SUMMARY

The Church of Sweden (Lutheran) was disestablished on January 1, 2000. The new situation in the Church clearly calls for organizational change. Using well-known test instruments, 240 Swedish vicars were asked about their leadership style, decision-making style, motivation profile and perceived operational demands. The questionnaires were related to a model of leadership strength for initiating and implementing organizational change. The results indicate that most vicars have a relationship-oriented leadership style. Most are feeling types in their decision-making style. Almost 60% were affiliation motivated. Almost 80% perceived relational operational demands to be most important. It is assumed that managers who have a change-centered leadership style, who are intuitive in decision-making style, power motivated and see urgent demands for change and development, will have an optimal capacity for implementing major changes in their organizations. This means that only 1% of the vicars seem to have a propensity for change at a time when many think that change is crucial for the Church.

The Church of Sweden is the oldest institution in Swedish society. The tradition of the church is Evangelical-Lutheran and the Church welcomes everyone who is baptized and wishes to belong. Approximately 85% of the Swedish population belongs to the Church of Sweden, 78% of children are baptized and almost 50% of teenagers are confirmed (Straarup 1997). With a total of approximately 23,000 employees, the Church has as many employees as the Swedish armed forces and as many as some of the largest Swedish companies. The Church employs 3500 priests, 1500 permanent deacons and 2000 musicians. Other employees work in administration, cemeteries, etc.

The Church is divided into 13 dioceses, each headed by a bishop. There are more than 1000 parishes, led by vicars (rectors). A small parish generally has 10 to 15 employees, a large one 50 to 75. Each parish is governed by a parish council. Most parishes also have a large group of volunteers that help out in their spare time. The vicar manages the employees and volunteers involved in parish activities. It is evident from the above that the vicar has a great deal of managerial responsibility. Research has shown that the management responsibilities of the Swedish vicar are very complicated (Stålhammar 1996; Hansson 1997).
1. A Church in Transition

On January 1, 2000 the Church of Sweden was disestablished, meaning that it no longer has any official status or formal connection with the state. The parishes can no longer tax their members. Instead, parishioners are now obliged to pay a parish fee along with their taxes. The former Church Law passed by the Swedish parliament has been replaced by a new Canon Law, passed by the Church Assembly (Kyrkoordning för Svenska kyrkan 1999).

1.1 Change is necessary

Many interrelated religious and social changes have taken place over the last century. The transition from an agricultural and industrial society to what is often called the information or service society occurred in a little more than a hundred years. The basic values that were connected with the old social structures have been replaced by new values connected with a service society. People are skeptical of collectivism and tend to be more and more individualistic and accepting of pluralism. Religious changes, dependent on the societal changes, have taken place at the same time. Institutional religion has lost its pre-eminent role in society and religious life today is more individualized and privatized, even market oriented. These changes are evident in Europe as a whole, although there are differences between Catholic Southern Europe and Protestant Northern Europe.

There are several signs indicating that the Church of Sweden must become more change-oriented and adapt to local or regional conditions. The rites of baptism and confirmation are crucial to the survival of Christian faith (and to the economy of the Church). Only baptized persons can belong to the church. The new Canon Law requires the parishes to continuously develop parish life so that the adherents to the church are called to be believers. In this respect, then, change and development are a function of the mission of the parish. According to the Swedish Canon Law (Kyrkoordning för Svenska kyrkan 1999) one can say that the parish is called to change by God himself.

There are, however, external factors that will test the adaptability of the parishes. One might mention, for example, the large influx of refugees, many of them Muslims. Social changes and changes in the local labour market would be other factors challenging the leadership and diaconal imagination of the local church. Thus various factors both outside and inside the parish make heavy demands on the vicars and parish councils to plan for and carry out changes in the local parishes. Examples of change in parishes include new programs and models for pastoral work and theological awareness, and discussion about attitudes towards the phenomena of the modern age.