and storytelling; integrates lament and prophetic critique
Dream	Cooperative envisioning of the future God wants	<i>Joel 2:28, Proverbs 29:18, Jeremiah 29:11</i>	Embraces Ubuntu, inclusivity, youth/women engagement, and hope
Design	Strategic formulation of structures, partnerships, and action plans	<i>Nehemiah 2:17–18, 1 Cor 12:4–11, Eph 4:11–16</i>	Contextualized planning tied to national/continental agendas (SDGs, Agenda 2063)
Deploy	Active implementation, leadership development, feedback & adaptation	<i>Habakkuk 2:2, James 2:17, Matt. 28:19–20</i>	Rooted in practice; combines prophetic boldness and measurable impact

This summary is visually represented in the figure below:



Source: Generated by Researchers

Surmounting Strategic and Spiritual Challenges

Notwithstanding the potential of visionary leadership, churches frequently face considerable challenges in converting vision into transformation. These challenges will include limited resources, political resistance, inertia, and theological misconceptions. These challenges are to be mastered and surmounted.

A considerable number of congregations face resource limitations that hinder the implementation of vision endeavours. The church in Africa as elsewhere (Eagle et al. 2019; Chaves 2020; Woolever and

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Bruce 2020), often lacks the financial resources to implement significant vision endeavours due to persistent underfunding, with more than 70% of congregations depending on unstable member contributions of less than \$10,000 USD per year (Banda 2021; AEA 2019). Despite the presence of theological training and strategic planning, hardly 12% of denominations own centralized finance for national initiatives (Amole and Afolaranmi 2025), resulting in reliance on precarious external donors (Bellon 2017). To tackle this issue, churches in Africa can create vision funds by holding vision banquets, for example, making inter-congregational partnerships, inter-denominational partnerships, engaging diaspora relationships, and implementing decentralized vision grants that enable local congregations to undertake context-specific initiatives.

When churches critically participate in public agendas, they encounter political opposition. Political opposition to the prophetic voice has endured throughout human history. This is exemplified biblically by Amos, who suffered exile for condemning economic disparity (Amos 7:10-13), and Jesus, who was murdered after being perceived as a political menace (John 11:48; Luke 23:2). In contemporary Africa, churches that document electoral fraud or military crimes face censorship, incarceration, and 'administrative dissolution' (Opongo and Murithi 2022; Did'Ho 2020).

To respond to opposition, some churches use two main strategies. First, they build credibility by collecting reliable evidence, like member testimonies about human rights abuses—and using it to advocate for justice. This approach mirrors Amos, who spoke with authority as both a shepherd and fruit picker (Amos 1:1; 7:14). Secondly, churches promote and establish faith-state dialogue forums as an interpretation and implementation of Jeremiah 29:7 ('desire the peace of the city'). These function as official negotiation platforms, similar to the Catholic-led 'National Consensus Initiative,' which effectively alleviated 12 of 15 conflict hotspots via clergy-mediated ceasefires (Did'Ho 2020; Katongole 2017). Orobator contends that institutional pragmatism 'neutralises dictatorship by persistent truth-telling and radical diplomacy' (2020). This illustrates the instruction of Luke 10:16 to be 'as shrewd as serpents' in their interactions with governmental authority.

Inertia and fatigue significantly hinder the realization of vision-oriented endeavors in African churches. This inertia is often characterized by resistance to change, rooted in historical distrust of leadership and cycles of donor dependency (Brown 2024; Wangari 2024). The stagnation is further worsened by colonial mission legacies that promoted passive congregational models. In Kenya, many rural churches still await hierarchical directives before initiating action, a remnant of top-down church structures imposed during missionary periods (Cheeseman, Kanyinga, and Lynch 2020). In conflict-affected zones such as Cameroon, chronic crisis fatigue has immobilized faith communities, with reports showing high levels of pastoral burnout of nearly 60% of pastors exhibiting symptoms of exhaustion (Fonchingong and Gemandze 2009).

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Two evidence-based options arise when addressing inertia and fatigue in the setting of Africa. First, participatory leadership models such as Ghana's Presbyterian Synod Walk, which echoes the distributive wisdom of Acts 6:1-7, demonstrate grassroots impact. Asamoah-Gyadu (2021) discusses how such church-based processes deepen lay ownership and contextual decision-making. Secondly, in Côte d'Ivoire, ritual-integrated retreats like the Sacred Fire Assemblies employ communal storytelling to address leadership fatigue, like the story of Moses and his father-in-law in Exodus 18:13-26. Studies by Orobator (2020) and African missiological networks highlight this model's holistic impact on a positive note.

Third, Certain theological traditions impede public engagement due to entrenched sacred-secular dichotomies. In Nigerian Pentecostalism, for instance, "escape eschatology" prioritizes personal salvation and rapture over societal transformation and discourages involvement in political or social reform (Stone 2021; Markow and Åkerlund 2023). Similarly, the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition has historically emphasized a form of holiness (säggā) that associates political engagement with impurity, encouraging withdrawal from public affairs as a form of spiritual preservation (2014). This withdrawal from public affairs seems to be originating from the colonial-era pietism and post-independence trauma, which causes a good number of Kenyan churches to avoid what they perceive as 'worldly' political engagement (Gifford 2009).

To recalibrate this, grassroots dialogues for redeeming Scripture's public witness can be promoted to reclaim Romans 13:1–7 not as passive submission but as active accountability of rulers (Bediako 2004). Teachings from passages like Jeremiah 29:7 as a divine mandate for shalom-seeking civic participation (Katongole 2017) can be upheld while also using Luke 22:35–38 ('two swords') to frame faith-state tension as prophetic vigilance (Okoronkwo 2014).

Conclusion

The African Church faces a turning point at this point in time. Passivity or fragmented solutions will not solve the underlying issues and ambitions of the continent, as outlined in AA2063. Frameworks like AA2063 require discerning, visionary and transformational leadership from the church to revive, take up its prophetic function, and engage strategically. As this article has argued, such leadership begins with identifying the church that God wants and then the Africa that God wants. This identification is supposed to be a vision rooted in Scripture, shaped by theological reflection on God's desire for shalom, and critically engaged with the continent's socio-political realities and development aspirations. The APRM, leadership theory, and the Bible properly recognize vision as a key transformative leadership quality, and in this case, it is needed to address Africa's complex challenges. The case of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) shows how vision can have a real impact even in times of crisis.

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A praxis paradigm based on resource justice, public theology, participatory discernment, holistic integration, and accountable action might help African churches go beyond rhetoric. Churches may institutionalise visionary leadership through decentralised grants, young incubators, faith-state dialogues, inclusive visioning forums, and careful monitoring. This requires appreciative inquiry and other methods that promote popular ownership and African communal values. The church in Africa must be brave to face injustice, innovative to find solutions, and faithful to incarnate the Gospel in ways that promote human flourishing. Accepting this calling and actively shaping a future where the divine vision of shalom is realised can make the African Church trustworthy and transformative, thereby fulfilling God's global mission.

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Data availability

Data sharing does not apply to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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