

9-2019

Contextual Intelligence: One Intelligence to Serve Them All

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE:
ONE INTELLIGENCE TO SERVE THEM ALL

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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PORTLAND, OREGON

SEPTEMBER 2019

Portland Seminary
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

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DEDICATION

To Jill, my beautiful bride,
best friend, and partner in ministry.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation is the result of the collective intelligence of many beautiful minds. Many people have contributed both to this project and to my spiritual formation. Thanks specifically to my mentors, Len Sweet, Alan Hirsch, Michael Moynagh, Walter Edwards, Chris Backert, and Jorge Acevedo. Also, to the team that walked beside me on this journey, Loren Kerns, Ron Clark, Pablo Morales, and Clifford Berger. For the WildOnes, thank you for the incredible journey we have shared these last eight years. To my fellow Issacharian colleagues of the Portland Seminary Semiotics and Future Studies Cohort 16. Finally, to my fellow missional mischief makers of Fresh Expressions U.S., The Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, and the pioneers of Generative Pioneer Leadership Academy Cohort 1. I am deeply grateful for all of you.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the phenomenon of Contextual Intelligence (CI) and suggest a Contextual Intelligence Framework (CIF) for its cultivation in local churches. This will be accomplished by learning from both practitioners of pioneer ministry and inherited congregations, as well as researching the literature. While possessing CI has been shown to be a critical competency for leaders across multiple fields, it is yet to be explored theologically or assessed for practical application ecclesialogically. Amid symptoms of decline, a new breed of leaders first identified by the Church of England as “pioneers,” are planting “fresh expressions of church” with “nones and dones.” These pioneers possess CI, which is the ability to accurately diagnose a context and make the correct decisions regarding what to do. Eighty-six congregations and eighty-one fresh expressions in the North Central District of the Florida Conference United Methodist Church are the primary sample for this field research.

Chapter One will explore the symptoms of decline, define challenges, and highlight the opportunity for CI cultivation. Chapter Two will explore the Biblical materials to establish a theological foundation for the CI framework. Chapter Three will explore three contextually intelligent movements in church history—specifically, the primitive church, early Methodism, and Fresh Expressions. Chapter Four will explore the concept of contextual intelligence across multiple fields. Chapter Five will examine the emerging missional frontier of the network society and the value of CI. Chapter Six integrates all learnings and outlines the CIF.

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCING THE OPPORTUNITY

In choosing a problem the investigator takes a decision fraught with risks. The task may be insoluble or just too difficult. In that case his effort will be wasted and with it the effort of his collaborators, as well as the money spent on the whole project. *But to play safe may be equally wasteful.*

-Michael Polanyi¹

Three Opening Vignettes

1. Cynthia is an ordained clergy person in a mainline denomination. As an itinerate preacher she has been successful at a series of revitalization appointments. Each church she has served has grown, and the episcopacy has noticed her gifts to lead congregations from decline into revitalization. She is deployed to a new appointment, full of hope that this will be another church that grows in collaboration with her leadership.

Only it doesn't. She is a gifted preacher, who spends many hours each week preparing sermons. She spends a good deal of time in the office, making herself accessible to the congregation. She visits the sick in the hospital and the matriarchs of the congregation in their homes. She does all the things she did in previous appointments where churches began to thrive, but none of it works. The congregation continues to decline and is now in a discussion concerning closure.

¹ Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 124. Italics mine.

2. A once thriving global denomination has been in decline for several decades. Most of its churches have plateaued or are declining. Many have had no baptisms and no reception of new believers in years. Even those that are growing seem to be taking advantage of migrations of already Christians to an area, more specifically growth by membership transfer from one church to another. On top of the decline, several divisive issues now threaten to tear the denomination apart.

A small working party consisting of bishops, clergy, and lay persons, is chosen to create a series of plans for how the denomination can move forward without schism. Their work is focused primarily on one specific issue, the full inclusion of LGBTQ persons. At the global gathering the plans are presented, followed by utter chaos breaking loose. The denomination is now on the brink of serious schism or even death.

John is a non-denominational pastor in an autonomous congregational church system. He began young and has served two large thriving churches in his ten-year ministry career. At each church, he has focused on building strong youth programs and attracting young families. He receives a call from a large legacy church in a beautiful part of the southern United States. This church has been through a significant visioning process and they have concluded that they need a young pastor who can attract families and build a youth program. John interviews with the elders, and they commit to hire him with a significant pay increase.

John and his family move to the area, full of excitement to make new friends and help this church grow. John employs all his old tools, hanging out in targeted locations throughout the community to connect with new people, visiting significant leaders in the church, hiring the best youth pastor he could find, and planning big community

gatherings to get people to the church grounds. All his tactics fail epically; he can't seem to locate or make meaningful relationships with people under fifty. Not only does he not attract young families, he offends some of the older members. These folks contribute large financial sums to the congregation but aggravated by John's high energy preaching and endless stream of ideas, they feel neglected, and leave the church, taking their checkbooks with them. After this John is fired.

Each of these stories has one thing in common—a failure of *contextual intelligence*.

Cynthia, fell victim to a false assumption: what works in one context, will work in all contexts. She played to her strengths, hitting the ground running with what worked in previous congregations. She didn't take into account the ageing nature of the congregation or the mass migration of folks from the town. Just before she arrived, the railroad, the major industry of this town, relocated further north. Now all families associated with the railroad have left town or are in an economic dilemma.

The once thriving denomination failed to understand the makeup of its own constituency, and the voids between local congregations and communities. They focused on the specific issue of LGBTQ inclusion, while ignoring larger contextual realities. They defaulted to institutional strategies based in increasingly false assumptions. As if caught in a time-capsule of irrelevancy, they are embroiled in a battle that society has largely moved on from. They hold to familiar ways of thinking and acting that blind them to these changing contextual realities.

John trusted that his new congregation had an accurate assessment of their context. He also failed to understand that the way in which a congregation views their

relationship with the community, and *the actuality of that relationship* can be different. In his setting, the vision to bolster membership with young families was a set up for failure, being that the congregation sits on the edge of a retirement community.

Cynthia has incredible EQ, the ability to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior. She knows how to love and lead people into health but did not consider the post-Christendom implications of her time. The episcopal leaders lacked relational scaffolding and credibility with the people they lead. They also failed to understand the macro-context of a global denomination or the anti-institutional push against pyramidal hierarchies and the new protest-ant, spiritual-but-not-religious, zeitgeist. John showed high ability in one specific gifting but failed to understand his context and adapt his skills accordingly.

The Symptoms

In my national role with Fresh Expressions US, these opening vignettes represent the kinds of stories I encounter all too frequently. I work with churches across the theological spectrum that are in significant decline throughout the United States.² Most of these local church people are working hard. The pastors spend many hours preparing sermons, hiring the right people, reorganizing the staff, and caring for their flocks. In many cases, the flock is working hard to support the pastor. They are praying, reading Scripture, having meetings, “doing outreach,” and yet in most cases they continue in a marked spiral of decline.

² In 2018 we held 85 events in over 40 cities, each ecumenical gathering represented multiple churches from a wide array of denominations and non-denominations (<https://freshexpressionsus.org>).

The Pew Research Center reports that all Christian groups in the U.S. are declining, while the fastest growing demographic is the so called “nones.”³ Between 2007-2014 this group increased from 16.1 to 22.8 percent, (rising 6.7 percent in seven years). The only other growing demographic according to this data is “non-Christian faiths.” That means twenty-three percent of all adults, and more than a third of all millennials, now find a home in the tribe called “none.”⁴

So, while the overall U.S. population has grown incrementally the number of Christians is shrinking. To clarify, between the years of 2007 and 2014 North America’s population grew by eighteen million people, while the number of adults who identify as Christian declined by seven percent. There are seventeen million self-described agnostics and atheists, and thirty-nine million “nones.” The sharpest rate of decline was among mainline Protestant churches at 3.4 percent.⁵ To put it bluntly, this is a seismic shift that indicates the potential death of Christianity as the leading religion.⁶ The data predicts that this trajectory will continue, so that by the year 2050 church attendance will be fifty percent of what it was in the 1990s.⁷

The perspective of these so called “nones,” and the growing tendency of disaffiliation may be surprising. Certain myths are perpetuated about this group that are

³ Those that report “none” when asked to identify religious affiliation.

⁴ Paul Taylor, *The Next America: Boomers, Millennials, and the Looming Generational Showdown* (New York: Public Affairs: Public Affairs, 2015), 38, 172.

⁵ Gregory Smith, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow,” Pew Research Center, Washington D.C. May 12, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changingreligious-landscape/>.

⁶ Taylor, 163.

⁷ David Olson, *The American Church in Crisis: Groundbreaking Research Based On A National Database Of Over 200,000 Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 15–17.

not exactly accurate. Some suggest that those in the “nones” group are “atheists” “hostile” “self-absorbed” and “not spiritual.” A 2012 survey offered some interesting insight. Of the forty-six million unaffiliated adults, 68 percent believe in God. 37 percent self-describe as “spiritual but not religious” and 1 in 5 reportedly pray every day (21 percent). Many are open to spiritual practices and have a receptivity to Christ . . .but not the church.⁸ They are not particularly hostile toward organized religion, although their critique is that it’s typically “judgmental, homophobic, hypocritical, and too political.”⁹

This study will focus on The United Methodist Church (UMC), the largest single mainline denomination. Mainline denominations declined from 18.1 to 14.7 percent from 2007 to 2014, and the UMC, fell from 5.1 of U.S. adults in 2007 to 3.6 percent in 2014.¹⁰ The UMC has been declining in membership at a fairly consistent rate of around 1.6 percent (consecutively each year) since 2006, with worship attendance decreasing approximately 2.9 percent during that time frame.¹¹ Decline for the UMC is not a new phenomenon, it has been occurring for approximately forty years.¹² The current levels of decline are bringing it to a crisis point.

My field work took place in the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church (hereafter FLUMC). Polanyi suggests obsession with one’s problem is the

⁸ Taylor, 163.

⁹ Ibid., 166.

¹⁰ See Michael Lipka, “Mainline Protestants Make Up Shrinking Number of US Adults,” Pew Research Center, May 18, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/18/mainline-protestants-make-up-shrinking-number-of-u-s-adults/>

¹¹ Heather Hahn, “U.S. Church Sees Numbers Slide in 2015,” United Methodist News Service, November 18, 2006, 1, <http://www.um-insight.net/in-the-church/finance-andadministration/u-s-church-sees-numbers-slide-but-there-s-more-to-the-story/>.

¹² Smith, 1.

“mainspring of all inventive power,” waking with it, eating lunch with it, and sleeping with it.¹³ This I have done as an ordained elder in the UMC throughout my ministry. However, for the past five years, I’ve been intentionally studying the decline of the FLUMC and the cultivation of fresh expressions as a possible vehicle of revitalization.

The Florida UMC measures vitality and decline by certain institutional markers:

1. Average Worship Attendance: the congregations annual average of worship attendees.
2. Professions of Faith: new Christians, or first time Methodists becoming members of a congregation.
3. Apportionments Paid: the percentage of a local church’s giving that proportionally supports the churchwide budget of the denomination.
4. Expense vs. Giving Comparison: how much money is a local church receiving, compared to what it’s spending (paying of bills, clergy compensation, health benefits, and so on).¹⁴

In 2017, the FLUMC was comprised of 625+ churches (+ correlates with multi-site scenarios). Of these, 472 churches were flat or declining in Average Worship Attendance (AWA) over the previous five years: 242 churches lost twenty percent of their membership, and 272 reported one or no baptisms. Three hundred four of the churches who lost AWA are in areas where the population is growing. In 2018, these trends continued with 593 church entities reporting End of Year Statistics. Of those, 64 percent were flat or declined in membership, and 69 percent were flat or declined in average worship attendance.¹⁵

¹³ Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 127.

¹⁴ Data on all FLUM churches is accessible at: <https://www.flumc.org/congregationalvitality>

The Eighty-six churches in the North Central District (hereafter NCD) of Florida served as the primary sample for this study. These congregations mirror the larger decline. The official data (executive summary) collected by the FLUMC for the NCD in the 2018 Imprint Report is revealing. Sixty-four of the eighty-six churches are plateaued or declining. Thirty-five of these churches are worshipping below fifty. Thirty-one congregations are in high risk scenarios, showing three or more risk indicators like declining worship, decreasing finances, and no new members. Nineteen congregations had no baptisms or “professions of faith” in the last three years.¹⁶ It could be argued that the handful of those that are growing are taking advantage of demographic trends, like retirement migrations or urbanization—already Christians moving into an area.

These troubling statistics are not unique to this sample. Of the approximately 33,000 United Methodist congregations in the U.S., only five, or .01 percent, have been able to maintain an annual growth rate of 10 percent for the past ten years.¹⁷

I currently serve as Cultivator of Fresh Expressions for the FLUMC. Part of my role in this position has been the creation of the Generative Pioneer¹⁸ Leadership Academy (hereafter GPLA), as well as the formation of “District Fresh Expressions Teams” in each of the eight FLUMC districts. The GPLA is the first prototype of what

¹⁵ Email correspondence with Steve Loher, Florida UMC Manager of Knowledge & Information Services on April 9, 2019.

¹⁶ Executive Summary. Collected by the FLUMC for the NCD in the 2018 Imprint Report.

¹⁷ Len Wilson, “Top 25 Fastest Growing Large United Methodist Churches, 2017 Edition” January 10, 2017, <http://lenwilson.us/top-25-fastest-growing-large-umc-2017/>

¹⁸ The term “pioneer” is problematic for some in the U.S. context. While originally Middle French in origin (*pionnier*: a foot soldier, or trench digger), from the same root as peon or pawn. For Native Americans this term connotes the violence, manipulation, and oppression of early European settlers. I will employ this term only as it is the primary language of the Church of England and the Fresh Expressions movement literature I will reference.

will become the training system for pioneer ministers in the Florida UMC, and potentially beyond. Also, in this role I have led dozens of “Local Church Workshops” with congregations that want to explore the cultivation of fresh expressions in their community. This research grew into the foundation for my work in creating a new academy for pioneers. Thus, my job and the learnings of this study are deeply intertwined.

The NCD sample consists of an area of North Central Florida that sprawls beyond Gainesville on the northern end, and well south of The Villages on the southern end. The NCD includes portions of Marion, Alachua, Sumter, Lake Citrus, Hernando, Pasco and Levy Counties. Five years ago, I was appointed as the Cultivator of Fresh Expressions for this district. I was the first clergy person in the United States appointed to this role. Two years ago, I was appointed as cultivator for the FLUMC as well. Most of my conference work has been trying to scale our local and district learnings, then spread them throughout the whole state. This is a Positive Deviance Approach.¹⁹

While at this point extraneous variables make it impossible to directly correlate fresh expressions activity with the revitalization of inherited congregations, the data from the North Central District sample does point to some positive developments. Twenty-two congregations are growing in worship attendance. Nine of those congregations (41 percent) have been experimenting with fresh expressions for the past five years. Each of those experimenting congregations grew in “professions of faith.” They are among a

¹⁹ Positive Deviance refers to an approach to social change based on “deviants” whose uncommon but successful strategies enable them to find better solutions to a problem than their peers, despite facing similar challenges and having no extra resources or knowledge. Douglas Wayne Balzer, “Positive Deviance: Empowering Ecclesial Contextualization with Theological Praxis” (D.Min. diss., Portland Seminary, 2012), <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/161>.

handful of churches who are reversing decline by growing primarily through reaching out to the “nones” and forming new Christians.²⁰

I will couple these findings with a case study approach. There is widespread acceptance in the social sciences of the case study as a valid form of data acquisition. Advocacy of the case study in research reaches back to the Platonic idea that from a single principle it is possible to catch the essence of broader phenomena.²¹ The case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth to understand complex social phenomena, in a kind of real-life laboratory context.²²

Further, I interviewed eight ethnically, theologically, and denominationally diverse leaders who are cultivating the blended ecology²³ at various organizational levels ranging from district/diocesan oversight and mega-churches to mid to small sized local congregations and grassroots missional communities. These individuals were June Edwards, Jorge Acevedo, Verlon Fosner, Travis Collins, Luke Edwards, Mike Snedeker, Mia Chang, Evelyn Sekajipo, and Jonathan Dowman. Seven are from the United States, and one from the Church of England.²⁴ I also interviewed both inherited and emerging church leaders throughout the FLUMC, and the pioneers of the GPLA.

²⁰ Executive Summary. Collected for FLUMC NCD 2018 Imprint Report.

²¹ John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. *Complete Works of Plato* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub, 1997).

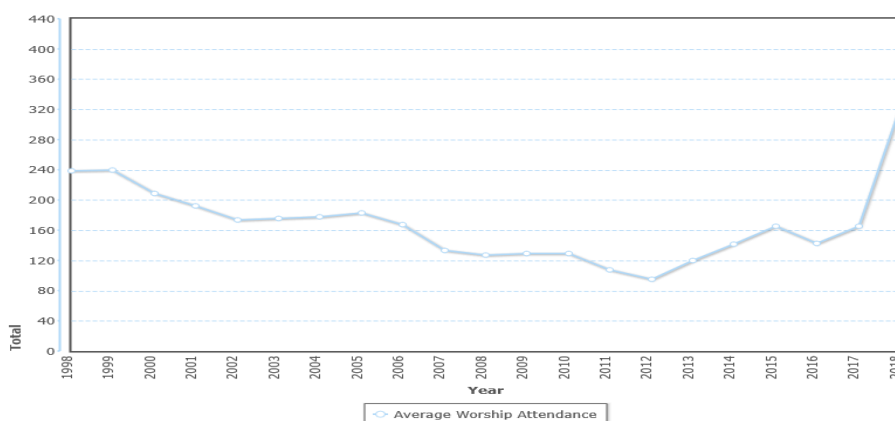
²² Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014).

²³ Blended Ecology refers to Fresh expressions of church in symbiotic relationship with inherited forms of church in such a way that the combining of these modes over time merge to create a nascent form. Michael Beck, *Deep Roots, Wild Branches: Revitalizing the Church in the Blended Ecology* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2019).

²⁴ Each interview is provided in full in the appendix, and is included in Michael Beck, *Deep Roots, Wild Branches: Revitalizing the Church in the Blended Ecology*, Book Two, (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2020), In Press.

Further, I will draw from my own experiences of pioneering fresh expressions, cultivating the blended ecology way in several revitalization congregations. My primary living laboratory is the revitalization congregation I have served for the past eight years, Wildwood United Methodist Church, of Wildwood, Florida (hereafter Wildwood).

When my wife and copastor Jill Beck and I visited Wildwood our first Sunday there were about thirty people in attendance, most of whom were eighty years old or above. Today Wildwood has about 300 people worshipping both in the inherited worship services and the network of thirteen fresh expressions of church. Planted in 1881 as a Methodist Episcopal South congregation (a denomination resulting from a split on the wrong side of the slavery issue), we partnered with a black church plant in the Pentecostal stream in 2018—God’s Glory Ministries. Our two congregations are in the process of merging, becoming fully multiethnic in our communal life and mission. Wildwood has now become a national case study for the “blended ecology of church.”²⁵



*Figure 1. AWA Wildwood*²⁶

²⁵ Michael Beck, *Deep Roots, Wild Branches: Revitalizing the Church in the Blended Ecology* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2019). Also, access videos at <http://deeprootswildbranches.com/>

²⁶ Average Worship Attendance of Wildwood UMC. Accessible at <https://tools.flumc.org/yearly.asp>

Wildwood is growing primarily through this network of thirteen fresh expressions forming new Christians (i.e. “professions of faith”) in multiple third places including tattoo parlors, dog parks, hair salons, community centers, Mexican restaurants, yoga studios, nursing homes, and the local jail.

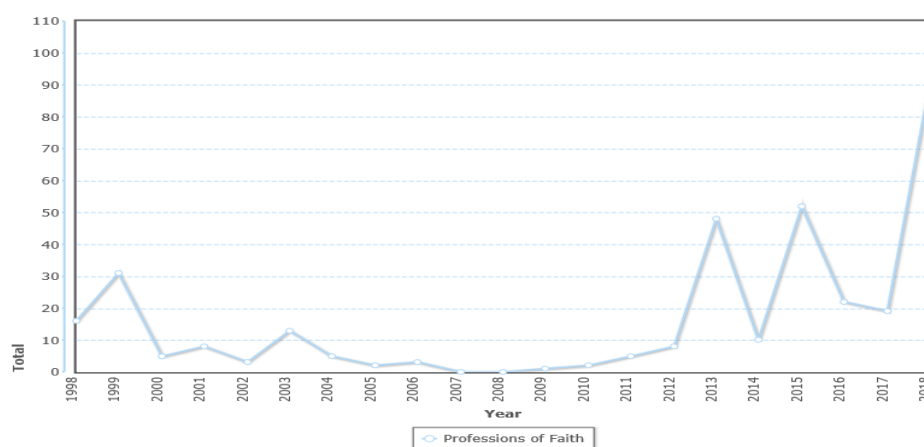


Figure 2. POF Wildwood²⁷

The churches in this study experimenting with fresh expressions and growing by reaching not-yet-Christians are “positive deviants” in the overall system. Process innovation demonstrates that positive deviations can be spread throughout a system.²⁸ Thus, it is helpful to understand how impactful even small missional adaptations can be. For instance, one local church’s simple decision to offer breakfast to people experiencing homelessness catalyzed a radical transformation of the church and served as a case study of emergence for researchers in the field of organizational management.²⁹ For now, I’m operating from the assumption that these positive deviations in the greater narrative of

²⁷ Professions of Faith, Wildwood UMC. Accessible at <https://tools.flumc.org/yearly.asp>

²⁸ Michael Moynagh, *Church in Life: Emergence, Ecclesiology and Entrepreneurship* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2017), 22-23.

²⁹ Donde Plowman, LaKami Baker, Tammy E. Beck, Mukta Kulkarni, Stephanie Thomas Solansky, Deandra Villarreal Travis, “Radical Change Accidentally: The Emergence and Amplification of Small Change” *The Academy of Management Journal* 50. no. 3 (2007): 515-543.

decline can provide insight for the whole system. Or as Frederick Buechner famously said, “The story of any one of us is in some measure the story of us all.”

To summarize, the data undergirding this research involves several key sources: the NCD sample of eighty-six congregations, interactive observations with pioneers in the Generative Pioneer Leadership Academy, firsthand learnings from Wildwood UMC, and interviews with the international blended ecology leaders.

While the key “problem” I want to address is the decline of the UMC, which is part of a broader “un-churching” of the United States,³⁰ I want to suggest that everything discussed so far are merely *symptoms* of a deeper underlying problem. Declining worship attendance, finances, and lack of new Christians are not problems to be solved . . . they are symptoms. Like a body that is ill exhibits symptoms, so does the body of Christ. Further, I will suggest that this illness is a mental one—a sickness centered in the mind—that effects the whole organism.

I also want to reframe the *problem* as a profound *opportunity*. A significant amount of the research has been focused on the external factors contributing to this decline.³¹ Likewise, there is a plethora of research and popular books on the inner world (psychology) of church leaders, and how to make them better.³² However, my argument

³⁰ Multiple “spiritual but not religious,” movements are pushing against institutional/denominational expressions of the church. For instance, see Richard Jacobson’s “Unchurching: Christianity without Churchianity” <http://www.unchurching.com/>

³¹ For a good summary see, Kory Knott, “A Cost-Sensitive Model for Revitalizing United Methodist Churches” (D.Min. diss., Portland Seminary, 2018), <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/264/>

³² For a representative example, see Barna’s chapter “Attributes of a Turnaround Pastor” in George Barna, *Turnaround Churches: How to Overcome Barriers to Growth and Bring New Life to an Established Church* (Ventura, Calif: Regal Books, 1993), 61.

is that external contextual factors are not the most significant contributors to church decline, nor are merely internal factors at the root of the problem. Rather, it is a psycho-social interaction between inherited church leaders and their contexts that possesses a profound degree of potential for positive change. More specifically, it is *how the church thinks about and responds to* the shifting context that is largely perpetuating the decline—a semiotic failure to “read the signs of the times and know what to do.”³³ As I will show, this is an adaptive challenge. A challenge that transforms into immense opportunity when we employ a new way of thinking and being in the nascent scenario.

I will suggest a psycho-social framework through which local church people can grow in our Contextual Intelligence Quotient (CIQ). Diane Reay, sociologist and Professor of Education at the University of Cambridge, states that psychosocial study is about,

inquiry into the mutual constitution of the individual and the social relations within which they are enmeshed, an attempt to build bridges between the individual focus of much psychology and psychoanalysis and the concerns of sociology with society and culture.³⁴

I will blend insights primarily from theology, sociology, psychology, organizational science, and complexity thinking to suggest a Contextual Intelligence Framework (CIF). I will show that persons who possess contextual intelligence often understand how to engage communities in healthy missional ways, experimenting effectively in new forms of church with “nones and dones.” Capturing and sharing these

³³ 1 Chronicles 12:32.

³⁴ Diane Reay, “Habitus and the Psychosocial: Bourdieu with Feelings,” *Cambridge Journal of Education* 45, no. 1 (2015): 10.

learnings could lead to introducing new people to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This is the “why” of this dissertation.

A Blinded Mindset

They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart (Ephesians 4:18)

One of the problems Paul was addressing in the early church, was the phenomenon of a “darkened mind/understanding” ἐσκοτισμένοι (*skotizō*) τῆς διανοίας (*dianoia*).³⁵ Quite literally “to cover with darkness” or metaphorically “the blinding,” (*skotizō*), and the “mind” or “mindset” (*dianoia*).³⁶

Len Sweet suggests steering away from using language which implies “darkness as evil” and “light as good.” Biblical language used in these ways contributes to a culture of racism. God is both the God of darkness and of light. Sometimes black is good and white is bad, and vice versa.³⁷ Another way to describe what Paul is getting at here, also Biblically accurate, is that of a “skewed” mindset, a “diminished” perception, and a mind “blinded” to beauty, goodness, and truth. A “blinded mind” leads to a hardened heart πώρωσις (*pōrōsis*: hardened or blinded) καρδιά (*kardia*: heart) the very condition that Jesus associated with the religious leadership of his day (Mk 3:5). Ultimately this hardened heart results in a life “alienated from God” (Eph 4:18).

In Reframation: Seeing God, People, and Mission Through Reenchanted Frames

Alan Hirsch and Mark Nelson explore this concept of a “darkened frame of mind” which

³⁵ Ephesians 4:18.

³⁶ Gerhard Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964) 4: 963, 636.

³⁷ Leonard I. Sweet, *Me and We: God's New Social Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014), 73.

they claim leads to a reduced life. In regard to the decline of the church they write, “The issue is not just a loss of traditional religious faith and a declining church but a more profound loss of our whole sense of transcendence, our spiritual instincts, and our consciousness of the divine.”³⁸ Their work supports the central concept of this dissertation—Western churches have a “thinking problem”—a reduced way of understanding God, creation, other human beings, and the larger communal ecosystems that cradle the life of inherited congregations.

Hirsh and Nelson discuss the tragedy of a reduced life, a reduced truth, and a reduced story, then write,

but here is our attempt to delve deeper, past the problems of reduced living, in order to understand that it is our reduced *thinking*—our theory of knowledge, how we perceive, interpret, and make sense of the world—which is at its core severely narrowed. It’s not simply that the truth is reduced, but that our very way of *receiving* and *perceiving* the truth is confined.³⁹

T.K. Das, expert of Strategic Management and Organizational Studies at Baruch College, demonstrates that organizations typically make mistakes in the area of *perceiving* their environments. Perceptions are shaped by our inner logic and they skew our vision. Perception involves how we process and analyze basic sensory stimuli. Das shows that many strategic plans fail due to mistakes made in the early perceiving of the environment stage.⁴⁰

³⁸ Alan Hirsch and Mark Nelson, *Reframation: Seeing God, People, and Mission Through Reenchanted Frames* (100 Movements Publishing, 2019), 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁰ T.K. Das, *The Subjective Side of Strategy Making: Future Orientations and Perceptions of Executives* (New York: Praeger, 1986), 19.

Hirsch and Nelson write, “As we consider what it means to be human, we’d do well to note that in the New Testament, the word *mind* (*nous*, *dianoia*) constitutes, not an instrument of thought” but “a mode of thought” or “mind-set.” ... “It therefore refers to the outlook, filter, orientation, or frames, as well as the rationale implicit in these” ... “This mind-set is ‘a complex of thoughts and assumptions which make up the consciousness of a person’ or their ‘way of thinking’”⁴¹

Thus, Ephesians 4:18 is referring to a blinded “mindset,” a way of looking at the world through hard eyes, a skewed way of thinking and believing that leads to a warped way of living, “alienated from God.” Further, Ephesian 2:3 associates the cravings of our flesh, with a “darkened perception.” Romans 12:2 refers to having our perceptions cleansed, a “renewing the *nous*.” Paul instructs the church “to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” in Ephesians 4: 23-24. This renewing of the “spirit of your minds” opens the possibility of living a new kind of life. Hirsch and Nelson posit further,

To translate the *nous/dianoia* as simply ‘mind’ therefore does not fully convey the biblical understanding. Rather, it approximates what we might generally call a *worldview* or *paradigm*; a particular set of frames used to view the world. And while paradigms allow us to see the world and negotiate it, they come along with what is called ‘paradigm blindness.’ By opting for one view of reality, the perceiver automatically deselects possible alternatives.⁴²

Jesus provides a new frame, a mind-set, a mental model, through which to view reality. “It was Jesus who once said that it is only through the simple yes of the child, the eyes that see the world through the ever-expanding frames of wonder, surprise, and

⁴¹ Hirsch and Nelson, *Reframation*, 72-73.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 73.

imagination, that one can understand God.”⁴³ The starting point of seeing how Jesus sees is “very good” (Gen 1:31). Creation itself is the “first incarnation.” The world is filled with beauty, truth, and goodness, but when we see creation through a blinded mind, it is hidden. The antidote to this broken thinking model is a renewed mind—a cleansed mind. This mode of thinking is embedded in the Scriptures as the “mind of Christ” (Phil 2).

Consider this quote famously attributed to Einstein, “Problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.”⁴⁴ This is called the “Einstellung effect,” a psychological term that describes the tendency of problem solvers to “employ only familiar methods even if better ones are available.”⁴⁵ Another way to describe this, in the words of missiologist and consultant Alan Roxburgh, we are stuck doing doughnuts in the “cul-de-sac” of church questions and church answers.⁴⁶

Among mainline denominations we are largely unaware of the “institutional voids”⁴⁷ between local congregations and their communities. Further, we are relying on “mental models” largely no longer valid on a new missional frontier.

MIT systems scientist Peter Senge describes mental models as “deeply held internal images of how the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking

⁴³ Ibid., 73-74.

⁴⁴ This quote has been modernized and translated out of the context of his original idea, while it is widely attributed to him, the closest written approximation is found here: Albert Einstein, “Atomic Education Urged by Einstein,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1946, 13.

⁴⁵ David J. Epstein, *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2019), 177.

⁴⁶ Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 16.

⁴⁷ Tarun Khanna pioneered this term to describe the various impediments to buyers and sellers coming together in emerging markets, for example the absence of intermediaries like market research firms and credit card systems. “A Case for Contextual Intelligence,” *Management International Review (MIR)* 55, no. 2, (April 2015): 185.

and acting.”⁴⁸ These mental models determine not only how we make sense of our environments, how we see, but also shape how we act. Some of the best ideas fail, brilliant strategies never get translated into action, because they conflict with these deeply held mental models. Philosophers have discussed mental models going as far back as Plato’s parable of the cave and perhaps beyond.⁴⁹ They can be the simple generalizations that we hold, as well as complex theories about the way things work. Senge writes, “Two people with different mental models can observe the same event and describe it differently, because they’ve looked at different details and made different interpretations.”⁵⁰

This idea has not exactly gone unnoticed in the field of organizational science. T.K. Das describes the importance of the perception of strategic decision makers in an organization. As businesses seek to thrive and expand, they must think about future considerations in the environment and decide how to prepare for those conditions. Organizations usually accomplish this through “strategic planning” which comprises decisions being made with a future orientation. Das notes that how organization members view their environment can be skewed by their perceptions, thus physical environments may or may not play a direct role in “determining the internal features of the organization.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 2006), 163.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵¹ Das, 14.

Using the example of Detroit automakers who were so stuck in faulty metal models to the degree they nearly imploded, Senge warns that entire industries can develop “chronic misfits between mental models and reality. In some ways, close-knit industries are especially vulnerable because all the member companies look to each other for standards of best practices.”⁵² We can see how this is particularly true for mainline denominational iterations of the church, as they rely heavily upon each other to develop these “best practices.” We have a significant case of “chronic misfit” with the emerging reality of our communities.

Senge writes, “Because we remain unaware of our mental models, the models remain unexamined. Because they remain unexamined, the models remain unchanged. As the world changes, the gap widens between our mental models and reality, leading to increasingly counterproductive actions.”⁵³

As the church finds itself today in a season of immense societal transformation, a new missional frontier emerges.

Opportunity—Reframing the Story of Decline

I’ve sought to avoid perpetuating the death-dealing narrative of the decline and closure of churches that dominates the ecclesial conversation in the West. If the UMC has a “thinking problem” there is a solution. Peter Senge writes, “But if mental models can *impede* learning—freezing companies and industries in outmoded practices—why can’t they also help *accelerate* learning?”⁵⁴ So, let’s reframe our reality like this: we find

⁵² Senge, 166.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 167.

ourselves on the edge of the greatest missional opportunity in the history of the United States.⁵⁵

My field research began with an exploration of ecclesial phenomena in the United Kingdom called “fresh expressions,” “the mixed economy” of church, and the emergence of “pioneer leadership.”⁵⁶ Regarding these phenomena, Stuart Murray, in *Church after Christendom* writes, “The brightest hope for the church after Christendom is a symbiotic relationship between inherited and emerging churches.”⁵⁷ From field observations, as a practitioner, I observed churches that were experimenting with fresh expressions were experiencing transformations.

I did not set out to produce a dissertation on contextual intelligence. The first wave of my research on Fresh Expressions was focused on what I termed the “Blended Ecology.” The blended ecology is a form of revitalization that occurs when local churches live in the mixed economy, cultivating both attractional and emerging forms of church over a significant period. I explored this phenomenon through the theoretical concept of emergence from complexity thinking.⁵⁸ This endeavor is being published as a

⁵⁵ See, *The Great Opportunity: The American Church in 2050* report. <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/4245467/The%20Great%20Opportunity.pdf>

⁵⁶ Louise Nelstrop and Martyn Percy, *Evaluating Fresh Expressions: Explorations in Emerging Church: Responses to the Changing Face of Ecclesiology in the Church of England* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 3-5.

⁵⁷ Stuart Murray, *Church After Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2004), 122.

⁵⁸ Emergence refers to novel and coherent forms (structure, pattern, order) arising from the dynamic self-organizing interplay among elements at successive layers within a complex adaptive system, and the irreducibility of the properties of the whole to the characteristics of its parts. See, Omer Yezdani, Louis Sanzogni, and Arthur Poropat, “Theory of Emergence: Introducing a Model-centered Approach to Applied Social Science Research,” *Prometheus* 33, no. 3 (2015): 306.

series of books titled *Deep Roots, Wild Branches: Revitalizing the Church in the Blended Ecology* with Seedbed Publishing.⁵⁹

In researching the blended ecology, I observed that the Fresh Expressions movement had glaring similarities with early Methodism. I sought to explore a Wesleyan theological foundation for fresh expressions. I launched out on an exploration of John Wesley and the first Methodists, and how that movement in the fields of the emerging industrial society is being reborn afresh today in the network society. This research is now being published as *A Field Guide to Methodist Fresh Expressions* with Abingdon Press.⁶⁰

Yet, throughout each wave of the research, some of my fundamental assumptions were challenged. In my day to day role as cultivator of fresh expressions, I discovered there was something blocking many local church folks from exploring planting new forms of church or even introducing small incremental changes. I found myself working with primarily two groups of people, who although incredibly diverse in many ways, embodied primarily two “mind sets.” These two groups are inherited church leaders (traditional), and emerging church leaders (pioneers) respectively.

I define *Inherited Church* in the sense of a form of church passed on as a precious gift by the saints of generations past, also called a “traditional, attractional, or gathered” church sometimes compared to the emerging church. As in our parents leaving us an incredibly valuable inheritance that we must now learn how to steward well. I use

⁵⁹ Michael Beck, *Deep Roots, Wild Branches: Revitalizing the Church in the Blended Ecology* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2019). Book One released 2-1-19, books two and three in press.

⁶⁰ Michael Beck, with Jorge Acevedo, *A Field Guide to Methodist Fresh Expressions* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2020), in press.

Emerging Church in the sense of a contextual form of church that reaches and serves people currently outside the inherited church. Emerging churches are typically shaped from a relational interaction between people, cultures, and the Gospel and as such are also referred to as “modern, missional, scattered” and fresh expressions of church. Both cohorts demonstrated CI in their own ways, as I will show, all people in some measure possess CI, not only pioneers.

Thomas Kuhn, whose work on paradigm shift I will explore in chapter five writes, “Notice now that two groups, the members of which have systematically different sensations on receipt of the same stimuli, do *in some sense* live in different worlds.”⁶¹ This describes my experience between the two groups in my consultations. It was obvious that they held certain assumptions, used a specific kind of language, and employed a set of strategies, undergirded by a specific thought paradigm. What Peter Senge calls “mental models.”

Through organizing district fresh expressions teams, interviewing and coaching pioneers, and creating the Generative Pioneer Leadership Academy, it became obvious that pioneers also held certain assumptions, used a specific kind of language, and operated in unique “mental models.” An elegant truth kept recurring throughout my learnings. These mental models, as well as their embodied practices, were very distinct. The following table features a list of “frequently asked questions.” Each question is a direct contrast to its numeric counterpart, highlighting these distinct mental models.

⁶¹ Thomas S. Kuhn and Ian Hacking, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 192.

Distinct Mental Models		
Inherited Cohorts	Example FAQ's	Pioneer Cohorts
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When will the people in the fresh expression come back for Sunday service? (i.e. "real church"). 2. So is this another evangelism "program"? 3. Will we hire someone to run the fresh expressions? 4. Will the people in the fresh expression become "members"? 5. What if the fresh expression breaks away on its own? 6. Are these fxC's sustainable ? 7. How will these fx'C's contribute to our current metrics? 8. What are these pioneers' "credentials" to do this work? 9. Who will provide the music, sermon, and other features of the service? 10. When will the Bible study start to form them as disciples? 11. How will these pioneers be paid by the church, if there is little expectation of income from the fxC? 12. Will they ever build or own a building? 13. Can our church do this on our own? 14. How does the hierarchy of leadership work? 15. What are the boundaries that mark who's in and who's out? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How can this become a form of church where these people already gather? 2. How do we avoid this becoming another "program"? 3. Can we raise up indigenous leaders within the communal practice? 4. What will be the signs of "belonging" to this church? 5. How can we sustain relationship and support the fxC's to replicate? 6. Are these fxC's able to flourish and multiply? 7. How do we create metrics that accurately measure "vitality" in the new scenario? 8. How do we create ways to "authenticate" the work of these pioneers? 9. What does a meaningful worship experience look like for these people? 10. How is discipleship happening through socialization, and non-formal learning, how can Scripture be weaved into those processes? 11. How can we adapt to bi and co-vocational ministry models? 12. How do we utilize spaces that free us from owning and maintain a building? 13. Who can we form strategic partnerships with to do this better? 14. How do we create a polycentric, shared leadership network? 15. What is the center that everyone should be moving towards? 	

Figure 3. Distinct Mental Model FAQ's⁶²

While admittedly a generalization, inherited cohorts often seemed to possess incredible IQ (intelligence quotient: involving analytical, information-processing abilities) and even EQ (emotional quotient: using emotional information to guide thinking and behavior).⁶³ Clergy were articulate communicators, educated extensively in theology, ecclesiology, and church management. They were trained in intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. However, they made incredible false assumptions about their context, and more specifically, the relationship of their churches with those contexts.

⁶² This table was created from frequently asked questions not only in the NCD/GPLA samples, but FX trainings nationally.

⁶³ Robert J. Sternberg, *Wisdom, Intelligence, and Creativity Synthesized* (Cambridge, UK New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xiv-xv.

From my perspective the pioneer cohorts often lacked the formal training and education. They seemed socially awkward in inherited ecclesial settings. As Jonny Baker says, pioneers have “the gift of not fitting in,” meaning they are those who have the uncanny gift to see and imagine different possibilities than the accepted ways of doing business as usual, and then build a path to make real this possibility.⁶⁴ They often possessed a keen kind of contextual awareness, and they could easily relate to people *outside* the church.

The communities they oversaw reflected these distinctions. The emerging communities of the pioneers operated in a *centered-set* way, rather than a *bounded-set*. They are communities that primarily follow a “belonging before believing” journey, an inclusive community, in which core convictions shape behavior, but one is free to explore moving towards the center, regardless of where in proximity they may be to those beliefs and behaviors. Whereas the inherited cohorts primarily had clear boundaries, established around beliefs and behaviors, which are patrolled and enforced, in which one is included or excluded based on adherence.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross, *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2014), 1.

⁶⁵ Stuart Murray, 28-31, 71.

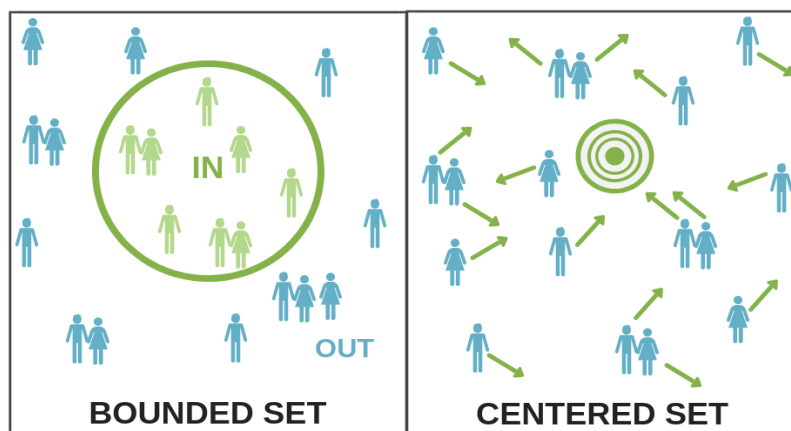


Figure 4. Bounded and Centered Set

One fundamental distinction between these two groups: what the inherited cohort saw as their greatest challenges, were seen by the emerging cohort as their greatest opportunities.

These interactions ultimately led to a shift in the focus of my research. The pioneers embody a form of *habitus* that is markedly different than conventional cohorts. “Habitus,” a concept with a long history dating back to Aristotle, was expanded greatly in the work of French sociologist, anthropologist, philosopher and public intellectual, Pierre Bourdieu.⁶⁶

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus refers to a “system of schemes of thought, perception, appreciation and action.”⁶⁷ The body inhabits a social world, and also the social world, the “field” of a context inhabits the body.⁶⁸ So, we carry a system of dispositions, a corporeal knowledge, in our bodies. A kind of second nature, or

⁶⁶ Diane Reay, “‘It’s All Becoming a Habitus’: Beyond the Habitual Use of Habitus in Educational Research” *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25 (2004): 432.

⁶⁷ Pierre Bourdieu and Jean C. Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990), 40.

⁶⁸ Reay, “It’s All Becoming a Habitus,” 432.

hardwiring, formed by story, parents, peers, and the repeated physicality of doing things again and again. Repeated behaviors become, habitual, reflexive, and born in our bodies. Learning habitus involves both bodily movement—kinesthetics—and engagement of the imagination—poetics.⁶⁹ Yet habitus is more than *habit* and less than *determinism*. It is an embodied rhythm of being, a set of dispositions, or a way of thinking and acting, that is shaped by one’s environment.

To various degrees, beneath their unique practices, the pioneers literally *think differently* than most of the inherited cohorts. They are simply not operating from the same assumptions. Many local churches seem to be stuck in a way of thinking that prohibits adopting simple missional practices, despite the proven success of these practices. Senge references examples that even when new organizational experiments prove successful, “mental models deeply embedded in the firms management traditions” win the battle and suffocate the innovation.⁷⁰ Bourdieu explains that dispositions are, “durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions.”⁷¹ Thus, individuals, their thinking and their actions, are shaped by their contexts, by the opportunities that are provided or denied therein.

It is as though emerging and inherited cohorts literally operate in different “mental models.” Peter Senge explains that one’s “mental models” may blind them to contextual variation and that they limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting: “We

⁶⁹ Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 39-40.

⁷⁰ Senge, 167.

⁷¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press. 1990), 54.

are not consciously aware of our mental models or the effects they have on our behavior.”⁷²

To drill down even further here, it’s as if many local church people amid the liminality I will discuss fully in Chapter Five, embody a *habitus* that is no longer suited to the *domain* in which they operate. Robin Hogarth et al. describes *wicked learning environments* as, “situations in which feedback in the form of outcomes of actions or observations is poor, misleading, or even missing.” This is contrasted this with *kind learning environments*, in which “feedback links outcomes directly to the appropriate actions or judgments and is both accurate and plentiful.”⁷³ The inherited church was formed in a *kind* domain, but we now inhabit a *wicked* domain. It’s as if inherited cohorts were prepared to be expert tennis players, but their local communities are soccer fields. Some of the skills and instincts will cross over to the new domain, but significant adaptation is needed.

I want to posit three primary initial observations from these explorations: 1. Churches cultivating fresh expressions are slowly experiencing forms of revitalization. 2. “Pioneer” ministry teams are the key to this activity. 3. Pioneers, although diverse in many ways exhibit a way of thinking and acting that indicates a distinct characteristic which I define as *contextual intelligence* (CI).

Contextual Intelligence

Contextual Intelligence comes from the Latin root *contextere*, which means “to weave together,” and the conjunction of two Latin words: *inter* (between) and *legere* (to

⁷² Senge, 166.

⁷³ Robin Hogarth, Tomás Lejarraga, and Emre Soyer, “The Two Settings of Kind and Wicked Learning Environments,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 24, no. 5 (2015): 379.

choose or read). Matthew Kutz, describes CI as “accurately reading between the lines” (the threads that intertwine to form a context), or “the ability to accurately diagnose a context and make the correct decisions regarding what to do.”⁷⁴ This distinct kind of intelligence was embodied by the Tribe of Issachar: “Of Issachar, those who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chr. 12:32).

Kutz, Ball, and Carroll report that Contextual intelligence has been reported to be important and useful in a variety of industries relative to decision-making and leadership behaviors, including: Professionals and scholars in nursing, educational research, psychology, counseling, business, politics, athletic training, medicine, marketing, teacher education, global entrepreneurship, and military strategy.⁷⁵ Each examination of CI from these various fields has promoted it as a useful or even requisite skill. While the reasons vary, generally, CI facilitates identifying external and internal influences that are not immediately obvious, helps in considering non-linear relationships, promotes a holistic perspective to resolve tensions among opposing ideas, and generates innovative outcomes.⁷⁶

It was Yale psychologist Robert Sternberg who first popularized the term “contextual intelligence.”⁷⁷ He suggests that all intelligence is contextual. Intelligence

⁷⁴ Matthew R. Kutz, *Contextual Intelligence: Smart Leadership for a Constantly Changing World* (Perrysburg, OH: RTG Publishing, 2013), 8-9.

⁷⁵ Matthew R. Kutz, Debra A. Ball, and Gretchen K. Carroll, “Contextual Intelligence Behaviors of Female Hospital Managers in the United States,” *International Journal of Healthcare Management* 11, no. 3 (2018): 156.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁷⁷ In 1984 Sternberg published “Toward a Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence” where he first proposed a contextual framework for understanding intelligence. Sternberg described “contextual intelligence” as a subtheme of practical intelligence. “Toward a Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 7, no. 2 (1984): 270.

does not develop in a vacuum, or in a laboratory with standardized tests and objective answers only. All people possess CI in some measure and can grow in its employment.

Tarun Khanna defines CI as “the ability to understand the limits of our knowledge, and to adapt that knowledge to a context different from the one in which it was developed.” He pioneered the concept of “institutional voids” to describe the absence of intermediaries like market research firms and credit card systems to connect buyers and sellers in emerging markets. He borrows from Senge’s research to describe corporations holding to “mental models” that blind them to contextual variation. This results in strategy failure.⁷⁸

Two Harvard researchers, Anthony J. Mayo and Nitin Nohria conducted a massive study including one thousand of the most influential business leaders of the twentieth century. They term this group the “canon of business legends.”⁷⁹ They collected dozens of profiles of individual leaders and divided them into three basic leadership archetypes: leaders, managers, and entrepreneurs. Their research reveals that exceptional businesspersons vary in traits such as charismatic personalities, analytical intelligence, creativity, and low risk aversion.⁸⁰

However, what each person they studied possessed that separated them from others in their time was not the possession of certain characteristics, but the application of these characteristics within unique contextual settings . . . contextual intelligence, which they describe as “the profound sensitivity to macro-level contextual factors in the

⁷⁸ Khanna, 181.

⁷⁹ Anthony J. Mayo and Nitin Nohria, *In Their Time: The Greatest Business Leaders of the Twentieth Century* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2005), xv.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

creation, growth, or transformation of businesses.”⁸¹ Thus, understanding how to make sense of the spirit of the times and harnessing the opportunities it presents is the path to creating and recreating successful organizations. They claim that leadership “springs forth from an appreciation and understanding of one’s situation in the world.”⁸² Each of the leaders they studied could read the changing economic, social, and political conditions, and respond appropriately to be successful.

Conclusion

One place CI has yet to be seriously considered and applied is within the ecclesial realm. The cultivation of this kind of intelligence is a crucial endeavor for the church today. The greatest manifestation of contextual intelligence in human history is found in the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth. In *The Kingdom of God & Jesus’ Contextual Intelligence* T.C. Choong states, “In fact, it appears to me that Jesus originated a communication and management skill more than 2000 years ago that management gurus and psychologists are just beginning to refer to today as *contextual intelligence*.”⁸³

While all forms of intelligence are important, CI refers to a broader capacity to weave them together and practically apply them. I want to explore a potential framework for the cultivation of CI in the local church. I will suggest that the incarnation of Jesus (particularly informed by the descent/ascent Christology of Philippians 2 and Ephesians 4) offers us such a framework, which I define as the Contextual Intelligence Framework (CIF). Choong calls CI “the golden thread” of Jesus’ intelligence.⁸⁴ Let us now follow the

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ T.C. Choong, *The Kingdom of God & Jesus’ Contextual Intelligence* (Singapore: Armour Publishing, 2017), 11.

“golden thread” through the Scriptures and into church history. CI . . . one intelligence to serve them all.

⁸⁴ Ibid., xiv.

CHAPTER 2:

BIBLICAL MATERIAL—THE GOLDEN THREAD OF CI

“Of Issachar, those who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, two hundred chiefs, and all their kindred under their command”
1 Chronicles 12:32.

The Intelligence of Issacharians

Once again, we are in a situation similar to Judges 2:10, “Moreover, that whole generation was gathered to their ancestors, and *another generation grew up* after them, *who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.*”⁸⁵ I noted earlier the growth of “nones and dones,” the decline of all Christian groups, and the disaffiliation of emerging generations with the church. On a massive scale, another generation has grown up who does not know the Lord.

In times of paradigm shift, we need the intelligence of the Issacharians. In 1 Chronicles 12:32, the people are in a liminal space, a time between the times, and various constituencies of the tribes are rallying around David in the wilderness. While Saul is still technically king, and David’s movement is restricted, these supporters are of “one mind” to make David king. They are bringing support, in terms of people power, wisdom, and resources.⁸⁶ Thus, this is a time *between* two ages: the reign of Saul, and the reign of David. The two paradigms exist simultaneously betwixt and between these kingships and their distinct ways of ordering society.

The tribe of Issachar shows up: the semioticians—known as the sign readers—who could “understand the times,” and “knew what to do” (1 Chr 12:32).

⁸⁵ Italics mine.

⁸⁶ 1 Chronicles 12:1-40.

Organizationally speaking they were the strategic planners of the community. Perhaps this wisdom is embodied most clearly in Tola, the seventh judge of Israel:

After Abimelech, Tola son of Puah son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, who lived at Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim, rose to deliver Israel. He judged Israel twenty-three years. Then he died, and was buried at Shamir (Judg. 10:1-2).

In contrast to Abimelech's three-year reign of terror that preceded him (to which is devoted an entire chapter in Judges 9), the Bible devotes merely two short verses to this twenty-three-year reign of Tola. Moskowitz notes that, "Biblical brevity typically conveys epochal serenity."⁸⁷ While brevity can also imply nothing noteworthy occurred, Moskowitz argues that the associations of Tola with classical Issachar names, portrays him as "the embodiment of the blessings given to Issachar."⁸⁸ The Issacharians exemplified a domestic calm, a peaceful disposition, and a willingness to serve that denoted deep humility. In Jewish Scholarship today Issachar is known for insightful study of Torah.⁸⁹

Moskowitz notes that Issachar and Zebulun, unlike most commonly paired sets of biblical brothers, do not become adversaries or even rivals. "Issachar and Zebulun chose to work together, combining their separate and different skills to their mutual advantage."⁹⁰ In the last testament of Moses, the partnership between the two tribes is used as a paradigm for life.⁹¹ This is a Biblical basis for the idea of "strategic

⁸⁷ Nathan Moskowitz, "Tola the Judge: A New Midrashic Analysis," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 43, no. 1. 17–21 (January 2015): 17.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸⁹ T.D. Alexander and David W. Baker. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 459.

⁹⁰ TB Megillah 6a; Numbers Rabbah 13:17. Quoted in Moskowitz, 19.

⁹¹ Alexander, 459.

partnerships” in the kind of effectual reasoning employed by entrepreneurial pioneers I will describe later.

Tola, a humble, peaceful judge of Israel for 23 years, symbolizes the tribe of Issachar, and embodies the “qualities of scholarship and learning that minimized any internal civil strife and which, through mediation, averted any potential external strife.”⁹² Perhaps we see here a difference between two very distinct leadership styles: a positional/hierarchical individualistic approach (Abimelech) and a shared/adaptive collectivistic approach (Tola). This interpretation lines up with the commentary of Malbim who argues the text is contrasting Tola with Abimelech: “Abimelech sought to lord it over the Israelites as his subjects, whereas Tola sought to help them and take care of their needs.”⁹³

This also enlivens the description of the Issacharians in 1 Chronicles 12. Other tribes bring soldiers, weapons, and provisions, while Issachar brings a form of *intelligence*.

The Issacharians therefore seem to have a competency in the exegesis of context. There are parallels here with the strategic planning process of Das we will explore later. Not only are Issacharians able to gain a factual perception and evaluation of an environment, but also, they can move into strategy delineation and implementation.⁹⁴ When times are changing, and the future is uncertain, they are called upon in the liminality to provide an accurate assessment of the context and develop a strategy.

⁹² Moskowitz, 20.

⁹³ Ibid., 19.

⁹⁴ Das, 19-24.

The church is no stranger to liminality. There are multiple occasions provided in Scripture of God’s people moving through the process of in-betweenness. The movement from favor to un-favor with Pharaoh (Exo 1:8), the 40-year wandering in the wilderness between liberation from captivity and promised land (Josh 5:6), the emergence of the Judges and a new generation who “did not know” YHWH (Judg 2), the rocky transition of kingship between Saul and David (1 Chr 11-12), the captivity and exile with Jeremiah’s accompanying prophetic logic to settle in for the long-haul (Jer 29), Jesus in the tomb (Mk 15:46), the church prayerfully awaiting the Spirit (Acts 2), and many more. In some sense, the church is always living in the in-between. Thus, in an ecclesiological sense, CI is always valuable and needed.

The CIQ of Jesus

If we follow the golden thread of CI through the Scriptures, the greatest example is embodied in the life of Jesus himself. It is perhaps no mere coincidence that Jesus rides into Jerusalem on the very symbol of Issachar—a donkey—the humble domesticated beast of burden.⁹⁵ “Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9). Each of the four Gospels demonstrate that Jesus strategically stages this activity to fulfill this prophecy (Matthew 21:1–11, Mark 11:1–11, Luke 19:28–44, John 12:12–19). As Jesus descends from the Mount of Olives towards Jerusalem, the crowds lay their clothes on the ground to welcome him as he triumphantly

⁹⁵ The image of donkey served as the symbol of the tribe, originating from deathbed blessing of Jacob over his son Issachar in Genesis 49: 14-15. Alexander, 459.

and peacefully enters Jerusalem. This is a kind of anti-power parade, an inverted experience from the triumphal entry of the Caesars.⁹⁶

Semiotically, there are multiple connections that could be made with Jesus' symbolic activity and the tribe of Issachar. Most notably, there are many similarities in the dispositions of Jesus, Tola, and the Issacharites (humble, wise, and peaceful for example). Jesus is not an Abimelech type of leader, but of the character of Tola. He was not a Caesar, thundering into the city on a war horse with legions of military units.

The triumphal entry also signifies the full inauguration of the greatest transition in human history. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth was a cosmic movement from the "age of the law" to the "age of faith" (Romans 10:4). This launches the in-betweenness of Israel and New Israel, and the grafting in of the gentiles into the family of God. The whole New Testament takes place amid this shift of ages, from one reality into another. Further, we live between Jesus' incarnation and the second coming now.

Jesus' life and ministry initiate this transformation, but the rest of the New Testament emerges in response. The story of the early church is the story of the first disciples unlearning, improvising, and responding to these implications. Furthermore, Jesus is the greatest manifestation of intelligence ever possessed by a single person, he is the incarnate logos (Jn 1:1). While this intelligence has many facets, one dimension is contextual intelligence. I will now explore this assertion at three levels:

- The incarnation as a manifestation of CI.

⁹⁶ A case can be made that this was an imitation of Simon Maccabees' entry into Jerusalem after the defeat of Antiochus. See, Witherington's *John's Wisdom*, 221.

- Jesus teaches his disciples how to grow in their CI.
- Jesus bequeaths the church with his own CI, i.e. the “mind of Christ” (Phil 2:1-11).

Contextual Intelligence—The Word Made Flesh

The life of Jesus is the ultimate form of contextual intelligence. The content of the universe enters into the context of a human life. God transfigures creation by entering fully into it, taking on particularity to redeem universally. God takes on a fully human, fully sensory, experience. Jesus OF Nazareth, he fully immerses himself in the language, culture, and practices of a seemingly insignificant place. It is the resonance of Jesus’ authentic contextual voice of a specific place and time that speaks universally to all humanity. God lives out a story in our midst. God doesn’t merely love in general, but in the particular. Jesus didn’t just love people, he loved particular persons. Jesus shows us that we love not in universals, but in particulars. T.C. Choong identifies the “divine and unique framework” of Jesus’ intelligence as “contextual intelligence.”⁹⁷

Jesus taught his disciples how to hone their competencies in contextual intelligence. One aspect of this was learning to read the “signs” or “σημεῖον” (*semeion*) of the times:

From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. (Matt 24:32-33).

Jesus also criticized the Pharisees for not being able to read the signs: “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, ‘It will

⁹⁷ Choong, xv.

be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times” (Matt 16:2-3). Or, “Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?” (Lk 12:56-57).

Jesus directly tells his disciples or implies in his teaching for them to “stay awake”⁹⁸ and to “watch,” give strict attention to, be cautious, and actively pay attention fourteen times in the Gospels⁹⁹ and three times in Revelation.¹⁰⁰ One of Jesus’ trademark sayings in his teachings is, “he who has ears,” the equivalent of “Listen up! Pay close attention!” which is also peppered throughout the Gospels.¹⁰¹

Jesus taught the disciples to learn from their surroundings,

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these (Matt 6:26-29).

Thus, he frequently compels the disciples to look, notice, observe, and behold the surrounding context, thereby developing their CI.

Jesus himself also offers us a primary example of contextual intelligence. He observed and brought awareness to the fragmentation and inequalities in the context.¹⁰² He created disorientation regarding the status quo by challenging the systems of his day.

⁹⁸ Mk 13:33, Lk 21:36.

⁹⁹ Mt 24:42, Mt 24:43, Mt 25:13, Mt 26:38, Mt 26:40, Mt 26:41, Mk 13:34, Mk 13:35, Mk 13:37, Mk 14:34, Mk 14:37, Mk 14:38, Lk 12:37, Lk 12:39.

¹⁰⁰ Rev 3:2, Rev 3:3, Rev 16:15.

¹⁰¹ Mt 11:15, Mt 13:9, Mt 13:43, Mk 4:9, Lk 8:8, Lk 14:35.

¹⁰² What I have termed “minding the gaps” in the CIF.

Jesus wasn't always "nice." He was quite adept at healthy conflict. While not merely a prophet, he was the greatest prophet in the line of prophets.¹⁰³ Jesus confronted the dominate "mental models." He was a master at reading the signs of the times and knowing what to do.

He was also a master of contextualizing Scripture. He did so in seemingly unique ways. He quoted them often and claimed that his mission was to "fulfill" them (Mt 5:17). Yet his fulfillment, in some cases, is quite radical. This is made clear by his confrontations with the Pharisees (Deut 24:1, Mk 10:2-9) and the "fulfillment" teachings: "you've heard it said...but I say." Jesus expands "eye for an eye" to "turn the other cheek," and "hate your enemies" to "love your enemies and pray for them," etc. (Matt 5:17-48).

Not only is Jesus embodied Scripture, "living word" (Jn 1:1). He himself directly reframes sections in the Book of Leviticus that speak of "clean versus unclean" sins requiring the death penalty, and the seemingly crude restrictions of those with birth defects (Jn 9:2-3), the deformed (Mk 3:1-6), or menstruating women not being allowed in community worship (Lk 8:42-48). Perhaps his rereading the story comes from Exile theology. For instance, Isaiah 56 suggested that in the new temple age outcasts would be welcome. Jesus shared sacred table fellowship with those labeled by the Pharisees' as sinners and called them to be his disciples—Levi the tax collector for example (Lk 5). Jesus even used the words of the prophets, (Isaiah 56 and Jeremiah 7 for instance), when he confronted the temple leadership (Mk 11:12-19). In some sense, the CI of Jesus

¹⁰³ For instance, he both embodied the prophetic tradition and quoted the prophets, joining the lineage of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel.

included an acutely accurate reading of context along with a blending of Torah, Exilic prophets, and justice for marginalized people.

Jesus' radical missional reading of Scripture, his temple tantrum, and an unpopular position on the inevitable destruction of the temple were profound disruptions to the religious system. Balzer notes that this bold religious and cultural positive deviation was a deciding factor in Jesus' execution.¹⁰⁴

According to Mark, in Jesus' final teaching block to his disciples, he instructs them to maintain a state of watchfulness and calls them to γρηγορέω (gregoreō) "stay awake" or "be awake" Mk 13:37. This ability to focus one's attention, observe and analyze the surroundings, and notice fragmentation, are contextual intelligence competencies I will discuss later: tracking and minding the gaps. Jesus was teaching his disciples to "understand the times and know what to do" (1 Chr 12:32). Most important to a theological exploration and practically accessible application of CI for the local church is found in the possibility that Jesus bequeathed this intelligence to the church. He gives us the "mind of Christ," a contextual intelligence framework imbedded in the Scriptures.

Philippians 2

The "Mind of Christ"

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus"

Philippians 2:4

The Bible not only tells us *what to think about* (λογίζομαι Phil 4:8), it tells us *how to think* (φρονέω Phil 2:4). Buttrick notes in the case of Phil 2:4 the word φρονέω is rendered not as a noun but a verb, which evades a literal translation in the English

¹⁰⁴ Balzer, 39.

language.¹⁰⁵ Bultman suggested “be minded” as an appropriate translation.¹⁰⁶ Or more fully, to develop an attitude based on careful thought—a disposition.¹⁰⁷ Hence, let the “same mind be in you” that was in Jesus, quite literally be “Christ minded,” or take on the disposition of Christ. It may be feasible that this paraenesis can be more fully grasped by bringing it into conversation with the concept of habitus, the “system of schemes of thought, perception, appreciation and action” I referenced earlier and will explore more fully in chapter six.¹⁰⁸ I want to suggest that the “mind of Christ” passage in Philippians 2 gives us a base framework for contextual intelligence.

This is a letter authored by Paul during one of his imprisonments (Phil 1:12-14). N.T. Wright sides with interpreters that suggest it was composed in the mid-50s of the first century, less than thirty years after Jesus’ execution.¹⁰⁹ Many commentators agree that chapter two contains a potential hymn or creedal statement that may predate Paul.¹¹⁰ Wright refers to this segment as simply a “poem” which potentially served as a vehicle for the early church’s theology, “telling the story of both the human race and Israel, with both of them focused now on Jesus as the Messiah, Israel’s representative, who is also the

¹⁰⁵ George A. Buttrick, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 3, 384.

¹⁰⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, translated by K. Grobel (New York, Scribner, 1954), 211-216.

¹⁰⁷ Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William F. Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1066.

¹⁰⁸ Bourdieu, and Passeron, 40.

¹⁰⁹ N.T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus’s Crucifixion* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2016), 257.

¹¹⁰ *The New Interpreter’s Bible: General Articles & Introduction, Commentary, & Reflections for Each Book of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), XI, 501.

quintessential human being.”¹¹¹ DeSilva notes that the voluntary humbling of Jesus in obedience to God, and his exaltation to the place of greatest honor by God becomes a warrant for believers, “Paul appeals to Jesus’ example specifically to curtail competition and rivalry over status within the Christian movement, showing that the precedent of Jesus was as useful for regulating relationships within the group as for strengthening the group against erosion from without.”¹¹²

The structural breakdown of this paraenesis has been suggested to be two major components: an opening statement proposing a series of questions (an interrogation) with an explanation of a community of love (Phil 2:1-4), followed by the poem that describes the “mind of Christ” (Phil 2:5-11). In the structure of the poem itself there is a clear contrast noticeable as two distinct trajectories: the descending of Christ (2:6-8), followed by an exaltation by God (2:9-11). Wright adds, “each of the two halves of the poem consists of three three-line stanzas, and the line in the middle, as it were, holds its arms out in both directions, making shocking and revolutionary sense.”¹¹³ The middle of the poem is the cross, the pivot point, which reverses the trajectory from descent to ascent.

Philippians 2:1-4 focuses on the qualities of life in the community. In 2:1 *κοινωνία* (fellowship)—community, communion, and intimacy—is a major focus. There seems to be a lack of this kind of selfless love and unity in some degree. Hellerman has suggested that the background is the Roman view of honor which means “moving up the

¹¹¹ Wright, 255.

¹¹² David A. DeSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 55.

¹¹³ Wright, 254.

social scale,” while Jesus descends.¹¹⁴ So then, Christianity teaches honor through descent rather than ascent, a radically countercultural idea.¹¹⁵

Philippians 2:5-11 consists of what MacLeod has called the “Magnificent Hymn” in which there are many distinctive doctrines, including: the preexistence of Christ, his deity, his equality with God the Father, Christ’s incarnation and true humanity, his voluntary death on the cross, his glorious exaltation by God the Father, and his ultimate triumph over evil, all of this in just seventy-six Greek words.¹¹⁶ Entire books have been written on this segment, so I will not attempt to replicate that work. One key concept I intend to engage is: κενόω (*kenoō* emptying of self). κενόω is the basis for the nineteenth century “kenotic theory” of the incarnation, which argues that Christ emptied himself of the divine attributes.¹¹⁷ The meaning here seems to be that Jesus abandons privileges that were rightly his, which may be a direct contrast to Adam, who exploited those privileges.¹¹⁸

Perhaps a most important point: it is the *self-emptying* that reveals what God is like. The incarnation reveals the very nature of God, and it is precisely this “emptying” that makes this possible. The reality of Christ’s self-identification with those who are slaves is highlighted. Jesus descends all the way down into the depths of the human condition as a δούλου (slave).

¹¹⁴ Joseph H. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 47.

¹¹⁵ DeSilva, 55.

¹¹⁶ David J. MacLeod, “Imitating the Incarnation of Christ: An Exposition of Philippians 2:5-8.” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158, no. 631 (2001): 309.

¹¹⁷ *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 500-510.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Marshall also shows that in Philippians 2:1-4, Paul is dealing with the problem of rivalry leading to disunity in the congregation, the way to create true unity and fellowship in the Spirit is by taking on the “attitude of Christ Jesus.”¹¹⁹ Philippians 2:5-11 then describes the “same mind... that was in Christ” or the disposition and mental model of Jesus himself. Paul implores the church community to be unified in this same mind, then he describes it in the poetic language of a journey.

DeSilva describes the New Testament culture of honor and shame, and how the story at the center of the church’s faith forces a decision concerning the reliability of the world’s estimation of these concepts.¹²⁰ To live as a slave (a Jew under the yoke of Roman subjugation) and be crucified (an intentionally degrading death reserved for the criminals at the lowest end of the shame spectrum) would not be a story celebrated as honorable.¹²¹ In fact, it completely inverts the dominant cultural values. Philippians 2 captures the shame-honor reversal that Paul describes more fully elsewhere as a “stumbling block” and the “scandal of the cross” (1 Cor 1:18-31). DeSilva calls Philippians a “fine study in the application of the ethos of unity and harmony” in which the “mind of Christ” shows that “only a spirit of humility, a willingness to sacrifice what we may hold dear for the sake of love for the other, a willingness to ‘die to self’ will contribute to restoring unity in the church where it has been breached and preserving it where it is now threatened.”¹²²

¹¹⁹ I.H. Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 355.

¹²⁰ DeSilva, 51.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 218-219.

Wright states,

The first half of the poem describes Jesus' refusal to do what normal worldly powers would do, namely, to exploit a status for one's own benefit. In Paul's day, and in the world well known in Philippi (a Roman colony), the contrast is stark: everyone knew how worldly emperors behaved, and Jesus did the opposite. His self-emptying, his humility, his obedience to the divine plan even though it meant his own cruel and shameful death—all this is the complete opposite of normal human behavior, normal imperial behavior.¹²³

Meeks shows that this descent/exaltation Christology follows the interpretive pattern of crucifixion/resurrection, thereby functioning as a main metaphor for evaluating behavior within the church, "In paraenesis, Christ's voluntary submission to death is taken as a model for other-regarding actions and attitudes."¹²⁴ Wright also argues that the poem is setting out the pattern of life that Jesus' followers are to model in their relationship with one another. Yet, he provides an important further distinction. Not only is Jesus the example to follow, but he is also the "place," from which his followers find their identity, meaning through this relationship with Jesus, they already belong to him, "and this is how his 'mind' worked, so theirs should work in the same way not only because they are copying him, but because his 'mind' is at work in theirs."¹²⁵

Christians have been given a new *mental model* and a disposition that finds embodied expression in the unique *habitus* of Jesus himself. This disposition includes "humility" which Witherington shows was not a desirable virtue in the larger Greco-Roman culture, but "was associated with craven cowering or the obsequiousness of a

¹²³ Wright, 256.

¹²⁴ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 181.

¹²⁵ Wright, 256.

slave.¹²⁶ Thus, Christians have been given a new *framework* through which to view reality—the very “mind of Christ,” which is countercultural on many levels.

Ephesians 4

A Parallel Paraenesis of the Descent/Ascent Christology

As early as the 4th Century, church father John Chrysostom noticed the similarities and connection between Philippians 2 and Ephesians 4. He remarks in his Homily on Ephesians, that Paul’s “design here is just the same as in the epistle to the Philippians. When he was exhorting them there he showed them Christ. So he does also here too, showing that even Christ descended to the lowest parts of the earth.”¹²⁷ Following Chrysostom’s logic I want to draw out some parallels. The key connection point is found in what he calls the “design” or more specifically the trajectory of descent and ascent. Philippians 2 ends with Jesus taking his seat as the glorified and enthroned Lord, yet there are more details to be “fleshed out” so to speak. Ephesians 4 describes the ascending Lord gifting the church. While Jesus ascends in his resurrected body, one form of embodiment—the gifted body of Christ called the church serves as another form of embodiment.

There are various arguments for and against Pauline authorship of Ephesians. Witherington notes that about “half or less of commentators think Paul himself penned Ephesians.”¹²⁸ While Arnold shows that most evangelical scholars support the

¹²⁶ Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2007), 284.

¹²⁷ Mark J. Edwards, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians* (Chicago, IL: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 164.

¹²⁸ Witherington, 1.

authenticity of Pauline authorship.¹²⁹ There are certainly components of the document that are unique in the Pauline corpus, not only the language, but the fact that it is an encyclical addressed to a whole group of Christians in an area of Asia.¹³⁰ Witherington makes a compelling case that Ephesians is actually a homily, and a “large-scale example of epideictic rhetoric in praise of the nature and unity of the church.”¹³¹ My focus here is to exegete a small pericope within chapter four, focused on the descent/ascent Christology. I will take the text as it stands, attributed to Paul during one of his imprisonments, as assumed by the early church fathers.¹³²

While there are multiple connection points between Philippians 2 and Ephesians 4, and the ultimate aim of each passage is the embodiment of a community of holy love, here are some key similarities:

- Paul is imprisoned, but writes these letters to encourage the churches in similar ways:

Phil 1:7 “in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.”

Phil 1:27 “Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.”

Eph 4:1 “I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.”

- Both passages are paraenetic, Paul is instructing them to possess a distinct moral and ethical quality based in two different concepts of “mind:” φρονέω (Phil 2, “be minded” or “an attitude” as noted above and; νοῦς (Eph 4:17, the intellectual faculty or “mindset” as noted in chapter one.

¹²⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 46.

¹³⁰ Witherington, 218-219.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Edwards, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 236.

Phil 2:2 “make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind”

Eph 4:17 “Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds.”

Eph 4:23 “and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds.”

- In both passages, having the appropriately oriented *mindset* or *being minded*, is linked with behavioral change:

Phil 2:3 “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.”

Eph 4:23-34 “and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

- Both passages employ descent/exaltation Christology:

Phil 2:8-9 “he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name.”

Eph 4:8-10 “Therefore it is said, ‘When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.’ (When it says, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things).”

Earlier I spoke of a “blinded mindset,” comparing that to faulty mental models that restrict us from attaining an accurate portrait of reality. Ephesians 4 takes place in the context of an ascended Christ, giving gifts to the church so that the body may become “fully mature in every way.” How is one cleansed from the diminished perceptions of a blinded mind (Eph 4:23-24)? How does the “renewing of the *nous*” take place (Rom 12:2)?

While different “mind” words are used in these passages, a transformed, distinctly Christ-like habitus lived out in community is the ultimate goal of both. A similar instruction is found in Romans “to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and

acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:1-2). The “mind of Christ” seems to be the cleansed mind, the renewed mind, and the mind that makes the church “one.”

Ephesians 4 is a further explanation of the implications of the ascension. Yes, Jesus ascended to the throne of the cosmos, and one day everything will be brought under his submission. Yet, there is more to the story. Primarily, Pentecost and the creation of the church. The incarnation continues, both in the crucified but still fully-alive Lord of the cosmos, seated at the right hand of God (Rom 8:34), and as the “body of Christ” in the world (1 Cor 12) of which Jesus is the head (Col 1:18).

In Ephesians 4:8-10, verse eight is a reference to an Aramaic paraphrase of Psalm 68:18, a victorious exultation song of YHWH.¹³³ Psalm 68:18 describes God ascending to the high mount, “leading captives in your train and receiving gifts from people, even from those who rebel against the Lord God’s abiding.” Paul connects this with Jesus’ ascension, but there’s a reversal; Jesus is giving gifts, not receiving them.

There is an ongoing debate about the meaning of “descended into the lower parts of the earth” (Eph 4:9). Witherington outlines three major possibilities:

- (1) The preexistent Christ’s descent into the incarnation.
- (2) Jesus descent into Hades after his death.
- (3) Or the descent of the Holy Spirit after the ascension.¹³⁴

¹³³ Witherington, 287.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 288.

While church fathers Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Jerome all accepted the view of a descent into Hades, most modern interpreters find this unlikely.¹³⁵ Witherington favors possibility one, he rules out option two being that the “lower earthly regions” do not denote Hades specifically but more likely illustrate the complete nature of Christ’s descent into the earth itself (incarnation).¹³⁶ In order to make option three work, Jesus and the Holy Spirit must be identified as one person, thus it is ruled out. Yet there is obviously a connection to Pentecost here, as the gifting of the church is intertwined with the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2).¹³⁷

Arnold insists that a descent into Hades is the most likely meaning, “Christ went there following his death on the cross to proclaim his victory to the imprisoned powers of darkness,” citing a connection to 1 Peter 3:19.”¹³⁸ This logic is bolstered by the fact the text infers “captives” being led to freedom which must be accounted for. Arnold suggests these were the “evil principalities and powers” which connects with Colossians 2:15, where Jesus’ victory is portrayed as a Roman triumphal procession, and also alludes to Philippians 2:10 where every knee is bowed “in heaven and on earth.”¹³⁹ Thus, at some level in the darkness of the tomb, Jesus has been busy. While the cross is often the pivot point of Paul’s descent/ascent theology, the tomb lies in the shadow of the cross. The final depths of the descent is death itself. The Gospels, Matthew 27:45-54 for example,

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Witherington shows that this argument is made by both Caird, *Paul’s Letters*, 73-76; and Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 289.

¹³⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, Volume 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 325.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

potentially inform this “tomb time” as a period of liminality, a sequence of disorientation in which creation itself seemed to “glitch.” A kind of short circuit in all systems, including religious, imperial, and nature itself:

Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’ (Matt 27:45-54).

Perhaps the most often overlooked aspect of Ephesians 4:9 is in fact that the ascended one “might fill all things.” What is this mysterious reference? Hoehner notes, “the designation ‘all things’ does not limit Christ’s filling to the church, otherwise Paul would have made the church the object of the filling.”¹⁴⁰ Hoehner posits that the “object of Christ’s ascension was to allow him to enter into a sovereign relationship with the whole world, and in that position he has the right to bestow gifts as he wills.”¹⁴¹ The implications of this verse are cosmic in scope. This has parallels with Peter’s Pentecost sermon, as he quotes the prophet Joel “I will pour out my Spirit on all people” and implies that this is already happening now (Acts 2:14-21). It also informs how all the universe is shuddering in the birth pains of a new creation, because Christ fills all things, creation itself is in the process of renewal from decay and death (Rom 8:21-22).

In some sense, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus has been downloaded into the whole of creation and into all living things, even before we are aware. His presence is

¹⁴⁰ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 537.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

“filling all things” (Eph 4:9). Hoehner writes, “How is the universe filled with all things? It is the benefits of the work of the cross and consequently the ministry of the church to which Christ gave gifted persons who can function in his power.”¹⁴² Christ is filled with God’s fullness, Christ fills the church with that fullness, Christ is filling all things with God’s fullness. Christ unites all things under his head, Christ is head over all the universe (Col 1:17) embodies the fullness of the Godhead (Col 2:9), fills the universe and is head over it (Eph 1:22, Col 1:18), and finally “Christ fills the universe with the message of God’s love by the messengers on whom he has bestowed the gifts as he has willed (Eph 4:7-8, 11).”

Thus, the next move in Ephesians four is “the giving of gifts” (Eph 4: 11-13). The gifts that Jesus gives to the church is gifted persons. Each individual Christian is like a cell that makes up the body of Christ, incarnate in the world. Witherington shows that there is no clergy-laity distinction in the New Testament, but there is a “leader follower distinction,” however, “leaders are called to equip the followers.”¹⁴³ The gifted persons listed in verse 11 serve as the foundational gifts whose purpose is preparing all the saints to minister, “Thus every believer must do the work of ministry.”¹⁴⁴ Verse 16 supports the idea that edification requires the work of every believer and not a select group, or “the final goal evolves from the last, namely that the work of ministry by every believer is to build up the body of Christ.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Witherington, 291.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Arnold suggests that the list of fivefold gifted people is not a complete enumeration of all the leadership roles within the church.¹⁴⁶ Elders and deacons still served in various positions in the local church. Arnold shows the importance of these particular five giftings was foundational for the establishment of local churches (Eph 2:20), particularly in the proclamation and application of the word to people's lives, this is directly connected to the church becoming "mature" and "growing up in love" (Eph 4:13-14) which is ultimately the goal of this pericope.¹⁴⁷

In *5Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ* Alan Hirsch summarizes much of his work on the "movemental" nature of the church, the necessity of apostolic leadership, new innovative practices that can advance multiplication, and recovering the fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4: 11-13, Apostles. Prophets. Evangelists. Shepherds. Teachers. (APEST). He calls for the "recalibration" of the church in the West, explaining how a return to the fivefold ministry as a "primordial form" (one of the meta-ideas that serves as a foundational concept) is essential for the multiplication of the church.¹⁴⁸ The recovery of the APEST is a significant thrust of the missional church movement.

Perhaps these five giftings are really five forms of intelligence. The "mind of Christ" distributed throughout the body. They may be, tacit forms of knowledge, each a unique expression of the mind of Jesus.¹⁴⁹ Thus, I will suggest the "mind of Christ" is a

¹⁴⁶ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 256

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Alan Hirsch, *5Q: Reactivating the Original Intelligence and Capacity of the Body of Christ* (USA: 100M, 2017), 19.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

collective intelligence, distributed among all Christians and “the great cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1). This is a more accurate reflection of theories of multiple intelligences we will explore later.

Scriptural Synthesis of the Incarnation

The person of Jesus, his journey of incarnation, cross, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Spirit is the foundation for the framework I propose. That story is my framework, and these passages in conversation together, inform that journey. As I have explored the “mind of Christ” as a sequence of trajectories, I will now delineate the journey of the incarnation as a series of six moves.

This diagram describes each move highlighted in the passage correlated with a corresponding move in the Contextual Intelligence Framework:

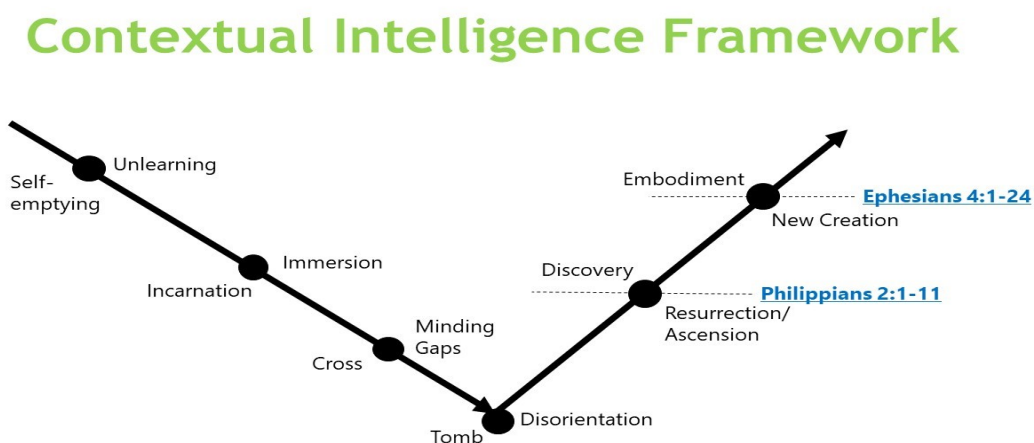


Figure 5. Incarnation as Contextual Intelligence Framework

While Philippians 2 and Ephesians 4 serve as the kind of train tracks of the journey, essential moments in the life of Jesus serve as the stations we will visit. In Paul’s theology the cross is the pivot point in which the trajectory is reversed. Yet each of the

Gospel narratives testify to the significance of the tomb. These moves could be called the fundamentals of the incarnation—the ultimate contextualization.

Philippians 2 finds unity with other New Testament passages about the incarnation: John 1:14 “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:9 “There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”¹ Timothy 3:16 “By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.” 2 Corinthians 8:9 “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” Matthew 1:22-23 “Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they will call his name Immanuel’ which translated means, “God with us.”

As discussed, the descending nature of Ephesians 4 has been connected to the historical affirmation of the “descent into hell.” Yet I find it more accurate to explore other passages to inform that move of the incarnation. Overall, the Scriptural support for a “descent into hell” is minimal.¹⁵⁰ However, Lewis shows the tomb is a central feature of the Gospels and Paul’s own theology.¹⁵¹ Perhaps exploring the implications of the three days Jesus was in the tomb is more appropriate.

¹⁵⁰ These passages have been key in arguments for a descent into hell: 1 Peter 3:19-20, 1 Peter 4:6, Rev 20:11–15.

¹⁵¹ Alan E. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 2-4.

While Philippians 2 seems to reference resurrection in the language of exaltation, later in the next chapter the notion of bodily resurrection is strongly affirmed (3:20-21). Similarly as resurrection and ascension seem intertwined in Ephesians 4, the letter begins with a clear statement of Jesus' resurrection "God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places" (1:20). Paul affirms the bodily resurrection quite powerfully elsewhere.¹⁵² A bodily resurrection was clearly a foundational component of the early church's belief, for instance Acts 2:31 "Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay." As Wright demonstrates, Jesus' actual body was raised imperishable and is the prototype for the bodily resurrection of all believers.¹⁵³

We must look to Ephesians 4 to fill out the whole scope of Jesus' salvific activities in the ascension. Here Paul affirms that Jesus does not merely ascend to the heavens and take his seat, there are some further developments. The exaltation as described in Philippians 2, can be informed by a reading of Ephesians 4. By placing these texts in conversation with the whole story of Jesus, the contextual intelligence framework emerges.

¹⁵² 1 Cor 15, Romans 8.

¹⁵³ N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 18.

The Contextual Intelligence Framework

Philippians 2:1-11 Ephesians 4:1-24

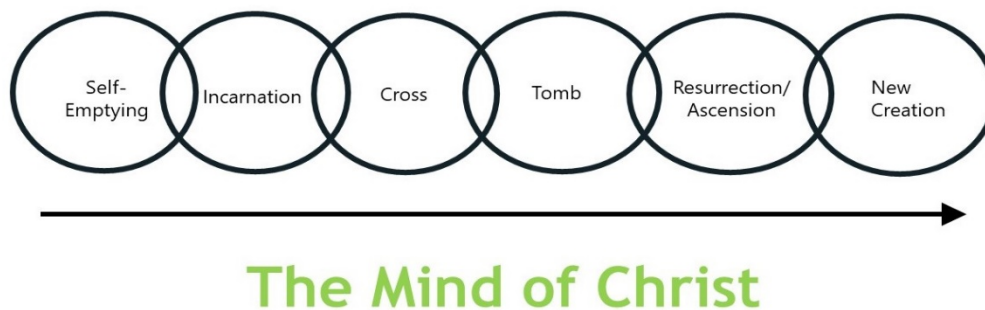


Figure 6. The Mind of Christ

I mean *framework* in the sense of a basic structure underlying a system or concept. Think of it as the bare frame of a building under construction, on which we can hang our thoughts. We are not building from scratch; God has provided the undergirding structure.

Polanyi speaks of the “art” of learning a language and the irreversible modification that comes through a desire for clarity and coherence, a “transformation of the intellectual life” as we seek coming into a closer touch with reality: “Indeed, any modification of an anticipatory framework, whether conceptual, perceptual, or appetitive, is an irreversible heuristic act, which transforms our ways of thinking, seeing and appreciating in the hope of attuning our understanding, perception or sensuality more closely to what is true and right.”¹⁵⁴

Polanyi explains that in different thought paradigms, generally accepted theories can be widely held and yet remain obscure. However, the discovery of an “interpretive

¹⁵⁴ Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 106.

framework” can bring a new clarity and coherence to understanding something that was once confused or veiled.¹⁵⁵ I want to suggest that the incarnation journey, centered on the description of the “mind of Christ” is such an interpretive framework. The CIF can be employed to bring clarity and understanding to a multitude of contextual complexities.

Here is the framework in a series of six moves:

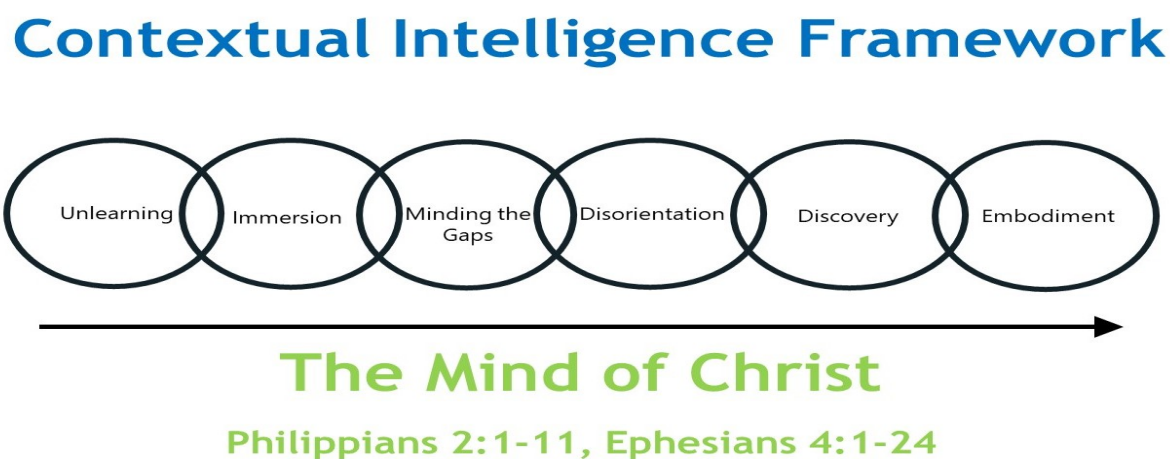


Figure 7. Contextual Intelligence Framework

For now, I will simply identify each of the moves and provide the theological underpinnings that will be explored in depth in chapter six.

(1) Self-Emptying (unlearning):

The first move is about humility, “emptying self.” One way to understand the significance of Jesus’ “self-emptying” is to explore his normal development as a human being. While remaining fully God he did indeed grow in his *understanding* (Lk 2: 41-52). Luke 2:52 is particularly instructive of this point, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.” This is indeed almost a direct quote from 1 Sam

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 107.

2:26, describing the growth and development of Samuel, “Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with the people.”

This passage seems to corroborate the “self-emptying” described in Philippians 2. Sweet and Viola demonstrate that the Gospels are not silent about Jesus’ so-called “missing years” (12-20).¹⁵⁶ They tell us Jesus grew up in Nazareth “called a Nazarene” (Matt 2:23), and Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and humanity (Lk 2:52, Mk 13: 32). Perhaps this is a kind of intentional “unlearning.” The carpenter of the universe becomes the carpenter’s son. While the mystery of the incarnation only allows us to go so far with this idea, “fully human and fully God” is an irresolvable paradox after all. These texts demonstrate a humility in which Jesus “empties” and goes through the normal developmental process. The humility to empty, to unlearn, to embrace vulnerability, is a fundamental characteristic of the “mind of Christ” (Phil 2:7-8).

For the church, contextual intelligence requires first and foremost—humility. This emptying process includes some of our foundational assumptions as a primarily attractional, propositional and colonial, iteration of the church. Our “mental models” were formed in a world that is fading from view. We don’t have all the answers, and we have asked wrong questions. Thus, the first move in the contextual intelligence framework is *unlearning*: to cleanse the gates of perception, to consciously choose to give up, abandon, or stop using knowledge, values, or behaviors to acquire new ones—in

¹⁵⁶ Leonard I. Sweet and Frank Viola, *Jesus: A Theography* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2012), 86.

the organizational sense—a process of clearing out old routines and beliefs that no longer meet current challenges.¹⁵⁷

(2) Incarnation (immersion):

The second move is about vulnerability. Through the incarnation, while Jesus remains sinless, he descends into a human condition that is ultimately fallen and marred. He takes a risk. The incarnation—God coming in human flesh—is a missional endeavor. While the kingdoms of the world oppress and take captive a train of innocents in their *self*-seeking agendas, Jesus comes in *self*-less love, and ultimate humiliation (crucifixion). God immerses himself fully in the context of humanity. The universal one enters into particularity. Jesus brings healing to the cosmos, not by manipulating it from the outside, but through living a cruciform life in the middle of it—true contextualization.

In the North American context, Jesus' very life and death provides a model for our mission. Hence, incarnation is the “form” of our mission. The church as the “body of Christ” is an extension of the very incarnate “flesh and blood” Jesus that we proclaim, a channel of God's grace in the world.

Thus, *immersion* is the next move in the contextual intelligence framework: the action of immersing someone or something in a context. We must immerse ourselves in our communities in risky, vulnerable ways.

(3) Cross (minding the gaps):

¹⁵⁷ Makoto Matsuo “Goal Orientation, Critical Reflection, and Unlearning: An Individual-level Study,” *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2018): 50.

The third move requires a willingness to sacrifice. Jesus willing gives his life in the most devastating and shameful way possible. Here we see echoes of the “suffering servant” passage of Isaiah 53. There is no doubt that some of Paul’s references to the “form of God” contrasts between humanity grasping for equality with God, and Jesus self-emptying. Philippians 2 mirrors Genesis 3. Humanity takes the fruit of temptation in an attempt to be “like God.” Jesus, who is the very form of God, empties himself, and takes on the form of sin-marred humanity to redeem the fallen condition. There is a “gap” between the covenant God has made with humanity and our ability to live it out. The cross is the bridge God builds across the gap. Jesus, the God-human, takes on all the forces of wickedness. On the cross, he turns human ego and violence in on itself.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed (1 Peter 2:24).

He comes down and lives out the redemptive act that transfigures eternity. Wright reflecting on Colossians 2 insists that in the cross, the “rulers and the powers” have been defeated through the forgiveness of sins.¹⁵⁸ “He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.” (Col 2:15).

Jesus is the way God heals the gap.

Thus, the church is not in the self-preservation business, the church is in the self-donation business. The very eucharistic nature of the body of Christ is to break pieces of ourselves off and give them away to a hungry world.¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately, when our church is caught in a decline cycle we clench our fists, desperately grasping at what’s left. Yet, if

¹⁵⁸ Wright, 259.

¹⁵⁹ Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 143.

we open our hands and give what we are away through our own self-death, we release God to catalyze resurrection (Jn 12:24). Infilled by the Holy Spirit, we as the church descend into the messy brokenness of those who suffer as the hands and feet of Jesus. We stand in the tragic gaps with Jesus, bringing healing and reconciliation.

Thus, this move in the contextual intelligence framework is *minding the gaps* which originates from a visual warning phrase issued to subway riders to be careful crossing the spatial gap between the train door and the station platform. For our purposes, this is seeing the sore spots, the fragmentation, the disconnects in our community, the “institutional voids” where we need to sacrificially build relational bridges.

(4) Tomb (disorientation):

The fourth move requires faith and obedience in the face of uncertainty. An often-overlooked component of the incarnation is the three days that Jesus spends in the grave. God doesn't stop where we live but goes before us into death. Meeting with us in our brokenness, Jesus does not bail out when things get uncomfortable, he willingly gives his life. He trusts the Father and moves into the unknown.

Yet, Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12 reveal not only the astonishing depths of God's love, but also indicate our place is with him in the tomb. This descent into the tomb with Christ is part of our own journey to spiritual maturity. It is a move toward our own resurrection life. This inverts the modern worlds values of honor, prestige, and power.

The tomb forces us into an uncomfortable state of liminality and confusion. We join the disoriented march back to our familiar Emmaus, saying, “But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since

these things took place” (Lk 24:21). The tomb, represents separation, disorientation, and living in the in-between. As we carry the cross, innovate and create new things, we hit the wall of disappointment and failure. Thus, in the contextual intelligence framework *disorientation* describes the state of having lost one’s sense of direction and meaning. Organizationally speaking, this is living on the “edge of chaos” between stagnation and innovation.¹⁶⁰

(5) Resurrection/Ascension (discovery):

The fifth move is about God’s supernatural intervention, and how that epiphany opens our awareness to the possibility of resurrection life. In the resurrection, we discover the victory of God over sin, shame, and suffering. We see the “image of the invisible God” once hidden, and the deep “mystery” now revealed that in the Christ even the gentiles have been saved (Col 1:24-29), something veiled since the foundation of the world (Eph 3:1-13). It is confessing Jesus as Lord and believing God “raised him from the dead” through which we are saved (Rom 10:9). The first Christians gathered around the confession of Jesus’ Lordship, a title they believed was conferred on Jesus by God, based on the resurrection (Acts 2:32-36). After they saw Jesus resurrected bodily, they experienced him from then on, through the power of the Holy Spirit, as infinitely alive on both personal and communal levels (1 Cor 12:3).

It is the discovery of Christ’s victory in the resurrection that humanity finds restoration from our fragmented condition. Jesus has ultimately “bridged the gap” as the still incarnate and Risen Christ.

¹⁶⁰ Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 34.

Thus, in the contextual intelligence framework this move is described as *discovery*, the action or process of attaining new insight. New discoveries lead to innovation. Once we move through the process of liminality and disorientation, our reality can be transformed.

(6) New Creation (embodiment):

The final move is about a new form of embodiment, ranging from a transformed habitus individually, to the formation of a new communal manifestation of Jesus' life. Philippians 2 envisions an ascended Lord, surrounded by a new communal embodiment consisting of "every knee" and "every tongue" bent and confessing "in heaven and on earth and under the earth," heralding a transformation that is cosmic in scope. Philippians 3:17-4:1 envisions the mature community living a resurrected life now with our citizenship already in heaven. Ephesians 4 further informs the meaning of the ascension for this new colony of heaven on earth. The resurrected body of Jesus on the throne is not the only body. Jesus has a body on the earth as well—the church. The church is filled and gifted by the Spirit. Jesus the head of the church, has given us the "mind of Christ." He who "fills all things" (Eph 4:9) and on who has poured "out my Spirit on all people" (Acts 2:14-21) is bringing the healing of the cosmos (Rom 8:19-23)).

For better or worse, the gifts God gives to the church—is us—gifted persons (Eph 4:10-11). An embodied and gifted community called the church is God's missional instrument in the earth. Thus, the final move of the contextual intelligence framework is described as *embodiment* the tangible or visible form of an idea, quality, or in our case, a person. The "mind of Christ" is now embodied in a community.

Conclusion

As noted in the introduction, the church has a thinking problem, and the cultivation of contextual intelligence is a notable opportunity. Here I have integrated key texts to create a Contextual Intelligence Framework. The CIF outlines the journey of the incarnation. In one sense, it allows believers individually to move from knowledge to experience, or in psychological terms, from semantic memory (general accumulated knowledge) to episodic memory (an autobiographical collection of past personal experiences).¹⁶¹ In some sense this enables a shift from a church membership culture based on knowledge about Jesus, to a discipleship culture based in personal relationship with Jesus. Moving from knowledge to embodiment seems to be a major challenge for the local church today. The CIF may help build up the body as disciples seek to practice ministry, love, and holiness, while immersing themselves in local contexts.

¹⁶¹ Lowell D. Groninger, and Linda K. Groninger “Autobiographical Memories: Their Relation to Images, Definitions, and Word Recognition,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 10 (1984): 745–55.

CHAPTER 3:
CHURCH HISTORY—CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE MISSIONAL
CHURCH

At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people.

-John Wesley

In this chapter I will now follow the “golden thread” of CI through Paul in the primitive church, early Methodism and John Wesley, and finally the Fresh Expressions movement and pioneer ministry today. I understand each of these waves of church history as iterations of the missional church movement. One of the glaring marks of each is a clear demonstration of CI. Let’s begin with Paul the Apostle.

Paul and the Primitive Church

Fortunately, the New Testament provides examples of not only Paul’s description of the “mind of Christ,” but how he employed this framework. Paul and the early church were in a tremendous time of liminality. Let’s take a brief look at the Book of Acts. Here’s some key points for how they lived among the paradigm shift in an age of transition.

Acts 6:1-7. Leadership was born and structured improvisationally from a missional imperative (immersion).

Acts 11:1-18. The Spirit guides the church to abolish long held convictions that divided people along racial and religious lines—to “make no distinction between them and us” (unlearning) (v. 12).

Acts 15. The church “gathered” (i.e. Jerusalem, inherited) and “scattered” (i.e. Antioch, fresh expression of church). They cooperate, conference, and make major adjustments for the sake of the greater mission in a blended ecology way (disorientation and discovery) (Vv. 28-29).

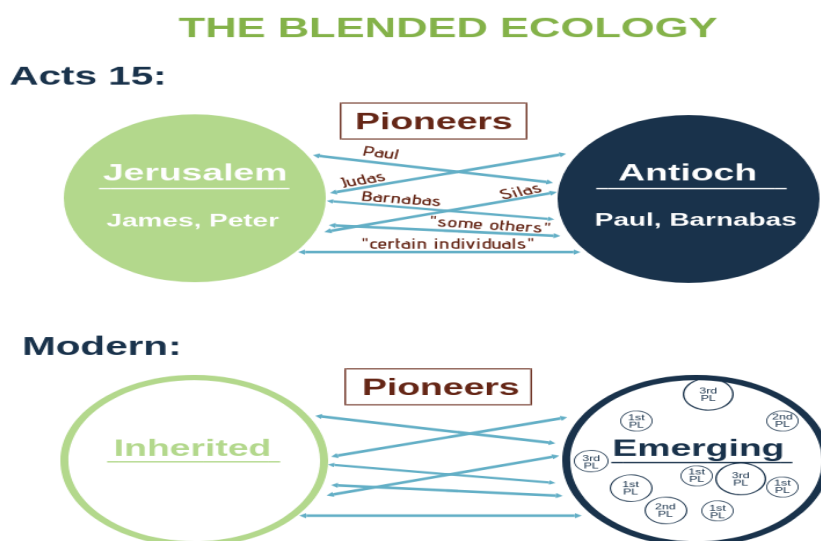


Figure 8. Acts 15. Blended Ecology: Then and Now

Acts 16. Context determined Paul’s missional approach. At Philippi, there were no synagogues, so Paul finds “a place of prayer” down by the river. A fresh expression of church is born in Lydia’s home (immersion, embodiment).

Acts 17:1-9. The disciples disturbed the imperial peace, not cooperated with it, and engaged in non-violent subversion (minding the gaps, disorientation) (v. 7).

Acts 17:16-34. Paul sensed and adapted to context. A true innovator, he uses cultural phenomenon as a medium of proclamation (minding the gaps) (Vv. 22-24).

Acts 11 and 15. Paul cultivated new “emerging” forms of church in Antioch that looked very different from the “inherited” version back at Jerusalem (embodiment).

Let's consider Paul's experience in Athens at the Areopagus in Acts 17: 21-23. In Paul's day, the City of Athens was the historic cradle of Greek civilization. It had the feel of what we would today call a "university town." It was a place that valued education, where there were two major schools of thought—the Stoics and the Epicureans.¹⁶²

The Stoics, a group of pantheistic materialists, followed the philosophical framework of their founder Zeno. They believed that the various gods and goddesses did indeed exist, but they were vulgar expressions of primitive mythologies. They saw the universe itself as kind of living organism, the supreme god if you will. They believed the pursuit of virtue was the greatest good to which one good dedicate one's life.¹⁶³

The Epicureans held to a materialistic worldview, first proposed by their founder Epicurus. They also believed in the gods but were convinced that they existed outside the space time continuum and did not concern themselves in the affairs of mortals. They saw the universe as an arrangement of atoms governed by a series of natural laws. The greatest good to which one might devote themselves would be understanding these physical laws and living in harmony with them. Thus, there was no value in an activity like prayer, which caused them to be labeled as atheists by their contemporaries.¹⁶⁴

The Areopagus (Hill of Ares, the Greek god of war) was in its genesis, the gathering place for the ruling council for the city of Athens. In Paul's day, it had become a forum for the exchange of free-flowing ideas between Epicureans, Stoics, and other philosophers.¹⁶⁵ Or according to Luke, a place where they spent "their time in nothing but

¹⁶² Arnold, *ZIB*, 385.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 388-389.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 390-391.

telling or hearing something new” (Acts 17: 21). It was a place of dialogue and debate, where intellectuals could swap theories and disperse new ideas. It was this place that Paul chose to share about Jesus.

Paul demonstrates profound contextual intelligence here. He was highly competent in the skill of *translation*: the ability to build a bridge of meaning between culture and the Gospel. Paul employs *tracking*: seeing with soft eyes, paying attention, analyzing culture, minding the gaps. He then starts constructing the bridge of meaning on their side of the shore, this is the competency of *recoding*: contextualizing the Gospel in a meaningful way in the language of the context. This is an instinctual use of the CI framework.

For instance, in the Areopagus Address (Acts 17: 22-31). We find Paul using the inscriptions on their own temples as a medium for his proclamation. Temples to “unknown gods” were an expression of how deeply religious most common citizens were. To not properly honor local deities could spell disaster, famine, and misfortune.¹⁶⁶ Amidst this pantheonic thinking of multiple gods, the impersonal god of the Epicureans, and the deterministic fatalism of the Stoics, Paul weaves in an introduction to a very known, and personal God, creator of the universe.

He also quotes their own poets and philosophers, “for in him we live and move and have our being.” This line originated with the poet Epimenides around 600 B.C. who wrote and taught in Athens. Then Aratus, a Stoic philosopher, who was also a resident of Athens where he was a student of Zeno himself (315-240 B.C.). He wrote, “Zeus, for we

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

are truly his offspring.”¹⁶⁷ Paul does his homework. He respects the people enough to immerse himself in their context and thinking. He acknowledges what’s good, beautiful, and true in their culture. He even nods toward their pantheistic conceptions, but then unabashedly lifts the truth of Jesus.

He also taps into impulses already present in both Epicurean and Stoic philosophies. He platforms some of their own ideas about the crude nature of idol worship and primitive mythologies. Yet he uses that framework as scaffolding to build a compelling argument for Old Testament truth. That the God of Israel, now revealed fully in Jesus through his resurrection from the dead, is the one God, creator of the universe, and the content of it. That God is calling for repentance and a turning toward the pursuit of true virtue. Extending an invitation to all people to live a new life, in harmony with natural laws.

Paul fully embraced the cultural reality of a pantheon religious system but used it as a medium for the proclamation of the uniqueness of Jesus. There was acknowledgement of the cultural truth, and a pointing to the truth of Jesus within it.¹⁶⁸ This is a both/and method. Paul practiced a missional posture of radical openness and radical conviction. Paul was being a contextually intelligent follower of Jesus, “reading the signs.” He was a student of the culture, with an Issacharian-like ability to “understand the times and to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chr 12:32).

Paul and his missionary teams (and other early writers) following the lead of Jesus were *recoding* themselves, adopting imperial language, and programming the truth

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 392-393.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

of the Gospel into the Roman system. They utilized the emerging societal morphology, employing technologies of the Roman highways, sea transit, and mail courier systems. In the contextual intelligence framework, Paul was guiding the church through *unlearning, immersion, minding the gaps, disorientation, discovery, and embodiment*. The result of the efforts of his team is the “gentile” form of the church that most of us inhabit today.¹⁶⁹

John Wesley and the People Called Methodists

Paul Chilcote writes that the Wesley’s in their own day rediscovered what we would call today the “missional church.”¹⁷⁰ Wesley and the early Methodists became an incarnational presence in the fields, recoding the Gospel in “plain words for plain people.” They possessed a remarkably high Contextual Intelligence Quotient (CIQ). Each of the moves of the contextual intelligence framework is evident in the missional approach of the people called Methodists: *unlearning, immersion, minding the gaps, disorientation, discovery, and embodiment*.

John Wesley observed that the Anglican Church that he loved and served was largely failing to reach the masses of people in his day.¹⁷¹ In the 18th century, there was a great gulf between the wealthy minority and the immobilized masses experiencing poverty. It was a time of enormous social and economic change and dislocation, which included massive population growth as well as urbanization.¹⁷² The Industrial Revolution

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Paul W. Chilcote, *Recapturing the Wesleys’ Vision: An Introduction to the Faith of John and Charles Wesley* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2011), 20.

¹⁷¹ Arthur S. Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley, Evangelist* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1978), 70.

¹⁷² Stephen Sykes, John E. Booty, and Jonathan Knight, *The Study of Anglicanism* (London: SPCK/Fortress Press, 1998), 32-33.

was dawning, and the seeds of a global economy were being planted. The Enlightenment created a wave of clergy who embraced the assumptions of Deism. In the drive to create a religion of pure rationality, Christianity was reduced to a system of moral precepts. The Scriptures were considered crude, inconsistent, and even immoral. Belief in the Trinity, incarnation, special revelation, and miracles were criticized and dismissed. A kind of enlightened clergy caste system was formed. The church was regarded with suspicion and deep skepticism.¹⁷³

The “Holy Club” the Wesley brothers formed at Oxford to pursue a sanctified life (1720-1735) was later described by Wesley as the “first rise of Methodism.” The Moravians singing joyfully in the storms at sea while Wesley himself was gripped with fear in 1735 on the way to Georgia, and the failed missionary activities in the American colonies was the “second rise of Methodism” (1736-1738). This led up to the “heart strangely warmed” conversion that happened at Aldersgate Street in London on May 24, 1738, the forming of the Fetter Lane Society, and the “third rise of Methodism.”¹⁷⁴

This was a life altering moment for John Wesley. He realized that his “mental model” was a legalistic one. Much of what he believed his whole life was challenged. He had some “unlearning” to do. The Wesley’s weaved together a contextually relevant “practical divinity” from strands of Calvinism, Lutheran Pietism, Puritanism, *and* the Eastern Fathers into a new singular and flexible system, a “practical divinity.” This holding together and blending of diverse and even seemingly contradictory truths in creative tension is exactly as Paul Chilcote writes, “their most profound contributions to

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Chilcote, *Recapturing the Wesleys’ Vision*, 6-7.

the life of the church and to the understanding of renewal.”¹⁷⁵ It is a both/and, and either/or theology, unabashedly Scriptural, with a practical soteriological orientation, developing experimentally though faithful missional engagement with a context.

Wesley understood the power of contextualization. He famously said,

I want to know one thing, the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God has condescended to teach the way. For this very end God came down from heaven. God has written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price, give me that book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*.¹⁷⁶

Methodism has been called a rediscovery of the Bible. Wesley prescribed a highly intentional plan for Methodists to “search the Scriptures,” which included daily engagement with the Old and New Testaments. He suggested that his itinerant Issacharian preachers “Fix some part of every day for private exercises. ... Whether you like it or no, read and pray daily.”¹⁷⁷ For him, Scriptural engagement was a source of ongoing spiritual development.

However, Wesley also instructed his Methodist preachers to “Spend all the morning, or at least five hours in twenty-four, in reading the *most useful* books, and that regularly and constantly.”¹⁷⁸ He lifted up both the importance of continuous engagement with the Scriptures, *and* the importance of reading widely to gain all manner of understanding. It is through this study that Methodists were able to cultivate contextual

¹⁷⁵ Paul W. Chilcote, *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm for Renewal* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 24.

¹⁷⁶ John Wesley, et al. *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), “Sermons on Several Occasions,” preface, 1.5.

¹⁷⁷ Steve Harper, *Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1995), 21.

¹⁷⁸ Iain H. Murray, *Wesley and the Men Who Followed* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2003), 89-90. Emphasis original.

intelligence. Not only knowing the Scriptures but knowing the signs (culture) and knowing what to do. Engaging thinkers across the spectrum informed how they communicated the Gospel. They learned to build bridges of meaning and translate that Biblical truth to the wider culture in relevant ways.

A close reading of his journal conveys that Wesley still struggled spiritually following the incredible Aldersgate turning point experience. More and more churches began to close their doors to John. It wasn't until all these distinct "rises of Methodism" found embodied expression in a revolutionary new way that a true transformation occurred, and the Methodists became a distinct swell in the larger wave of the Evangelical Revival.

That revolutionary new way was truly a form of contextual immersion. Methodism began in a *field*—with a people willing to be *vile*. John's strangely warmed heart ignited a movement, that is, *when it found a contextually appropriate expression for its embodiment*.

On April 2, 1739, at the compulsion of his friend George Whitefield, John Wesley went to a field just outside what was then the city limits of Bristol, England. Bristol was a city of approximately 50,000 people, an emerging hub of commercial activity. It was an important port for trade with North America and the West Indies, exporting manufactured goods, and reprehensibly, African slaves. What's truly noteworthy for our discussion is that Bristol was surrounded by the coal mines that would help fuel the dawning Industrial Age.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 98.

There, among the coal miners who would transform the morphology of society through their sweat and groaning backs, Wesley tried this missional innovation called field preaching. About three thousand people showed up, many of whom who had no connection with a church. Later Wesley wrote in his journal, “At four in the afternoon I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation. ...”¹⁸⁰ Outler, carefully examining Wesley’s journals, writes of this experience, “It is most impressive to observe the marked effect this success at Bristol had on Wesley’s spiritual equilibrium. Up to this point the story is full of anxiety, insecurity, futility. Hereafter, the instances of spiritual disturbances drop off sharply and rarely recur, even in the records of a very candid man.”¹⁸¹

Chilcote describes this moment as the “genuine birth of the Methodist revival.”¹⁸² In open air preaching, Wesley found his *channel of communication*, the *means* to reach his constituency. John crossed the threshold of his true vocation not in a parish church, a university classroom, or a prayer meeting, but in the *field*.

Richard Heitzenrater notes, “By this method, the gospel could be brought to the people where they were, to people who could not or would not go to a church at the appointed hour of services.”¹⁸³ “I submitted to be more vile.” It’s easy to lose the radical nature of this endeavor in our modern context. For most of the clergy and church goers of Wesley’s day, field preaching was unacceptable. John himself resisted it, he wrote, “I

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 99.

¹⁸¹ John Wesley and Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 17.

¹⁸² Chilcote, *Recapturing*, 8.

¹⁸³ Heitzenrater, 99.

could scarce reconcile myself at first to this *strange way* of preaching in the fields... having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the *saving* of souls *almost a sin* if it had not been done *in a church*.”¹⁸⁴

Even John’s elder brother Samuel critiqued him and wrote to their mother Susanna of his concerns with John’s field preaching. An excerpt from a four-part sermon series against Wesley and Whitefield’s field preaching by the respected English scholar and contemporary of Wesley, Rev’d Dr. Joseph Trapp, enlightens us:

For a clergyman of the Church of England to pray and preach in the fields, in the country, or in the streets of the city, is perfectly new, a fresh honour to the blessed age in which we have the happiness to live. I am ashamed to speak on a subject which is a reproach not only to our Church and country but to human nature itself. Can it promote Christianity to turn into riot, tumult, and confusion? to make it ridiculous and contemptible, and to expose it to the scorn and scoffs of infidels and atheists? To the prevalence of immorality and profaneness, infidelity and atheism, is now added the pest of enthusiasm. Our prospect is very sad and melancholy. Go not after these imposters and seducers; but shun them as you would the plague.¹⁸⁵

This captures the general attitude towards field preaching and the abominable Methodists. Despite the derision of his many critics, most of whom were fellow clergy persons, Wesley took up this vile practice of field preaching, and borrowing from similar practices of his day, designed an apostolic discipleship process. Wesley reached the people that were not connecting with the established church, taking it to the fields, miners camps, and debtors’ prisons. He connected new believers whose only requirement for membership was a “desire to flee the wrath to come” into small gatherings of people who journeyed on in the life of grace together (societies, classes, bands).

¹⁸⁴ Wesley Journal 2:167.

¹⁸⁵ Quoted in Wood, 96.

In the contextual intelligence framework, what Wesley was doing is called unlearning, immersion, and minding the gaps. Risking the comfortability of the known and familiar, entering disorientation. It's a process of self-emptying and incarnation. Getting out in the spaces of a community and experimenting. The early Methodists were living their way into a new way of thinking, not thinking their way into a new way of living.¹⁸⁶

Aside from the well-known accusations of “enthusiasm,” a focus on personal testimonies of conversion, and the boisterous nature of the early “shouting Methodists,” Wesley did other “vile” but contextually intelligent things. He assembled, trained, deployed, and oversaw a small army of lay preachers. These itinerant Methodist circuit riders and local leaders did not have the proper Anglican credentials, and they often invaded the parish territory of the ordained priests. One of the keys of early Methodism's success was the unflinching tenacity of these “lay preachers.” This was an awakening of the “priesthood of all believers” and a releasing of the A.P.E.S.T. (Apostles. Prophets. Evangelists. Shepherds. Teachers)—the whole people of God. This should be no surprise for a people who looked upon the world as our parish.¹⁸⁷

In addition to field preaching, lay preaching, extemporaneous prayer, and other “irregular” practices, not only did Wesley encourage women to lead the Methodist societies, as the movement progressed, they also joined the ranks of these lay preachers. Perhaps this full inclusion of women was deeply imbedded in John from his mother

¹⁸⁶ A premise of the Positive Deviance Approach is “It is easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than think your way into a new way of acting.” Balzer, 30-31.

¹⁸⁷ Heitzenrater, 93.

Susanna, who pioneered the first Wesleyan “fresh expression” in her kitchen (a full “church service” which grew to include about 200 folks).¹⁸⁸ Women led, preached, organized, and figured prominently in the movement from its genesis overall. This was not permissible in most of the established churches of Wesley’s day.¹⁸⁹

Later there would be quite a bit of debate concerning the lay preachers serving sacraments leading to charges of separatism. The Methodists became known as “rabble rousers” accused of being “big with mischief” in their “unauthorized gatherings” that disturbed the peace of post-Restoration England.¹⁹⁰ Wesley’s messages were considered crude and the “unaccustomed frankness” of his delivery was offensive to the sensibilities of the learned minds of the Enlightenment.¹⁹¹ The Methodist movement started in the fields, with the vile riff raff of the day.¹⁹²

John Wesley had the contextual intelligence to weave together emerging innovations. Field preaching was already happening; Wesley joined fellow “irregulars” like George Whitefield in this practice. German Pietists sought to renew the Lutheran Church by returning to traditional Reformation themes through creation of the *collegia pietatis* (colleges of piety) which were small groups gathered together for Bible study and prayer. An adaptation of these groups for the Church of England became the *religious*

¹⁸⁸ Chilcote, *Recapturing*, 8.

¹⁸⁹ Ryan N. Danker, *Wesley and the Anglicans: Political Division in Early Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2016), 131.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁹¹ Wood, 285.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 194.

societies (started by Anthony Horneck in the 1670's).¹⁹³ Furthermore, other groups prayed extemporaneously, utilized laity, took personal conversion seriously, sought to recover the primitive form of the church, and utilized print media culture to further their movements, all part of the larger Evangelical Revival.

John's true genius was in his ability to weave all these innovations together in a robust system while creating a relational network that would sustain the movement beyond his own influence. This ability to adapt and innovate led to what I've identified in the CIF as *embodiment*.

Wesley harnessed the power of the emerging societal structures and technologies of his day. For instance, the regular publication of select journal articles is an example of utilizing the emerging print technology of the day in a revolutionary way. He kept a daily journal for his personal use and from that developed an expanded narrative. He then published *Extracts of the Journal*, which was not a typical private work in the sense of a diary, but a careful public documentation of his own spiritual development and the movement that grew under his leadership. These publications were used in an apologetical sense, to defend his actions, and to inspire and teach his followers.¹⁹⁴

One could argue that he was the first "blogger," posting his journal entries in printed publications in the same way we may post blog entries on the internet today. His "blogs" were wildly popular with the common people, and the Methodist publications were in high demand. In his life he published over 450 books, sermons, tracts, journal

¹⁹³ Heitzenrater, 19-21.

¹⁹⁴ Chilcote, *Recapturing*, 15.

articles, theological treaties, and so on. These publications enabled the movement to flourish.

Wesley understood the power of field preaching throughout his long employment of it as an innovation, he wrote on October 10, 1756, “It is field preaching which does the execution still, for usefulness there is none comparable to it.”¹⁹⁵ Field preaching was what we would call today a form of “disruptive innovation.”¹⁹⁶

Field preaching rode the energy of change from the emerging societal structure, Dr. J.H. Plumb wrote,

The industrial revolution paid no attention to the parish boundaries. The mine ignored the parson. So that, by the middle years of the century, there were scores of industrial villages and suburbs that were without any church or priest. Ignorance of the most elementary facts of the Christian religion was astonishingly widespread. Only a fundamental constitutional reform of the Established Church could have coped with this situation, but such reform was unthinkable, for it would have disturbed the entire structure of the government.¹⁹⁷

Wesley’s pursuit of the Spirit led him to harness the “mobile technology” of his day, the complex systems of roads, bridges, and highways that connected England. He did so for most of his life in a saddle from the back of a horse. How did a man who traveled hundreds of thousands of miles, sometimes preaching multiple times per day, manage to keep up his reading and study? He turned his saddle into a library chair of

¹⁹⁵ Wesley, Journal Vol IV 10, October 1756, 188.

¹⁹⁶ A business term pioneered by Clayton Christensen to describe a technology whose application significantly affects the way a market functions. Clayton Christensen, Michael E. Raynor and Rory McDonald, “What Is Disruptive Innovation?” *Harvard Business Review*, December 2015. <https://hbr.org/2015/12/what-is-disruptive-innovation>.

¹⁹⁷ Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, 89-90, quoted in Wood, 98.

course! Wesley read voraciously—history, poetry, and philosophy—all from the back of a horse.¹⁹⁸

As the years progressed, and he was no longer able to sustain long saddle rides, Wesley transitioned to another evolving technology, a horse drawn carriage. Of course, Wesley, the adaptor, fitted his private chaise with a bookcase. He used it as a study, office, library, bookshop, and a private chapel. From time to time, he had to also hire or borrow a carriage; a “post-chaise” was the 18th century equivalent of an Uber today. The primary means of long-distance travel was the stagecoach, and Wesley would use them when he absolutely had to. Further, he used boats to cross the Irish Sea and the English Channel. Sometimes he would sit in his remixed carriage-study-chapel to do so.¹⁹⁹ Because the world truly was his parish, his pulpit took many forms: “His real pulpit was where the people were.”²⁰⁰

I’ve been using the “fields” as the metaphor for open air preaching, but this included many types of “pulpits”. Here’s a non-exhaustive list of places Wesley preached: parks, public and private gardens, churchyards, lofts, barrack-yards, barns, streets, theaters, private homes, front porches, city malls, general recreation grounds, miners camps, prisons, paved stairs, gateways, mansions, open squares, guildhalls, marketplaces, covered shambles, piazzas, bridges, cottages, malshouses, castles, cemetery tombstones, market houses, universities, shooting ranges, libraries, schools, courthouses, session houses, exchanges, local assembly rooms, playhouses, ballrooms, workhouses,

¹⁹⁸ Wood, 120.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 121-122.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 136.

asylums, hospitals, and auditoriums. Also, he preached from many natural formations: rocks, hills, mountainsides, granite boulders, beaches, prehistoric mounds, stone hollows, riverbanks, fields, orchards, meadows, and the shade of convenient trees. Wesley did of course preach in Anglican parish churches when they were open to him, but also, we find him in Presbyterian, Independent, Calvinist, Baptist, and Quaker meeting houses. Further, he preached in the Methodist buildings, sometimes when they were still under construction!²⁰¹

In the network society, we call what Wesley was doing here leveraging the power of first, second, and third places. Not only did he understand the importance of embodying the Gospel in the places where the people did life, he also had the contextual intelligence to adapt to the rhythms of their lives. It is vastly understated that Wesley adjusted his schedule to a time when he could reach the people. He preached every day, morning, noon, and night, wherever his voice could be heard by a crowd. He also habitually preached at 5 am, so he could catch the workers as they went off to work in the mines, forges, farms, and mills of the emerging Industrial Society. This was so important to Wesley, he called the early morning gatherings “the glory of the Methodists” and said if this was ever abandoned, “Ichabod” (the glory of God has departed) should be inscribed over Methodist societies.²⁰²

On one occasion, when Wesley discovered the early morning gathering had been abandoned at Stroud, he wrote, “Give up this, and Methodism too will degenerate into a mere sect, only distinguished by some opinions and modes of worship.”²⁰³

²⁰¹ Ibid., 125-136.

²⁰² Ibid., 154.

²⁰³ Ibid.

Thus, the people called Methodists were born from an evangelical imperative, not a doctrinal dispute or theological distinction. Not only did the first Methodists adapt to the emerging changes of society to reach people in the fields, but they connected them in a process of discipleship to journey through the life of grace together. This process worked in a small group system in which corresponding ministry constructs existed for each of the “waves of grace,” prevenient grace (society), justifying grace (class), and sanctifying grace (band). This required an army of dedicated laity to sustain the movement.

Thus, in some ways through sheer missional necessity and solid Biblical grounding, Wesley was led to affirm the “priesthood of all believers” and the baptismal vocation of all Christians. Not only did lay persons lead the various Methodist gatherings. The strong belief that lay people are gifted by the Spirit for ministry in the church led to the equipping of the itinerant preachers, including women.

Wood provides insight into how the lay-driven movement worked:

Converts were trained to become soul-winners themselves. Many enlisted as lay preachers—some itinerant and others local. Many were appointed as leaders in their own society, and in addition to watching over their own flock, engaged in evangelistic activity in the neighbourhood.²⁰⁴

Sweet writes,

One of the most revolutionary features of the Wesleyan revival was its liberation of the laity for leadership, and its blurring of the lines between clergy and lay when it came to priestly functions and spiritual guides. Wesley didn’t worry about qualifications since he trusted on-the-job training and expected all Methodists to be lifelong learners.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 194.

²⁰⁵ Leonard I. Sweet, *The Greatest Story Never Told: Revive Us Again* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 79.

Finally, the structure and polity of Methodism was birthed in the process of mission. Ultimately missionary need gave rise to different forms of order. Wesley's "practical divinity," his focus to share the Gospel in "plain words for plain people" in the "fields" (spaces and rhythms) of their everyday lives, emerged as a nascent expression of the church.

So then, "Methodist ecclesiology is a form of practical, rather than speculative, theology, flexible and adaptable in response to changing circumstances, culture and missionary needs as it seeks to articulate an authentically Methodist way of being church in a particular time and place."²⁰⁶ The form of embodiment that resulted was a Scripturally faithful, contextually appropriate, missional movement that changed history. One can argue that his methodology was the fresh expressions movement of his day.

Fresh Expressions Movement

Once again, a missional movement that began in the United Kingdom, has found a home in the United States. As, again, the structure of human society is amid massive transformation and much of the inherited church is failing to connect with the larger population; an ecumenical group led primarily by Anglicans in the UK organized to create a report concerned with the continued decline of the church and the discovery of an emergence of new contextual ecclesial communities.

In the Anglican congregations the preface to the Declaration of Assent that all incoming clergy must confess says,

The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds,

²⁰⁶ David Chapman, *Methodism and the Church* in Paul Avis, *The Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 321.

*which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation” (italics mine).*²⁰⁷

The term “Fresh Expressions” was born from the conviction of this statement, captured by the team led by Bishop Graham Cray, who produced the *Mission-shaped Church* (MSC) report in 2004. The report has now become an international bestseller, is credited with transforming the ecclesiology of the Church of England, and has catalyzed the development of thousands of fresh expressions. It has also precipitated similar initiatives in Australia, Canada, mainland Europe, South Africa, the US, and elsewhere.²⁰⁸

A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of those who are not yet part of any church. These are forms of church which are,

- *Missional*: birthed by the Spirit to reach not-yet-Christians.
- *Contextual*: seek to serve the context in an appropriate form to the people in it.
- *Formational*: focused on making disciples.
- *Ecclesial*: a full expression of the church, not a steppingstone to an inherited congregation.²⁰⁹

The term “mixed economy” traces back to Archbishop Rowan Williams, who appropriated the term from the business world to describe the larger model of ecclesiology emerging in the UK in which inherited and emerging forms of church could

²⁰⁷ Graham Cray, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions in a Changing Context* (New York: Seabury Books, 2010), 100.

²⁰⁸ Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 2.

²⁰⁹ Michael Moynagh and Philip Harrold, *Church for Every Context: An Introduction to Theology and Practice* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2012), 28-50.

function in a symbiotic relationship. This is now embraced as the primary missional strategy in England.²¹⁰

At the simplest level, the mixed economy assumes that no single form of church life is adequate to the missional task before us in the West. We need traditional and new forms of church operating together, not in competition, but as compliment. This is a conjunctive form of church, a both/and way. I have referred to this elsewhere as a “blended ecology of church” which occurs when local churches cultivate both attractional and emerging forms of church, grafting them together over time.²¹¹ In this scenario, the Great Commission is reoriented in the local context. Pioneer teams explore the missional potential of the various practices and places of the larger context. The local church building becomes one “habitat” within the larger communal ecosystem.

²¹⁰ Nelstrop and Percy, 3-5.

²¹¹ Beck, *Deep Roots, Wild Branches*, 23.

THE BLENDED ECOLOGY ECOSYSTEM

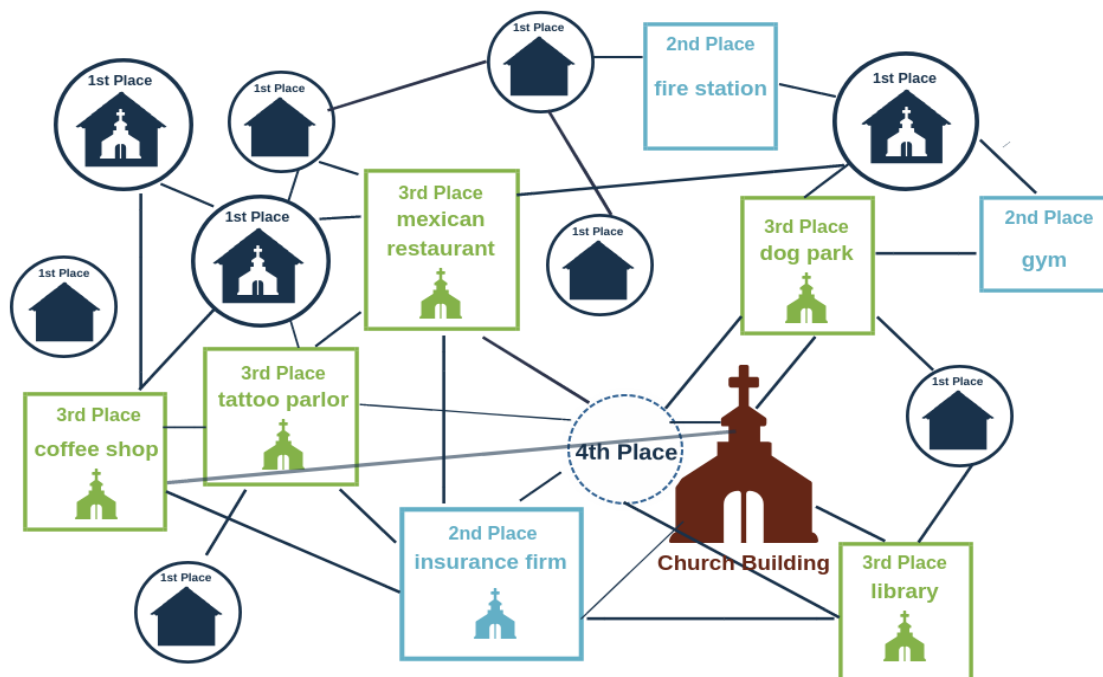


Figure 9. The Blended Ecology Ecosystem

Pioneer Ministry

In this emerging ecclesial ecosystem, new kinds of missionaries are cultivating communities of Jesus outside the walls of church facilities. In the Fresh Expressions movement, we call these missionaries “pioneers.”

The Church of England defines pioneers as, “people called by God who are the first to see and creatively respond to the Holy Spirit’s initiatives with those outside the church; gathering others around them as they seek to establish a new contextual Christian community.”²¹²

²¹² David Male, “Do We Need Pioneers,” Fresh Expressions, 2017, <https://freshexpressions.org.uk/get-started/pioneer-ministry/>.

They also identify two types of pioneers, largely based on *from where* the pioneering happens:

- **Fresh start Pioneers** (or edge pioneers): These are classic pioneering types who start new things, love firsts, and enjoy working from a blank canvas. If ordained they need to be released from expectations of an incumbency type parish role and allowed to pioneer in places where the Church is not present while remaining closely connected with the diocese.
- **Parish based Pioneers** (or mixed economy pioneers): These pioneers want to work from a parish base but from there develop fresh expressions of church in a mixed economy way expanding the growth and reach of the local church.²¹³

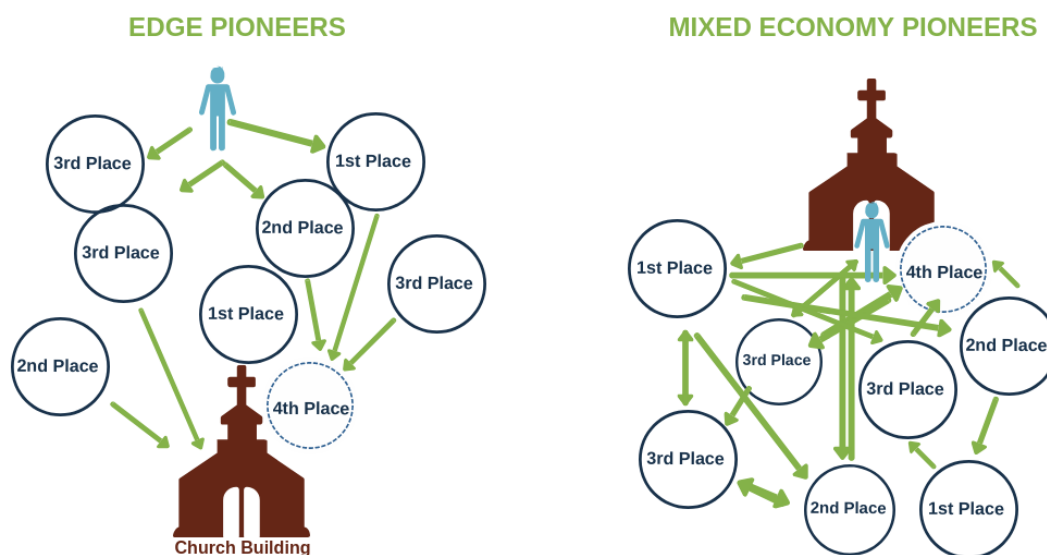


Figure 10. *Edge and Mixed Economy Pioneers*

There are three essential roles in the fresh expressions movement: pioneers, supporters, and permission givers. This provides a way for every believer to be involved in pioneer mission. When these roles work together in unity, local churches that have been sedentary for a period can join the motion of movement again.

Pioneers: are passionate about mission on the edges.

²¹³ Ibid.

Supporters: are passionate about supporting and releasing pioneers.

Permission Givers: use their role to foster release of pioneers and to influence the system to be more willing to experiment.

There is a clear correlation between pioneers and entrepreneurs; they share essential characteristics.²¹⁴ Bolton and Thompson define entrepreneur as “a person who habitually creates and innovates to build something of recognized value around perceived opportunities.”²¹⁵ The theological underpinnings of pioneer ministry are rooted deeply in the Trinity. *God is a pioneering God, thus there are pioneers.* Each person of the Trinity is a “pioneer.” As David Goodhew writes in *Fresh!* God the Father is pioneer, “God, by the creation of the cosmos, pioneers a new form of reality.”²¹⁶

God the Spirit is pioneer; Spirit breathes forth all life. Freshness is the hallmark of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the “foundation for fresh expressions, pioneer ministry, and church planting.” The Holy Spirit is “God as Pioneer Minister—through whom all pioneer ministry finds its authentication and strength.” The Spirit “creates community.” Thus, the church herself is a pioneer community of the Spirit.

God the Son is pioneer, he is the author and instigator of our faith, the one “innovating by who he is (incarnation) what he does (ministry) and by how he dies (cross) and rises again (resurrection).”²¹⁷

²¹⁴ David Goodhew, Andrew Roberts, and Michael Volland, *Fresh!: An Introduction to Fresh Expressions of Church and Pioneer Ministry* (London: SCM Press, 2012), 143.

²¹⁵ Bill Bolton and John Thompson, *Entrepreneurs: Talent, Temperament and Opportunity* (London: Routledge, 2013), 72.

²¹⁶ Goodhew, Roberts, and Volland, 25.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24-31.

Perhaps most helpful in our task of understanding and unleashing pioneer ministry comes from the pioneering of Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 states, “looking to Jesus the *pioneer* and perfecter of our faith” (italics mine). Jesus is identified here as the ἀρχηγός (ār-khā-gos). Which can translate “pioneer” or “author” and conversely “instigator.” The fullness of the verse also carries with it the idea of suffering, “who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame” (Heb 12:2). Pioneers also often experience pain, cross carrying, rejection, and the shame of failure as they try to create the new ways. ἀρχηγός is also the closest we get in koiné Greek to “innovator” or “entrepreneur.” Overall, this is understood as a gifting God bestows upon the church, for her nurture, upbuilding, and expansion. Paul the Apostle is perhaps a textbook example of a pioneer. Pioneers seek to embody this initiator, starter, ministry of Jesus in the world.²¹⁸

George Lings reserves the term pioneer for “originators of fresh entities,” while discussing the differences between pioneer-starters and pioneer-sustainers.²¹⁹ Pioneers also can cause quite a stir that calls for a reorganization of the local church. Beth Keith, in “The Gift of Troublesome Questioning” offers us some insight here. She draws a comparison between adaptors and stabilizers. Part of what pioneers do by their very presence is threaten overly stable systems by asking “what if.” Stabilizers operate in the impulse to immediately stabilize the disruption. While both have positive and negative attributes, stable systems often support stabilizers only and exile adaptors. Pioneers are

²¹⁸ George Lings, from “Looking in the Mirror: What Makes a Pioneer,” in David Male, *Pioneers 4 Life: Explorations in Theology and Wisdom for Pioneering Leaders* (Abingdon: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2011), 31.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

gifted by the Spirit to ask troublesome questions that threaten the stability of the system. Pioneers have the ability “to question aspects of the church without drawing the church into question.”²²⁰

Overly stable systems dampen innovation, overly destabilized systems devolve into chaos. Pioneers have a way of destabilizing systems enough to open the organization to the possibility of change. The innovation journey requires some disruption and dissatisfaction. Pioneers are a gift to the church in this way.

Pioneers do not fit neatly into theological pigeonholes. Their activity and effectiveness challenge the “closely defined liberal, evangelical, or catholic theologies and churchmanship” they move us “towards something unknown and developmental, with an emphasis on mission, diversity, dialogue and evolving belief and practice.”²²¹

They are contextual theologians who quite literally think differently. They employ the effectual reasoning typical of entrepreneurs. The word “effectual” is the inverse of “causal.” Causal rationality starts with a pre-determined goal and seeks to develop strategic steps toward meeting that goal. Effectual reasoning does not start with a specific goal. Rather, it begins with a given reality and “allows goals to emerge contingently over time from the varied imagination and diverse aspirations of the founders and the people they interact with.”²²²

²²⁰ Beth Keith, from “The Gift of Troublesome Questioning” in Male, *Pioneers 4 Life*, 57.

²²¹ Ibid., 56.

²²² Saras Sarasvathy, “What Makes Entrepreneurs Entrepreneurial?” Effectuation, accessed December 15, 2018, https://www.effectuation.org/sites/default/files/research_papers/what-makes-entrepreneurs-entrepreneurial-sarasvathy_0.pdf.

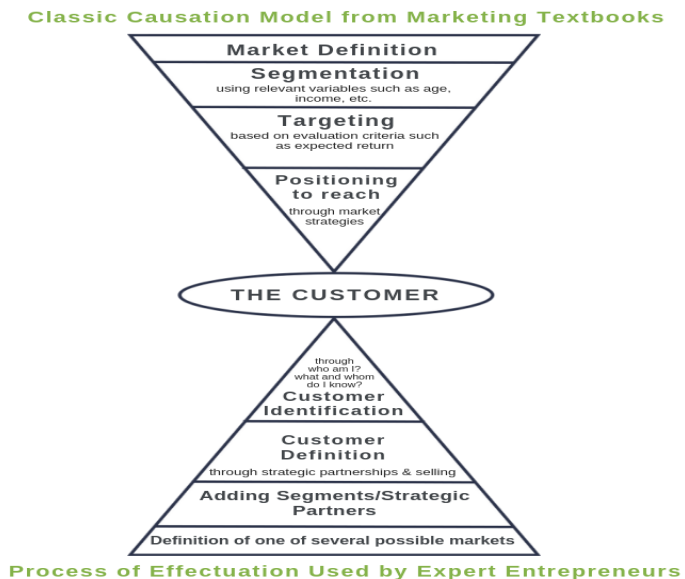


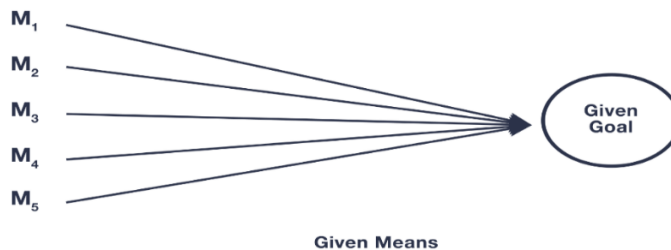
Figure 11. Causal and Effectual

For instance, while causal reasoning focuses on expected return, effectual reasoning emphasizes affordable loss; causal reasoning depends upon competitive analyses, effectual reasoning is built upon strategic partnerships; causal reasoning urges the exploitation of pre-existing knowledge and prediction, effectual reasoning stresses the leveraging of contingencies.²²³

Managerial Thinking -- Causal Reasoning

Distinguishing Characteristic:

Selecting between given means to achieve a pre-determined goal



²²³ Ibid.

Figure 12. Causal Reasoning

Entrepreneurial Thinking -- Effectual Reasoning

Distinguishing Characteristic:

Imagining possible new ends using a given set of means

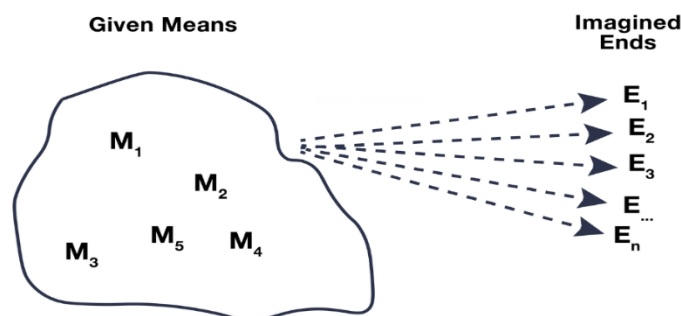


Figure 13. Effectual Reasoning

Thus, by taking the “effects” and starting with who and what pioneers already have, they begin to create something new from the pieces. Through a series of relational interactions as opportunities and strategic partnerships arise, multiple outcomes are possible. This kind of reasoning often employed by pioneers and entrepreneurs can fuel a journey of innovation in a traditional congregation. In my interactions with the pioneers of this sample, I observed that they operate from a fundamentally different mental model than most inherited leaders. They employ contextually intelligent behaviors and use the problems of institutional voids as opportunities for social innovation.

The distinct mental model observed in pioneers can be described by Polanyi’s concept of the “pioneer mind”:

The pioneer mind which reaches its own distinctive conclusions by crossing a logical gap deviates from the commonly accepted process of reasoning, to achieve surprising results. Such an act is original in the sense of making a new start, and the capacity for initiating it is the gift of originality, a gift possessed by a small minority.²²⁴

²²⁴ Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 123.

The research on pioneers from the Church Mission Society validates Polanyi's insight, however, Hodgett and Bradbury suggest the following spectrum of pioneering:

1. Pioneer innovators: refers to sodal or 'sobornistic' pioneer leaders who with their teams venture out beyond the edges of the church's structures to explore the creation of faithful expressions of Christian life among people of a new context.
2. Pioneer adaptors: refers to those who have the creative gift to adapt these innovations to their own contexts and take the established church's rituals and rhythms and adapted them into new environments.
3. Pioneer replicators: refers to those situated in contexts in which replication is applicable, where a context is seen to be sufficiently comparable so that a successful model of church can simply be repeated.
4. Pioneer activists: refers to those whose gift and vocation is to shape a place in ways that seek to align a community, network or industry with the values of the Kingdom. Seeing themselves as missionaries, but without the express intention of planting a church.²²⁵

I have contextualized the pioneer spectrum diagram specifically for the Fresh Expressions US movement which includes some of our own replicable models: Dinner Church, Church @ Play, and Café Church:

²²⁵ T. Hodgett and P. Bradbury, "Pioneering Mission is...a spectrum." *ANVIL* 34 no. 1. <https://churchmissionsociety.org/resources/pioneering-mission-spectrum-tina-hodgett-paul-bradbury-anvil-vol-34-issue-1/>

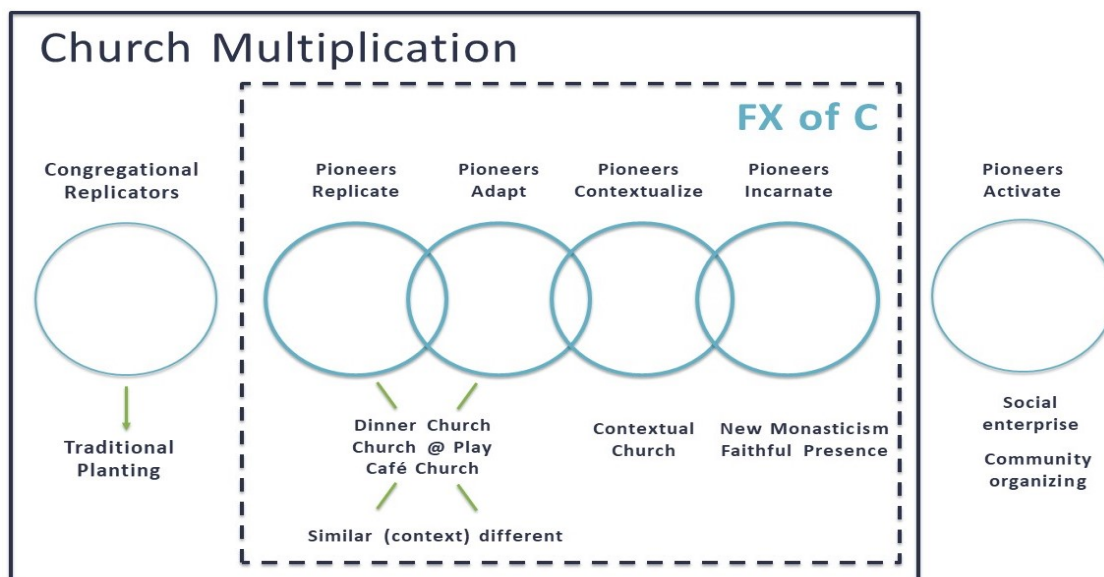


Figure 14. Pioneer Spectrum

Gerald Arbuckle discusses the reality that creativity can exist in organizations in a latent way, these ideas require application through innovative people, who he calls “dreamers who do.” He distinguishes between innovators and adaptors,

Both are creative persons and needed, especially the innovative and refunding type; both threaten the group because they dissent from the acceptable ways of doing things, but it is the innovator that particularly endangers the group’s security...²²⁶

Thus, denominations often eject the very persons gifted by the Spirit with the adaptation skills that could bring actual revitalization. While perhaps the true “pioneer innovator” types are seemingly rare, those that possess Polanyi’s “pioneer mind,” all people have the capacity to create, innovate, and adapt. It is the innate capacity of all human beings, created “very good” in the image of a creator God (Gen 1:27).

²²⁶ Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Refounding the Church: Dissent for Leadership* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 109.

Angela Shier-Jones thinks it's an important distinction to not understand pioneers as a particular sort of person, rather a particular sort of ministerial conduct or focus within the wider framework of the church. While in the Anglican Church ordained pioneers are a separate category of ministry because of the way they train and deploy priests, Shier-Jones insists that pioneer ministry is better understood not as a different category of lay or ordained ministry, but a distinct focus of ministry.²²⁷ All Christians are called to follow the great pioneer, Jesus, which always includes being involved in pioneering on some level. Yet, pioneers are *gifted* to be effective in that particular focus of ministry.

I believe Shier-Jones provides great insight here, but we must also hold this in tension with the reality that not all people are called to that particular focus of ministry. If everyone was a pioneer, the world would devolve into utter chaos. Thus, the intentionality of fresh expressions to understand the equal importance of the three roles: pioneer, supporter, and permission giver. Pioneer ministry is absolutely a work of the body, the whole people of God, not individual acts of heroic solo leadership. Pioneering is a communal endeavor. Shier-Jones writes "Pioneering ministry cannot be done to a community by someone who knows what they need; it can only be done with a community by someone who shares in their need."²²⁸ Pioneers are dependent upon the "persons of peace" and indigenous inhabitants of a community. They must work together with supporters and permission givers in a strategically team-based way, both for the health of the pioneer and the initiatives they start.

²²⁷ Angela Jones, *Pioneer Ministry and Fresh Expressions of Church* (London: SPCK, 2009), 3-5.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

So, it's more appropriate to speak of teams of pioneers, supporters, and permission givers, rather than individual pioneers. More specifically, all people have the capacity to cultivate contextual intelligence. Perhaps it comes more naturally to some than others, but these variations are neutralized when the cultivation of contextual intelligence is a *team effort*, as I will show later. It is the value of a "collective intelligence" that appears in Paul's employment of teams, Wesley's early lay preachers, and the awakening of the APEST in the modern missional church movement.

Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson note that every historical renewal movement recovers some degree of the following movemental elements: priesthood of believers, "kingdom of God" over "church," prophetic protest, church planting, and mission on the fringes and among the poor.²²⁹ Indeed, as we saw, early Methodism included each of these elements in a strong way. It seems that these missional waves of the Spirit are always breaking on the shore of history. There have been many of these waves, Paul and the Antioch church, early Methodism, and now the Fresh Expressions movement—early Methodism remixed.

Conclusion

In the network society, practitioners of fresh expressions have recognized that some unlearning is particularly important. Most of our inherited church assumptions prove false in this new social matrix. Pioneer teams immerse themselves in the context and learn through a process of experimentation and improvisation.

²²⁹ Alan Hirsch, and Dave Ferguson, *On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 35.

The fresh expressions movement in the United States is emerging before our eyes in real time. As the Cultivator of Fresh Expressions in the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church, I have a front row seat to this movement. Florida was the first conference to enter into a formal partnership with Fresh Expressions US. In a state where most congregations are in decline, less than 18% of the population is in worship on Sunday mornings, and churches across the denominational spectrum close their doors every year, Bishop Ken Carter has lifted a vision of 500 fresh expressions of church by 2025.²³⁰ Now, alongside over 600 inherited congregations, over 300 fresh expressions of church have emerged.

As I have shown, CI is an essential component of each of these historical church movements, and I now turn to its examination.

²³⁰ Ken Carter, "Church Vitality," <https://www.flumc.org/church-vitality>

CHAPTER 4:
THEORIES OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE: CI—ONE INTELLIGENCE TO SERVE
THEM ALL

“You will never come up with the right answer if you ask the wrong question.”
-Robert Sternberg

Rethinking IQ—Toward Multiple Intelligences

Yale psychologist Robert Sternberg argues that any intelligence must take place in an actual context, and its assessment must be contextually oriented.²³¹ The term “contextual intelligence” was used by Terenzini in the study of educational institutions. He proposed that there are three tiers of skills that are necessary for effective institutional research: technical knowledge, issues intelligence, and contextual intelligence.²³² Also Khanna, referenced in the introduction, emphasizes the ability to recognize the limits of our knowledge, and adapt it to different contexts.²³³

It is appropriate to begin this discussion by acknowledging a fundamental challenge—there is no conclusive agreement about what the concept of intelligence really is—there are concepts of intelligence oriented on achievement and others on aptitude.²³⁴ Traditionally, a “general intelligence” or “g” has been considered as a universal trait possessed by individuals at various levels. In the West, we largely associate this general intelligence with linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities. We measure this capacity

²³¹ Charles H. Brown, Dan Gould, and Sandra Foster, “A Framework for Developing Contextual Intelligence (CI),” *Sport Psychologist* 19 (2005): 51.

²³² Patrick T. Terenzini, “On the Nature of Institutional Research and the Knowledge and Skills It Requires” *New Directions for Institutional Research* 104 (1999): 21.

²³³ Khanna, 181.

²³⁴ Murray Hunter, “Creative Intelligence and Its Application to Entrepreneurial Opportunity and Ethics” *Contemporary Readings in Law & Social Justice* 4, no. 1 (June 2012): 98.

with the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) ascertained through standardized tests like Stanford-Binet and Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) or Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC). We consider those individuals with “genius IQ’s” to be exceptional among the human species. Thus, much contemporary research deals with intelligence primarily in relation to the internal world of the individual.²³⁵

Increasingly this psychometric paradigm has been challenged within the field of psychology, especially cross-cultural psychology.²³⁶ Most already concede that standardized IQ testing has a cultural bias and does not seriously consider external forces. While IQ tests have been continuously refined to be as “culture fair” as possible, it is highly questionable if these tests are able to escape measuring a specific form of Western academic or analytical intelligence.²³⁷

Is IQ testing merely a tool to measure the ability to take tests? Some psychologists insist that this “general intelligence factor” that IQ tests measure predicts school grades and job performance equally well.²³⁸ Other studies demonstrate a lack of strong correlation between actual occupational performance and IQ scores.²³⁹ A quick glance at most career fields demonstrates “it is not uncommon for people who are highly successful in their occupations to have unremarkable academic records and, conversely,

²³⁵ Sternberg, “Toward a Triarchic Theory,” 270.

²³⁶ David R. Matsumoto and Linda P. Juang, *Culture and Psychology* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson, 2008), 143.

²³⁷ Laura E. Berk, *Exploring Lifespan Development* (Boston, MA: Pearson Allyn and Bacon, 2008), 240-244.

²³⁸ L.S. Gottfredson, “Dissecting Practical Intelligence Theory: Its Claims and Evidence,” *Intelligence* 31, no. 4 (2003): 344.

²³⁹ R.K. Wagner, “Tacit Knowledge in Everyday Intelligent Behavior,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52 (1987): 1236.

for people with histories of distinguished performance in school to be only moderately successful in their occupations.”²⁴⁰ Professionals serving in a field for an extended duration report that the more important learning takes place on the job after graduation, not in a classroom.²⁴¹ The assumption that high IQ will predict career success has been found to be deceptive.²⁴²

The idea of multiple intelligences is not exactly a new one. For example, Aristotle’s triarchic theory of intelligence came long before the contemporary version of Sternberg’s we will examine here. We can see Sternberg’s analytical, practical, and creative intelligences closely resemble—although are not drawn from—Aristotle’s theoretical, practical, and productive excellences of intelligence.²⁴³

While Theories of Multiple Intelligences are not new, they have gained considerable traction both among theorists²⁴⁴ and certainly the general population in the last several decades (a simple search of books yields different intelligences such as: Multiple, Emotional, Cultural, Social, Successful, Creative, Musical, Contextual, and so on). The many proponents of these theories base their claims on valid research, have produced a tidal wave of popular books, and transformed educational environments and workplace systems alike. I will briefly examine two of these theories, in the larger category of “contextual models” first proposed by two distinguished psychologists in the

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Sternberg, “Toward a Triarchic Theory,” 270.

²⁴³ Robert B. Tigner and Steven S. Tigner, “Triarchic Theories of Intelligence: Aristotle and Sternberg,” *History of Psychology* 3, no. 2 (May 200): 168.

²⁴⁴ Brody, 2000; Davidson & Downing, 2000; Sternberg 1984; Gardner, 1983.

early 1980's: Howard Gardener's *Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, and Robert Sternberg's *Triarchic Theory of Intelligence*.

In 1983, Howard Gardener published *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. He follows in the footsteps of psychologists like L.L. Thurstone (1960) and J.P. Guilford (1967) who argued against the widely accepted premise that all human beings possess a single intelligence, which psychologists call “g” for “general intelligence.”²⁴⁵ They began to explore the existence of various factors, or components of intelligence. Gardener claims, “Rather, as a species, we human beings are better described as having a set of relatively autonomous intelligences.”²⁴⁶ He defines intelligence as “the ability to solve problems, or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings.”²⁴⁷ Thus, his theory of multiple intelligences views intelligence as distinct sets of processing operations that permit a wide range of activities that are contextually appropriate.²⁴⁸

Further, Gardner proposes three distinct uses of the term *intelligence*:

1. A property of all human beings (All of us possess multiple intelligences)
2. A dimension on which human beings differ (No two people—not even identical twins—possess the same profile of intelligences).
3. The way in which one carries out a task in virtue of one's goals.²⁴⁹

According to Gardener there are at least eight independent and equally important types of intelligence (linguistic, logical, mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-

²⁴⁵ Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), xxxi.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, xii.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

²⁴⁸ Berk, 241.

²⁴⁹ Gardner, xv.

kinesthetics, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and natural). Gardner defines an intelligence as “the ability to solve problems or create products that are of value within one or more cultural settings.”²⁵⁰ He claims that there can never be, “a single irrefutable and universally accepted list of human intelligences.”²⁵¹

While some psychologists have dismissed Gardner’s theory as “pseudo-psychology” that lacks a significant grounding in research, his theory has unquestionably and profoundly impacted educational and workplace systems.²⁵²

For our purposes, the most helpful aspect of the Multiple Intelligences tradition is the focus on *contextualization*. The growing trend in the behavioral sciences is for researchers to take seriously crucial differences among the contexts where human beings live and develop. It is a false assumption that intelligence can develop outside of interactions with the culture one inhabits.²⁵³ Most scientists now see intelligence as an interaction between certain internal proclivities and potentials, with external opportunities and constraints that characterize a particular cultural setting.²⁵⁴ While Gardner’s theory of Multiple Intelligences acknowledges this contextual interaction, Robert Sternberg advances it significantly.

²⁵⁰ Berk, 241.

²⁵¹ Gardner, 64.

²⁵² John White, “Illusory Intelligences?” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 42 (August 2008): 611.

²⁵³ J. Davidson and C.L. Downing in Sternberg, *Handbook of Intelligence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 47.

²⁵⁴ Gardner, xxxi.

Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, identifies three large interacting intelligences: 1. *analytical intelligence*, or information processing skills; 2. *creative intelligence*, the capacity to solve novel problems; and 3. *practical intelligence*, application of intellectual skills to everyday situations.²⁵⁵ The strength of this theory is how it takes into account a balance of these three intelligences interacting within a context, and does not reduce intelligence to a purely individualistic inner force. He writes, "I view intelligence in context as consisting of *purposive adaptation to, shaping of, and selection of real-world environments relevant to one's life.*"²⁵⁶

Sternberg argues that a contextual perspective provides an escape from the confining psychometric view that gave rise to both the IQ test and the questionable assumption that they can accurately measure intelligence in isolation. He advocates that intelligence at least in part must be considered in the light of adaptive behavior in the real-world environment, pointing out that even psychometric theorists themselves held this view.²⁵⁷ He concludes that it is impossible to comprehend the nature of intelligence without understanding how interaction with the environment shapes what constitutes intelligent behavior in a given sociocultural context. According to Sternberg, we need internal analyses that can elucidate cognitive processes, coupled with external analyses that can elucidate which behaviors or classes of behavior are intelligent in varying environments.²⁵⁸ Thus, he sees these analyses as of equal value in measuring intelligence,

²⁵⁵ Berk, 240-244.

²⁵⁶ Sternberg, "Toward a Triarchic Theory," 271.

²⁵⁷ He notes Binet and Simon, 1973, and Wechsler, 1958. *Ibid.*, 270.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

“It is as much a mistake to exclude test-like behavior from one’s view of intelligence as it is to rely upon it exclusively.”²⁵⁹

Sternberg shows us that “intelligent behavior” is often not intelligent universally across all cultures. Later, he further developed his theory to describe the combination of these analytical, creative, and practical dimensions as “successful intelligence.”

Analytical intelligence is focused on applying strategies, acquiring task-relevant and metacognitive knowledge, and engaging in self-regulation. Creative intelligence is focused on solving novel problems, developing processing skills to become automatic, which then frees working memory for complex thinking. Practical intelligence is goal oriented activity aimed at adapting to, shaping, or selecting environments.²⁶⁰ Thus Sternberg writes, “The higher-order skills of capitalization and compensation may be the same, but what is capitalized on and what is compensated for will vary. The differences across people and situations extend beyond different life paths within a given culture.”²⁶¹

Sternberg lifts up the example of Ruth D. Feldman’s book *Whatever Happened to the Quiz Kids?: Perils and Profits of Growing up Gifted*. The Quiz Kids radio and television programs were wildly successful in the 1940s and 1950s and became a kind of national institution. This catapulted these children into the spotlight of fame and notoriety. Feldman tells the sad tale that many of these Quiz Kids did not fulfill their youthful promise.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 271.

²⁶⁰ Berk, 240-241.

²⁶¹ Sternberg, “Toward a Triarchic Theory,” 273.

²⁶² Ruth D. Feldman, *Whatever Happened to the Quiz Kids?: Perils and Profits of Growing Up Gifted* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 1982).

Sternberg understands this as a powerful example of how environmental selection can operate in real world careers. While these children were selected for the show because of their exceptional intellectual and personal traits—most of them had exceptionally high and in some cases genius IQs—their later lives were not exceptional in proportion to their potential.²⁶³ Sternberg writes,

There are undoubtedly many reasons for this lesser later success, including statistical regression effects. What is striking in biography after biography is that the ones who were most successful were those who found what they were interested in and good at and then pursued it relentlessly. The less successful ones had difficulty in finding any one thing that interested them, and in a number of cases floundered while trying to find a niche for themselves.²⁶⁴

In other words, IQ scores do not automatically equate with career success.

Adapting, shaping, and choosing environments is essential to applying analytical and creative intelligence in actual contexts. Sternberg invites us to consider the “stars” in any given fields of endeavor and to ask what distinguishes such persons from all the rest? He calls attention to two distinguishing characteristics: (a) at least one extraordinarily well-developed skill, and (b) an extraordinary ability to capitalize upon that skill or skills in their work.²⁶⁵ Thus, to understand intelligence as it operates in the everyday world is to notice the contextual interactions, or to distinguish “book smarts” from “street smarts.”²⁶⁶ Sternberg posits that “underlying successful performance in many real-world tasks is a set of judgmental skills based upon tacit understanding of a kind that is never explicitly

²⁶³ Sternberg, “Toward a Triarchic Theory,” 273.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 272-273.

²⁶⁶ Gottfredson, 343-344.

taught, and, in many instances, never even verbalized.”²⁶⁷ He lists three kinds of tacit knowledge to be particularly important for success, which involves understanding regarding managing: 1. oneself, 2. others, and 3. one’s career.²⁶⁸

Polanyi pioneered the concept of tacit knowledge, arguing that we should start from the fact that “we can know more than we can tell.” He termed this pre-logical phase of knowing as “tacit knowledge.” Tacit knowledge refers to the range of conceptual and sensory information and images that can be brought to bear in an attempt to understand a phenomenon, these “intuitive powers of the investigator are always dominant and decisive.”²⁶⁹ Polanyi speaks of drives that preserve a rational coherence both within the person and within the person’s relationship to their context. These drives foreshadow the learning of part-whole relationships. He writes,

All these inarticulate achievements are guided by a self-satisfaction. The adaption of our sense organs, the urge of our appetites and fears, our capacity for locomotion, balancing and righting, as well as the processes of learning which an inarticulate intelligence develops from these strivings, can be said to be what they are and to achieve what they are said to achieve, only to the extent to which we accredit their implied assent to their own performance, shaped by them in accordance with standards set by themselves to themselves. Therefore, at each of the innumerable points at which our articulation is rooted in sub-intellectual strivings, or in any inarticulate feats of our intelligence, we rely on tacit performance of our own, the rightness of which we implicitly confirm.²⁷⁰

Polanyi shows that capacity of true intelligence, is to continually enrich and enliven one’s own conceptual framework, and to apply these drives in real environments.

²⁶⁷ Sternberg, “Toward a Triarchic Theory,” 273.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 130.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 100.

The ability to “assimilate new experience is the mark of a truly intelligent person.”²⁷¹ The practical dimensions of acquiring and applying tacit knowledge in real learning situations, this is a form of intelligence that’s not always measurable with a standardized test, but crucial for real life success.

The research of Richard Wagner supports the claim that a hallmark of practical intelligence is the acquisition and use of this *tacit knowledge*: “practical know-how that usually is not openly expressed or stated and which must be acquired in the absence of direct instruction.”²⁷² In order to examine the scope of tacit knowledge he categorizes it on the basis of these three elements: (1) The *content* of a situation, that is, whether it primarily involves managing oneself, managing others, or managing one’s tasks; (2) The *context* of a situation, either local or global; (3) The *orientation*, that is, whether one’s focus is idealistic or pragmatic.²⁷³

Further, Wagner describes *local* context as referring to a focus on the short-term accomplishment of the specific task at hand and a *global* context refers to a focus on long-range objectives and on how the present situation fits into the bigger picture. The idealistic orientation focuses on how good a solution is ideally, whereas a pragmatic orientation focuses on how workable a potential solution is.²⁷⁴ He posits that real-world accomplishment requires practical knowledge that can differentiate between ideal and practical, as well as be applied in both local and global contexts.²⁷⁵

²⁷¹ Ibid., 103.

²⁷² Wagner, 1236.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 1237.

Gardner’s introduction of the “personal intelligences” opened the door for multiple new forms of intelligence to be explored. For instance, psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer began to map out the various ways one can be intelligent emotionally.²⁷⁶ The widely popular concept of Emotional Intelligence—the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one’s emotions, and to be empathetic with others—is a logical extension of the concept of intrapersonal intelligence. It was Daniel Goleman’s bestselling book: *Emotional Intelligence – Why it Can Matter More Than IQ* published in 1995 that made the term a household name. Goleman calls Gardener’s *Frames of Mind* “a manifesto refuting the IQ view” laying a groundwork to explore these personal intelligences.²⁷⁷

Later Goleman published *Social Intelligence: The Revolutionary New Science of Human Relationships*. Goleman cites Columbia University psychologist Edward Thorndike for first proposing the concept in 1920, social intelligence involves one aspect of emotional intelligence, the ability to understand others and act wisely in human relationships.²⁷⁸ Goleman references the obvious correlation with the interpersonal intelligence proposed by Gardner and the practical intelligence of Sternberg in establishing models from which to build a cohesive theory of social intelligence.²⁷⁹

Sternberg’s groundbreaking Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence, which will inform our exploration of contextual intelligence, also opened new paths for the study of

²⁷⁶ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 2005), 38.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Daniel Goleman, *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships* (New York: Bantam Books, 2006), 332.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 332.

creative intelligence as well. Creative Intelligence is a term used broadly with little consensus but groups together “cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of creative generation like intense interest, motivation and other social influences,” or it can be a term that refers “more to styles of creative thinking.”²⁸⁰ Furthermore, creative intelligence “widens the concept of creativity by placing importance on the contextual and environmental variables on one hand and on thinking processes, applications, or styles on the other.”²⁸¹

Cultural Intelligence

Cross-cultural psychologists have long warned of the danger and limitations concerning IQ tests and the use of scores. Matsumoto and Juang describe a lack of awareness in cultural differences regarding intelligence.²⁸² Thus, they celebrate the work of Gardner and Sternberg, noting the expansion of the theoretical understanding of intelligence in mainstream American psychology as one of the great advancements in the field. They note that including creative, contextual, experimental, and componential forms of intelligence, while expanding application across cultures, helps to redefine intelligence as “the skills and abilities necessary to effectively accomplish cultural goals.”²⁸³ They offer a definition of *contextual intelligence* based in the work of Sternberg, “Contextual intelligence refers to an individual’s ability to adapt to the environment, solving problems in specific situations.”²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ Hunter, “Creative Intelligence,” 102.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Matsumoto and Juang, 143.

²⁸³ Matsumoto and Juang, 141-142.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 142

Let's briefly distinguish Contextual Intelligence from Cultural Intelligence. These are two different concepts emerging from two diverse streams of thought but intersecting in various ways. Thomas and Inkson, write, "cultural intelligence (or CQ) describes and assesses the capability to interact across cultures."²⁸⁵ They claim that cultural intelligence builds on earlier concepts, such as the intelligence quotient (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EQ), the ability to interact well emotionally. Cultural intelligence (CQ) incorporates the capability to interact effectively across cultures.²⁸⁶ They describe cultural intelligence as "being skilled and flexible about understanding a culture, interacting with it to learn more about it, reshaping your thinking to have more empathy for it, and becoming more skilled when interacting with others from it."²⁸⁷ Thus, they describe three stages in the process of cultivating "CQ": 1. Knowledge: acquiring an understanding of the culture; 2. Mindfulness: the ability to pay attention reflectively and creatively to cues to monitor one's own knowledge and feelings; 3. Skills: based on knowledge and mindfulness, the culturally intelligent person develops cross-cultural skills.²⁸⁸

Jesus is King, Context is Queen

Matsumoto and Juang define human culture as, "*a unique meaning and information system, shared by a group and transmitted across generations, that allows*

²⁸⁵ David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson, *Cultural Intelligence: Surviving and Thriving in the Global Village* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc, 2017), 15.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., x.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 14.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

the group to meet basic needs of survival, pursue happiness and well-being, and derive meaning from life."²⁸⁹

Context, on the other hand, is a larger concept that describes the environment and circumstances that form a setting from which a culture may emerge. Cultures emerge as solutions to the universal problem of how to adapt to an environment. It's important here to briefly treat the concept of a context.

Len Sweet and I have posited in *Issachar's Secret* that "Jesus is King, but Context is Queen." Contextualization yokes the fixity of a unique identity as a disciple of Jesus to the flux of cultural contexts, constructs and conditions. To contextualize the gospel is to bring the content of the gospel (Jesus) into conversation with local cultures of past, present and future.²⁹⁰

Each cultural group interacts with a context: the physical environment; geography; climate, time; and economic, political, and social factors. Context is the cradle of culture, the larger web of interactions where cultures live. Or more simply, "Culture is a solution to the problem of individuals' adaptations to their contexts to address their social motives and biological needs."²⁹¹ Thus, a single context may consist of multiple cultures interacting with each other. Certainly, contextual intelligence will involve understanding those interactions, but also must consider many other factors. Further, to help scale our discussion of context, we will employ Wagner's concepts of

²⁸⁹ Matsumoto and Juang, 12.

²⁹⁰ Leonard Sweet and Michael Beck, *Issachar's Secret: Contextual Intelligence for Jesus Followers* (Higher Life Publishing), in press.

²⁹¹ Matsumoto and Juang, 8.

local and global but extend them, in that a global context may be a vast network made of many local contexts, each made up of multiple cultures.

A context is a complex system. Environment itself is part of a larger system, within a larger system, “constituting the ever changing ambiguous medium that we are immersed within.”²⁹² Murray cites the work of W. Brian Arthur, who postulates that complex systems have three important characteristics: 1. Complex systems grow in co-evolutionary diversity where different entities compete and collaborate in ever diversified activities, some surviving, while others perish; 2. Complex systems are on a continual path of structural deepening where entities will increase in complexity; 3. Complex systems act as “capturing software” where entities interact with other entities giving birth to new entities, objects, and events.²⁹³ These three processes help us understand the complexity of even a seemingly simple context. There is continuous change, a varying degree of predictability, novelty resulting from independent but interrelated actions, and continuous need for adaptation.

Cultivating CI

Can CI be measured? Can it be cultivated? As we’ve seen in the research of Sternberg and Wagner, contextual intelligence has been assessed primarily as a form of tacit knowledge, something that’s maybe never explicitly taught and, in many instances, never even verbalized. Yet they have shown through the studies of career success in both academic and business management settings discussed above, that this “tacit” or practical

²⁹² Hunter, “Creative Intelligence,” 75.

²⁹³ Ibid.

knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of real-world success. This presents a challenge regarding the measurement and cultivation of CI.

Yet, in a practical sense—*it can be observed*. Emerging research in cognitive neuroscience is helping us understand how the brain pays attention. This is an acquired skill that one can practice and grow in proficiency.²⁹⁴ Cultivating CI is oriented around focused attention within a context and developing contextually intelligent behaviors. For instance, Brown, Gould, and Foster created a framework for developing CI. They note that “intelligent performance” is the appropriate measure of CI, and suggest three criteria: (a) one must demonstrate the ability to enact intelligent performance on authentic (real-life) tasks; (b) the ability to enact intelligent performance must persist over time; and (c) the ability must be transferable to a variety of real-life situations.²⁹⁵ Kutz and Bamford-Wade identified twelve behaviors associated with contextually intelligent persons.²⁹⁶ Kutz and Ball then developed a *Contextual Intelligence Profile* and used it to collect data among a sample of US female hospital managers.²⁹⁷ Kutz has developed a *3D Thinking Framework* and a *Contextual Intelligence Model for Organizational Leadership* for the purpose of CIQ cultivation, which will be summarized in the appendix.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ Anne Trafton, “How the Brain Pays Attention,” MIT News Office, April 10, 2014, <http://news.mit.edu/2014/how-brain-pays-attention>

²⁹⁵ Grotzer & Perkins, cited in Brown, Gould, and Foster, 51.

²⁹⁶ Matthew Kutz and Anita Bamford-Wade, “Understanding Contextual Intelligence: A Critical Competency for Today’s Leaders,” *Emergence: Complexity & Organization* 15, no. 3 (July 2013): 63.

²⁹⁷ Kutz, Ball, and Carroll, 156.

²⁹⁸ Kutz, *Contextual Intelligence* (2013), 68.

Conclusion

These studies show the cultivation of CI has been explored and applied successfully across disciplines. Contextual Intelligence can indeed be cultivated for the thriving of the church. I have followed the golden thread of CI from the Scriptures, through church history, and into the field of psychology. I will now take a short journey into the field of sociology to explore the interaction of “context and intelligence” in a missiologically informative way. I will also briefly examine some of the societal shifts on the emerging missional frontier.

CHAPTER 5:
THE EMERGING CONTEXT—A NEW MISSIONAL FRONTIER

“We are not makers of history. We are made by history.”
-Martin Luther King Jr.

From Jungle to Desert

In *Structured for Mission: Renewing the Culture of the Church*, Alan Roxburgh proposes the question, “Why have we spent so much energy and resources in processes of restructuring, reorganizing and renewing, but see little actually change?” He proposes that simply restructuring is not enough, we must deal with the “legitimizing narratives” from which our structures emerge, increase contextual sensitivity, and release local collaborative experimentation.²⁹⁹

A legitimating narrative refers to the overarching story that provides a group (a small unit or a whole society) with a way to express its underlying values, beliefs and commitments about who they are and how life is to be lived.³⁰⁰ The church in the U.S. embraced the legitimating narrative of the 20th century corporation. Roxburgh discusses at length how protestant denominations in the U.S. adopted this organizational structure and benefited greatly. Adapting this corporate structure helped churches to thrive in that season, as the legitimating narrative of United States culture became a perfect bedfellow

²⁹⁹ Alan J. Roxburgh, *Structured For Mission: Renewing The Culture Of The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press., 2015), 32.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

for the church. Churches took up the language of rationalized efficiency, professional management, and bureaucratic structures.³⁰¹

Our mental models were formed in this social milieu, but society itself has gone through a profound change in morphology. Gil Rendle refers to the season in which the U.S. church flourished as an “aberrant time.” An aberration is not the norm, it is in fact “a departure from the normal state of affairs.”³⁰² The conditions that caused the Christendom, largely attractional, corporate iteration of the church to thrive in the U.S. have changed. Again, this is not a technical problem with a technical solution, this is an adaptive challenge. According to Ronald Heifetz and Martin Linsky, an adaptive challenge occurs when a person or group faces discontinuous or accumulative incremental change, which requires a reconsideration and reformation of basic beliefs, values, and practices³⁰³

The metaphor I have used previously to describe this scenario is like learning to live in an entirely new ecosystem. The church planted in jungle conditions must now learn how to live in a desert. The inherited church was planted in a different ecosystem. It was like a jungle, a wild untamed frontier bursting with all kinds of lifeforms and many diverse challenges. The ecosystem changed, like a desert that swallowed up the jungle. While certainly different than a jungle, a desert is also an ecosystem. Deserts are not devoid of life; they just have different varieties of life, various species of plants,

³⁰¹ Ibid., 79.

³⁰² Gilbert Rendle, *Quietly Courageous: Leading the Church in a Changing World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 21-23.

³⁰³ Ronald Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 13.

mammals, reptiles, insects, and birds that call the desert home. The church is in a new ecosystem, and we have failed to adapt.³⁰⁴

Tod Bolsinger has captured this reality well with a powerful metaphor. In *Canoeing the Mountains*, he retraces the footsteps of the explorers Lewis and Clark as an analogy for the kind of leadership we need in uncharted territory. When Lewis and Clark came across the horizon expecting to find bodies of water for their canoes, they found mountains. Obviously in the scenario some adaptation is in order, the map is wrong, and canoes are not made for mountains. Churches are now in uncharted territory, and our old “vehicles” must be repurposed. Bolsinger echoes the thoughts of Roxburgh, that on the new frontier, “*experimental innovations are the key to surviving in a changing world.*”³⁰⁵

Jürgen Habermas discusses what he describes as “lifeworlds.” Lifeworlds includes the conceptual background, the assumptions, the linguistic fields, and the social imaginaries that people inhabit as a living space, which contain assumed structures of meaning that are largely unconscious, yet serve as the basis of any efforts at communication and cooperative activities.³⁰⁶ These lifeworlds are the ways people imagine their social existence, how they relate to others, how things go on between them and others, as well as their normal expectations and the underlying notions of these expectations.

Every local congregation inhabits their own kind of lifeworld to which they can be largely unaware. Even the language we use, a product of our lifeworld, occurs at a

³⁰⁴ Beck, *Deep Roots, Wild Branches*, 24.

³⁰⁵ Tod E. Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016), 126.

³⁰⁶ Mark Lau Branson, “Interpretive Leadership During Social Dislocation: Jeremiah and Social Imaginary,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 8, no. 1 (2009): 29.

subconscious level with layers of assumed meaning. The vocabulary that we exchange in the church is mostly a product of the legitimating narrative of late 20th century corporate America. Language that's not reflective of the Biblical narrative, but the larger society in which we lived. We even use titles like "pastor" that have Biblical precedent but have been transformed in our context by modern management theory and therapeutic schools.³⁰⁷

This is creating a kind of church identity crisis. We only know the church of the aberrant time; the deeper legitimating narrative has faded from living memory. We now find ourselves in the liminality, somewhere amid a paradigm shift.

Paradigm Shift

It was philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn who first popularized the term "paradigm shift" in his seminal work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* first released in 1962. The word paradigm has Greek origins *paradeigma* and had an important role in Aristotle's theory of argument. While the word is usually rendered "example" in English translations, Aristotle meant it in the sense of an "exemplar" or the very best and instructive example. When something was in dispute, it was used in an analogical sense; something that almost everyone would agree is true between two things is a *paradeigma*, in contrast to whatever was not unequivocally true.³⁰⁸

The idea of the paradigm shift has been widely used and applied to many fields. It is a complex concept even in Kuhn's own writings. Kuhn himself describes paradigm in two different senses:

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Kuhn and Hacking, xix.

On the one hand, it stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community. On the other, it denotes one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science.³⁰⁹

I will employ the term in the first sociological sense, as a kind of constellation of group commitments. In the scientific community, anomalies can emerge. Often anomalies are suppressed, to preserve the status quo of the paradigm. Kuhn describes clusters of anomalies that lead to crisis, “blurring of a paradigm and a consequent loosening of the rules of normal research.” This creates a kind of “despair of those who have seen it as the end of an existing paradigm” and “a crisis may end with the emergence of a new candidate for paradigm and with the ensuing battle over its acceptance.³¹⁰ Kuhn lists examples of paradigm shifts as “Copernican, Newtonian, chemical, and Einsteinian revolutions.”³¹¹

Kuhn also describes a transitional phase between paradigm shifts,

“During the transition period there will be a large but never complete overlap between the problems that can be solved by the old and new paradigm.”³¹² “Often a new paradigm emerges, at least in the embryo, before a crisis has developed far or been explicitly recognized” ... “In other cases, however—those of Copernicus, Einstein, and contemporary nuclear theory, for example—considerable time elapses between the first consciousness of breakdown and the emergence of the new paradigm.”³¹³

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 174.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 84.

³¹¹ Ibid., 67.

³¹² Ibid., 85.

³¹³ Ibid., 86.

In the ecclesial realm, anomalies have been showing up for 40 years. Decline of church attendance was a sign of larger change, but we have sought to preserve the status quo of the previous age, rather than deal with the emerging crisis.

David Bosch took up the language of “paradigm shift” to describe the emerging missional scenario in the West.³¹⁴ In the U.S., upcoming generations are having a qualitatively different experience than our ancestors just one or two generations removed. At the dawn of the third millennium, Bosch observed “a growing awareness that we live in an era of change from one way of understanding reality to another.”³¹⁵ Discoveries in biology, chemistry, and most particularly in physics have challenged long-held fundamental assumptions about life and the universe. Some call it “postmodern science” as it repudiates the assumptions of previous paradigms. Other call it “post-critical studies.” Leonard Sweet speaks of this as “an emerging cosmology that is now as revolutionary as once were the Copernican and Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmologies.”³¹⁶ Sweet speaks of quantum physics enlivening a spiritual perspective of the universe, that replaces religious sensibility with a “quantum spirituality.”³¹⁷

This nascent way of thinking is what Margaret Wheatley calls simply the “new science.”³¹⁸ Sara Savage and Eolene MacMillan laud the new sciences like quantum and

³¹⁴ Borrowing from concepts first developed by Kuhn, David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 185.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Leonard I. Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality: A Postmodern Apologetic* (Dayton, OH: Whaleprints, 1991), 8.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 6-7.

³¹⁸ Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999), xiii.

chaos theories for having “opened the doors for a more fruitful dialogue between science and religion.”³¹⁹ Others like Michael Moynagh and the Santa Fe Institute use the term “complexity thinking” to describe a variety of theories replacing the mechanistic Newtonian world-view.³²⁰ Following Kutz, I will seek to harvest learnings from these fields in the creation of the CI framework.³²¹ Mechanistic Newtonian assumptions are being replaced by the complexity thinking of the strange new quantum world in science. This paradigm shift, along with technological advances, have contributed to the restructuring of western and global society in dramatic ways. The church has largely failed to adapt to these changes and is still living under the spell of stale and outmoded old sciences.

The Network Society

The groundbreaking *Mission-Shaped Church* report says, “The Western world, at the start of the third millennium, is best described as a ‘network society.’ This is a fundamental change: ‘the emergence of a new social order.’”³²²

Manuel Castells, the pioneering sociologist behind this theory, posits that at the end of the second millennium, a new form of society arose from the interactions of

³¹⁹ Sara B. Savage and Eolene M. MacMillan, *The Human Face of Church: A Social Psychology and Pastoral Theology Resource for Pioneer and Traditional Ministry* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2007), 37.

³²⁰ Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 11, 21.

³²¹ Kutz is author of *Contextual Intelligence: Smart Leadership for a Constantly Changing World* (Perrysburg, OH: RTG Publishing, 2013). As well as several peer reviewed articles on contextual intelligence cited earlier: Kutz M.R. (2008a), Kutz M.R. (2008b), Kutz M.R. (2010a), Kutz M.R. (2010b), Kutz M.R. (2011), Kutz, M. R., and Bamford-Wade (2013). He suggests using complexity thinking to explore contextual intelligence.

³²² Cray, *Mission-Shaped Church*, 4.

several major social, technological, economic, and cultural transformations.³²³ Multiple sociologists have embraced Castells theory, and thousands of academic journals cite his work.³²⁴ Notable missiologists like Ryan Bolger have utilized Castell's work in attempting to inform missional strategies in the U.S..³²⁵

Network Society consists of a social structure made up of networks enabled by micro-electronics-based information and communications technologies.³²⁶ Castells writes of the network society, "Dominant functions and processes in the Information Age are increasingly organized around networks. Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power, and culture."³²⁷ Technology has made the world smaller, in that humanity is now a truly global community. These microelectronic and communication technologies serve as flows that enable us to connect across geographies and time. The new organization of this global community is a complex series of interconnected networks.

Thus, the emergence of this new form of society necessitates a revolution in the missionary approach in the U.S. Leslie Newbiggin wrote, "The idea that one can or could at any time separate out by some process of distillation a pure gospel unadulterated by

³²³ Manel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Malden, MS: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), xvii-xviii.

³²⁴ An initial search revealed over 2,000 citations.

³²⁵ Ryan K. Bolger, "Practice Movements in Global Information Culture: Looking Back to McGavran and Finding a Way Forward," *Missiology* 35, no. 2 (2007): 188.

³²⁶ Castells, xvii-xviii.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 500.

any cultural accretions is an illusion. It is, in fact, an abandonment of the gospel, for the gospel is about the word made flesh.”³²⁸

David Bosch also speaks of the “illusion” of a pure Gospel unaffected by culture and society. Theology will always interact with and emerge from a specific context with its implicit assumptions.³²⁹ Contextual intelligence requires contextualization. The Issacharians read the culture, and the Scriptures, and knew what to do. Jackson Wu notes that contextualization begins when we start reading the biblical text, not after. He notes two kinds of contextualization: *exegetical*, in which we interpret Scripture from a cultural perspective; *cultural*, in which we interpret a culture from a Scriptural perspective.³³⁰ We bring a context to the text, we are contextualizing as we grasp the meaning of the words in our own mental models. We also embody the text within a context as the church.

It was Polanyi who first challenged the notion of objectivity and wrote most persuasively that “knowing” is really more of an “art,” in which the knower is always guided by their passion, personal commitment, and underlying assumptions. Polanyi wrote:

To hold such knowledge is an act deeply committed to the conviction that there is something there to be discovered. It is personal, in the sense of involving the personality of him who holds it, and also in the sense of being, as a rule, solitary; but there is no trace in it of self-indulgence. The discoverer is filled with a compelling sense of responsibility for the pursuit of a hidden truth, which demands his services for revealing it. His act of knowing exercises a personal judgement in relating evidence to an external reality, an aspect of which he is seeking to apprehend.³³¹

³²⁸ Leslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1986), 4.

³²⁹ Bosch, 182-183.

³³⁰ Jackson Woo, *One Gospel for all Nations: A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015), 12-13.

³³¹ Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 24-5.

There is no pure “objective” knowing, nor is there such a theology—pure, objective and ideal. There is only a contextual knowing, a contextual theology, and a contextual intelligence. Intelligence does not develop in a vacuum, or in a laboratory with standardized tests and objective answers only.

Further, there is also no pure “objective” church. The church is always a contextualized version of itself. For instance, eighteenth-century Anglicanism blended the scientific method and rational empiricism of the Enlightenment project with natural and revealed religion.³³² As I have shown, the early Methodist revival movement was largely successful specifically because of their adaptation to the arising morphology of the dawning industrial society.³³³ Each historical iteration of the church, while maintaining fundamental characteristics, reflects the epoch in which it exists. Leonard Sweet reminds us, “Christianity must bring to every culture an indigenous faith that is true to its heritage with Christianity’s becoming a culture faith.”³³⁴

In the Network Society, the World Wide Web, a global integrated communication system, is the new Aeropaus. Manuel Castells notes that the culture of real virtuality,

weakens considerably the symbolic power of traditional senders external to the system, transmitting through historically encoded social habits: religion, morality, authority, traditional values, political ideology ... unless they *recode* themselves in the new system, where the power becomes multiplied by the electronic materialization of the spiritually transmitted habits.”³³⁵

³³² Sykes, Booty, and Knight, 32-33.

³³³ Plumb quoted in, Wood, *The Burning Heart*, 98.

³³⁴ Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality*, 1-4.

³³⁵ Castells, 406. Italics mine.

If we look back to Paul and Wesley for clues, it's obvious that the "fields" have changed. The massive social shifts have literally transformed the human experience of space and time. In a network society, we must now recognize the difference between two kinds of space... the *space of place* and the *space of flows*. Castells believes that space, throughout human history, has been "the material support of simultaneity in human social practice." So cities, for instance, are communication systems, increasing the chance of communication through physical contiguity (direct contact). He calls the *space of place*, the space of contiguity.³³⁶ Through the amalgamation of technologies listed earlier, along with computerized transportation, "simultaneity was introduced in social relationships at a distance" (distanced contact). This transformation of the spatiality of social interaction through simultaneity creates a new kind of space... *the space of flows*. Castells defines the space of flows as, "the material support of simultaneous social practices communicated at a distance."³³⁷

Castells writes, "The key innovation and decision-making processes take place in face-to-face contacts, and they still require a shared space of places, well-connected through its articulation to the space of flows."³³⁸ Microelectronic and communication technologies serve as *flows* that enable us to connect across geographies and time. "Flows" of capital, information, organizational interaction, images, sounds, and symbols move along a complex web of interconnected networks enabled by these technologies. Flows are the means through which the movement of people, objects, and things are

³³⁶ Ibid., xxxi.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid., xxxvi.

accomplished from one node to another in social space. The network society is an interconnected matrix, enabled by these technologically enabled flows. The flows are the social organization, the expression of processes dominating our economic, political, and symbolic life.³³⁹

Sociologist Ray Oldenburg enlightens our understanding of the “space of place,” in his description of first, second, and third places connected by flows of technology in a mobile culture. First Place: The home or primary place of residence. Second Place: The workplace or school place. Third Place: The public places separate from the two usual social environments of home and workplace, that “host regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals . . .” examples are environments such as cafes, pubs, theaters, parks, and so on.³⁴⁰

These “places” for us today are the “nodes” of a network society, and what were the “fields” of Wesley’s day. The places outside the earshot of church bells, where people gather for community. Pioneers learn to incarnate themselves in these places. In a mobile, hyperconnected, and diverse culture, pioneers recognize that a neighborhood approach to mission alone will not suffice. They are cultivating a contextually intelligent approach for the network that allows them to adapt to the emergent societal structure. This approach unleashes an exploration of endless new avenues for mission. Just consider the kaleidoscope of contextual variations of fresh expressions of church emerging across the U.S. in all colors, shapes, and sizes.

³³⁹ Ibid., 442.

³⁴⁰ Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (Berkeley, CA: Marlowe Distributed by Publishers Group West, 1999), 16.

The dominant Constantinian form of the U.S. church is the amalgam of a culture that is fading from view. The primarily attractional, propositional and colonial version of the church is not connecting with emerging generations. Perhaps it is easy to provide an overly critical analysis of the inherited mode with language like, immobile, self-centered, and introverted, or even “an invention of the Middle Ages.”³⁴¹ Yet, the inherited mode of church is still quite capable of reaching a large share of the population. As Bosch noted in the 90’s, when one theoretical framework replaces another it is not an “overnight” event but a process that may take “decades, sometimes even centuries, to develop distinctive contours.” He says, “The new paradigm is still emerging... For the most part we are, at the moment, thinking and working in *two* paradigms.”³⁴²

In the liminality or “in-betweenness” of our time, as society itself moves through this fundamental change, we are transitioning into the post-industrial, knowledge-based era now described as the Information Age. While the church exists in the emergence of this network society, we remain operating under the assumptions of a neighborhood society.

Liminality

British cultural anthropologist, Victor Turner, is best known for his work on symbols, rituals, and rites of passage in symbolic and interpretive anthropology. Turner’s work can offer insight here. In his studies on rites of passage, he describes a “transition” marked by three phases: “separation, margin (or *limen*, signifying ‘threshold’ in Latin),

³⁴¹ Bosch examines the critiques of Hoekendijk, Hutchison and others in *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 384.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 349.

and aggregation.”³⁴³ Separation: the first phase signifies detachment of the individual or group from an earlier point in the social structure, or the set of cultural conditions, or both. Liminal: during the liminal period, the characteristics of the passenger (ritual subject) are ambiguous, as they “pass through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state.” Reaggregation: the final phase is one in which the ritual is consummated, the persons or community is once more in a relatively stable state, by virtue of completing the ritual they come into a new “structural” type, a social position in which customary norms and ethical standards are incumbent upon the individual/community.³⁴⁴

Liminality, from the Latin root *limina*, means a threshold.³⁴⁵ Liminality refers to the transitional process where change occurs. In anthropology it’s a phenomenon marked by the ambiguity or disorientation occurring in the margin (*limen*) where a subject is described as having no particular place, in-between a pre-ritual and post-ritual status. Or simply, “In-between-ness, the stage in the middle of change.”³⁴⁶

The attributes of liminality are ambiguous, the “threshold people” now, “slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there, they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.”³⁴⁷

³⁴³ Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 94-95.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Edith Turner, “Exploring the Work of Victor Turner: Liminality and Its Later Implications,” *The Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 33, no. 4 (2008): 35-36.

³⁴⁷ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95.

As we will see later in the contextual intelligence framework, this is a necessary movement that is often compared to death or the disorientation of the tomb. It is an essential movement in the incarnation and the “mind of Christ” (Phil 2:1-11).

While in a sense, the church “in the world but not of it” is never *not* in a liminal space. Turner describes “a sharing and intimacy that develops among persons who experience liminality as a group” and that this is the very essence of *communitas*: the spirit of the community. Turner proposes two models for human interrelatedness. First, is of the society that is structured, differentiated, and often hierarchal, with politico-legal-economic positions. The second, arises in the liminal period, a society of unstructured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, “community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority.”³⁴⁸ It is the sacred bond of the journeyers who have traveled the liminality together. This is the kind of community historically embodied in the church, committed to “die to self, take up the cross” (Mk 8:34), and live under the reign of the incarnate, crucified, and resurrected One. The church is a community ever journeying through the liminality. Every present occurs “betwixt and between” God’s faithful action in the past and God’s promises toward the future.³⁴⁹ Yet, there are times in history when civilizations themselves are at a threshold, when there is a transitional phase, marked by instability, ambiguity, and paradox.

While the church is no stranger to liminality, this is most particularly where we find ourselves today. Following a relatively stable period of Christendom, the church is in a place of disorientation, in-betweenness, and paradox, called post-Christendom.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 96.

³⁴⁹ Turner, “Exploring the Work of Victor Turner,” 35-36.

Anything defined “post-” means it exists in liminality, “after something” without clearly knowing what the “next something” will be.

In the postmodern scenario we live in a creative tension between two ages, even between two ways of understanding the universe. Most of our systems and institutions still function in the mechanistic, reductionist, framework, while the “new science” develops further, transforming many of our long held foundational assumptions. Societally speaking, we see the monoliths of the industrial age existing alongside the emerging GRAIN Age of Genetics, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Info-tech, and Nanotechnology.³⁵⁰

The 60:40 Dilemma

In this scenario, Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson discuss the theory of “blue and red oceans” from the corporate world to describe “the 60:40 dilemma.” Corporations often compete for the same small base of existing customers in the “blood red waters” of the 40 percent, while ignoring the potential with that larger 60 percent. The 60 percent are reached through value innovation that unlocks new demand.³⁵¹

For the church, the 60:40 scenario can be understood as a twofold problem. The *missionary problem*: There is currently 60 percent of the population (or more) that the attractional church model will most likely never reach. The *strategic problem*: Most churches are fighting in the blood red waters for the same 40 percent of already-Christians. These churches best their competitors by “doing church better.” Better facilities, better bands, better coffee. There is an entire wider, deeper, blue ocean of

³⁵⁰ For more on GRAIN see Leonard Sweet, *Rings of Fire: Walking in Faith through a Volcanic Future* (Nav Press, Tyndale, 2019), 47, in Press.

³⁵¹ Hirsch and Ferguson, 27-29.

people, the 60 percent, who will remain beyond our relational bandwidth through the current attractional only mode.³⁵² Inherited cohorts in this study were deeply embedded in this mental model.

In the 60/40 scenario, the strategic problem shows us that at best—church in its current dominantly attractional form—can only reach 40 percent of the people. The missionary problem is concerned with the increasing 60 percent of the population that have no connection with the church. This is the focus of fresh expressions. Pioneers represent an entrepreneurial approach to mission, finding ways to be church out in the “blue ocean” with not-yet-Christians.

Conclusion

While decline and death seem to be a “new normal” for the church in the West, Michael Moynagh, in reference to the fresh expressions movement says, “We are at the frontier, it seems, of a new wave of Christian outreach and impact.”³⁵³ I have explored this emerging new breed of pioneer ministry and how they turn challenges into opportunity. Amidst the liminality of a society changing at 5G speed, these pioneer teams thrive by approaching ministry from a distinctly contextual framework.”³⁵⁴ Many have a high CIQ, and we can learn from them.

I have described the level of change in our society, the symptoms of decline, and suggested the cultivation of contextual intelligence as an opportunity for the church. I have followed the “golden thread” of contextual intelligence from the Scriptures, across

³⁵² Ibid., 250-251.

³⁵³ Michael Moynagh, *Being Church, Doing Life: Creating Gospel Communities Where Life Happens* (Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2014), 29.

³⁵⁴ Beth Keith, in *Pioneers 4 Life*, 56.

church history, and through various fields of knowledge. I will now lay out the CIF and describe each of the six moves in depth.

CHAPTER 6:
THE CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE FRAMEWORK

“It’s hell not to be in one’s own time.”
-Robin Blaser (1925-2009)

In this chapter I will synthesize all learnings thus far and lay out the Contextual Intelligence Framework (CIF). As I have shown, cultivating contextual intelligence is a team effort. It is not the venture of heroic solo leadership. So, I lay out the framework with the assumption that this is a team journey. While my application is focused on church decline, the framework can be used in many diverse scenarios not limited to the ecclesial realm.

Contextual Intelligence Framework

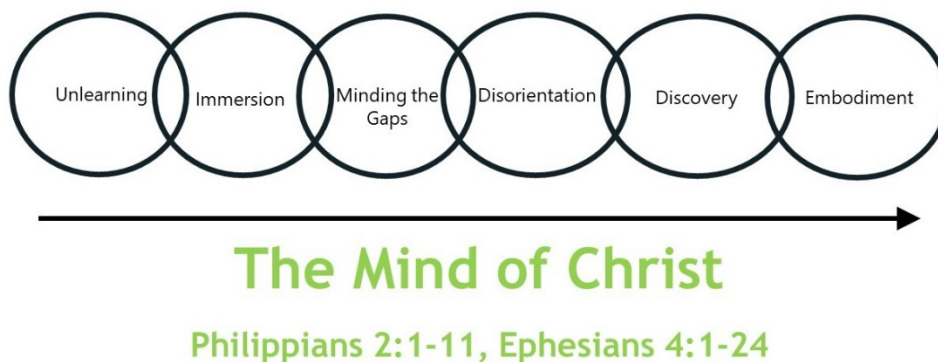


Figure 15. Contextual Intelligence Framework

Unlearning

Unlearning correlates with the “self-emptying” of Jesus in the incarnation. Physiologically speaking “unlearning” is unlikely. Indeed, Polanyi indicates that once

something is learned it is irreversible.³⁵⁵ Thus, clarification is needed. The concept of unlearning has been explored for more than 30 years in the field of organizational management as a process of clearing out old routines and beliefs that no longer meet current challenges. Thus, the underlying assumption is that discarding obsolete knowledge is critical for gaining new knowledge, and the inability to dispose of outdated knowledge may become a major hindrance to learning or innovation.³⁵⁶

In 1934 Dr. William D. Silkworth was the Medical Director of Towns Hospital New York, NY. He began to notice that the “problem” of alcoholism was centered in the mind, manifesting as an “allergy,” that unleashed a “phenomenon of craving.” Once an alcoholic took a single drink, the “allergy” was unleashed. Confessing the frustrations of his failed treatments, he encountered an anomaly—a case of the most extreme variety—that had now seemingly recovered from a hopeless state of mind and body. This individual, a positive deviant, was now helping other alcoholics recover in a rapidly growing fellowship.³⁵⁷ Silkworth wrote of alcoholics, “unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of recovery” and that the new ideals of these individuals must be grounded in a “power greater than themselves.”³⁵⁸ Of course, the individual he treated was Bill W., cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous, a now global

³⁵⁵ Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 106.

³⁵⁶ Matsuo, 50.

³⁵⁷ *Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001), xxv.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, xxv-xxx.

fellowship of over two million people, including 180 nations and more than 118,000 A.A. groups around the world.³⁵⁹

This thriving, global, leaderless organization, which has saved many millions of lives, is founded on some very simple principles. These principles are crystallized in the collective intelligence of A.A. members everywhere in the form of recovery fellowship clichés, such as “I don’t have a drinking problem, I have a thinking problem.” Simultaneously, this is held in tension with another cliché, “I can’t think my way into sober living, but I can live my way into sober thinking.” Alcoholics learn a new set of behaviors, praying, going to meetings, talking to a sponsor, reading the “big book,” and making coffee. As we “fake it till we make it,” we live ourselves into a new mindset, an “entire psychic change.” Further, the Twelve Steps are a framework, used to facilitate this entire psychic change.

Alcoholics must go through a process of unlearning, changing “people, places, and things” and embracing a new mental model, an “entire psychic change.” Our lives depend on this. This is fundamentally true of churches as well.

Crossley, Ashby, and Maddox published research in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* demonstrating that unlearning was essential in interventions for drug abuse and other maladaptive habitual behaviors. In fact, they demonstrate that if unlearning does not occur, interventions “may yield temporary success but are often fragile and relapse is common.” They showed that current interventions were ineffective at erasing

³⁵⁹ From AA World Services, accessed August 8, 2019, https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/aa-around-the-world.

or substantially modifying the representations that facilitated the “underlying addictive behavior—that is, they do not cause true unlearning.”³⁶⁰

Crossley and colleagues observed that relapse often occurred when addicts returned to the original context of their drug use. This is partly true because many interventions occur in clinics. In the context of a clinic, the addict learned new clinic-specific associations. However, the addiction driving stimulus-response (SR) associations were not actually affected. Addicts unlearn the clinic-specific associations upon reentry into the original context of the drug abuse.³⁶¹ Context is queen indeed.

Both positive and negative behaviors can be learned and are not easily unlearned.³⁶² An intervention is an attempt to disrupt this destructive behavior cycle. In Crossley et al’s research, they show that interventions can fail “because random feedback is noncontingent on behavior.”³⁶³ They describe that the Pf-TAN pathway “acts as a gate on cortical-striatal synaptic plasticity, permitting or preventing the learning and expression of procedural knowledge.”³⁶⁴

By overloading the participants and manipulating feedback response accuracy they were able to erase learning that occurred during initial acquisition.³⁶⁵ From these

³⁶⁰ Matthew J. Crossley, Todd Maddox, and F. Gregory Ashby, “Increased Cognitive Load Enables Unlearning in Procedural Category Learning,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 44, no. 11 (2018): 1854.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1845.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 1852.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1854.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1848.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1847.

results they were able to show that by increasing cognitive load via an explicit dual task during the random feedback period—unlearning could be facilitated.³⁶⁶

For our purposes, this highlights the power of context, the challenge of unlearning even when your life depends on it, and simultaneously validates that *it can be accomplished*.

Makoto Matsuo suggests practical applications of unlearning for organizational change. He summarizes findings to show that even well performing organizations face the dangers of complacency and rigidity in which learning cannot take place. He writes, “For strategic change to be successfully executed in a turbulent environment, firms must unlearn or discard old routines to make way for new ones.”³⁶⁷

This is particularly true for the Church amidst the liminality of a paradigm shift. Matsuo posits that individual and organizational unlearning must be given attention, for organizational unlearning is often catalyzed by individual unlearning. New knowledge is usually created by individuals, not organizations, in that organizations learn from their members. Further, this is true of teams as well, team members also need to “unlearn” their “previous knowledge, skills, and/or behaviors and look beyond their basic assumptions to find new solutions to problems.” So, unlearning occurs at individual, group, and organizational levels.³⁶⁸

First, individual unlearning is a conscious process of giving up knowledge, values, or behaviors. Again, the word *kenosis* (self-emptying) is appropriate here. Second, unlearning is not forgetting, what is unlearned is not permanently lost, but it is

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Matsuo, 49.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 48-40.

not used by an individual. What individuals have unlearned which was previously memorized as old knowledge and skills, can still be accessed if needed, while forgetting, refers to the unconscious or accidental loss of knowledge or information. Finally, the abandoning of existing knowledge, skills, and behaviors often occurs simultaneously while acquiring new ones.³⁶⁹ This affirms the results from Crossley, Ashby, and Maddox, and the example of substance abuse recovery.

These are hallmarks of contextually intelligent persons. They become aware that actions or beliefs are not necessarily transferable from context to context. Matsuo notes that this awareness can come organizationally when we receive negative feedback on our work, such as when errors are noted. When that occurs, most people tend to “discard the parts of their knowledge, values, or behaviors that are no longer valid or useful and acquire new ones.”³⁷⁰

Matsuo argues that goal orientation and reflection are crucial for unlearning “because goals influence how individuals interpret and respond to achievement.” Persons cannot act without goals, for action is defined as goal-oriented behavior. Further, reflective activities are employed to review objectives or work processes which enables the identification of beliefs or routines that should be stopped. Matsuo notes two types of goal orientation: learning goal orientation and performance goal orientation. He also further distinguishes reflection from critical reflection, which is a deeper cognitive activity.³⁷¹

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 51.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 50.

Matsuo shows that individual unlearning was closely linked to reflective activities, inspired by individual goal orientations.³⁷² Reflection is key to learning and fostering positive occupational outcomes; indeed we learn from our experiences by observing or reflecting on events and performance, then connect that learning with social outcomes.³⁷³ While *reflection* focuses on the immediate, presenting details of a task or problem, *critical reflection* on the other hand examines our taken-for-granted assumptions, so that we can become receptive to alternative ways of reasoning and behaving.³⁷⁴

Reflection corresponds to singleloop learning, “which involves problem solving, identifying, and correcting errors.” Critical reflection is equivalent to double-loop learning involving deeper critical thinking about behavior, “questioning assumptions, values, and espoused theories, as well as disconfirming, inventing, producing, and evaluating new theories in action.” In short, reflection involves critiquing assumptions on the content or process of “problem solving,” whereas critical reflection involves the critique of presuppositions pertaining to “problem posing.” Thus, critical reflection represents a higher level of reflective thinking that enables us to transform our meaning framework.³⁷⁵

This is an important competency for CI, for critical reflection can lead to transformative learning, “which refers to the process of effecting change in a frame of reference or in the very structures of assumptions through which we understand our

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid., 50.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 51.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 51-52.

experiences.” This kind of critical reflection allows us to question our underlying beliefs, values, and ways of interacting, and encourages an “other orientation” which keeps us open to possibilities of new ways of being and acting. Contextually intelligent individuals tend to critically reflect on preconceived assumptions, they are aware of whether certain beliefs and routines have become obsolete in the new context.³⁷⁶

In interactions between pioneer and inherited cohorts it was obvious that critical reflection was rare in the latter. Reflection was mostly focused on pressing problems and solutions, within the boundaries of a well-defined mental model. Deeper questions regarding frames of reference, structures, fundamental assumptions, values, and ways of interacting, were largely unexamined. Inherited church leaders had accepted the legitimating narrative of the Eurotribal denomination, with its underlying assumptions as valid. Pioneers in most cases did not. They asked, “troublesome questions.”³⁷⁷

Matsuo summarizes research regarding goal orientation, which refers to one’s dispositional or situational goal preferences in achievement situations. Goals can be classified by primarily two categories: performance goals and learning goals. Performance goals are concerned with gaining favorable judgments of one’s competence. Learning goals are concerned with increasing one’s competence. Organizationally, goal orientation plays an important role in a variety of human resource decisions. Learning goals have positive impacts on employee creativity, motivation to learn, learning from failure, skill acquisition, the intrinsic motivation to improve skills, self-regulation, and metacognitive activity including planning, monitoring, and revising goal appropriate

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 52.

³⁷⁷ Keith, 57.

behavior. Thus motivation to learn and metacognitive or higher-order cognitive activities such as reflecting on our behaviors or assumptions are also activated by learning goals.³⁷⁸

It's informative for the ecclesial realm that learning goals are not included in vitality metrics. Vitality metrics are oriented towards performance goals. Matsuo shows that learning goals are associated with adaptive response patterns and are characterized by "challenge seeking, persistence, and the acquisition of new knowledge, whereas performance goals involve maladaptive response patterns in which challenges are avoided." So individuals holding a learning goal perceive challenging tasks as learning opportunities, whereas individuals holding a performance goal perceive challenging tasks as "inherently risky because they fear that they might fail and reveal their inadequate abilities to others."³⁷⁹

While learning can take place in the pursuit of performance goals, denominational metrics themselves are not oriented towards creating a learning organization. For instance, average worship attendance, income verse expense, professions of faith, and apportionments paid are all performance goals. Churches are often focused on achieving these numerical targets. Little place for critical reflection is created. However, high-performance goals do not reduce the general positive effect of high-learning goals when paired. Performance goals coupled with opportunities for critical reflection produced unlearning.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ Matsuo, 52.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 53.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

Vitality metrics coupled with critical reflection could lead to transformational learning. Asking questions geared toward challenging assumptions can spark unlearning. For instance, do these goals measure vitality actually? If we are not growing in these areas, why not? What can we learn? What is vitality for us at a local level?

Matsuo suggests that organizations need to enhance individual unlearning by providing employees with opportunities to critically reflect on their assumptions and practices by linking their goals to reflective activities. This could transform firms into learning organizations engaged in double-loop learning and the exploration of new solutions. “Team-learning orientation” enhanced individual learning orientation. Establishing learning-related goals for the team, such as “developing problem solving capabilities” or “generating innovative ideas,” can lead teams to critical reflection.³⁸¹ So unlearning happens best in a team dynamic.

These results have obvious implications for local churches. When mental models become rigid and faulty, unlearning is a critical competency. However, as this research shows, unlearning which results from critical reflections must be coupled with new learnings. Thus, the CIF framework is not step by step linear process, rather each move is inextricably linked with the previous and forthcoming move. Unlearning accompanies immersion.

Immersion

The immersion move in the CIF is grounded in Jesus’ own incarnation, following the self-emptying (Phil 2:7b-8). Thus, Jesus immerses himself fully in a human context: “the word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14), and “Jesus OF Nazareth” (Matt

³⁸¹ Ibid., 63.

21:11). Immersion requires a posture of vulnerability. Jesus becomes dependent on his human parents and community. Jesus instructs his disciples to adopt this same kind of immersive approach in Luke 10:1-9. The disciples are to immerse themselves in local contexts, travel light, and depend on the “persons of peace” who welcome and provide for them.

Christine Stache offers insight on the value of immersion in the emerging post-Christendom scenario in which the church no longer enjoys a privileged position in Western society. She describes the difference between open and closed systems. Closed systems exist in particular contexts, but the systems operations do not depend on those contexts. The environments are not taken into consideration when the system operates. Staches reflects on Christendom ideal “a church was a church, regardless of where it was. It looked like a church, acted like a church and could be airlifted to any place around the globe and not change.” In comparison, an open system not only takes its context into consideration, but depends on its environment for input and resources. Therefore, an open system exists for the sake of that context.³⁸²

Open system, contextual forms of church will come in many different colors, shapes, and sizes. Stache defines the pastoral practice of “Immersion in Context” as “showing awareness of the context through listening to, dialogue with, and involvement in the local community.” Adopters of this approach are to show competency in the ability to “interpret texts and contexts with insight.”³⁸³

³⁸² Kristine Stache, “Practice of Immersion in the Context,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 38, no. 5 (2011): 363-364.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 364.

Local churches, particularly those that exist in the same location for many years can become a closed system. The context changes, but the church does not. The church continues to function under the assumptions of a previous societal form, while those assumptions have become largely invalid. Inherited church persons have thinking, and skill sets geared primarily towards a “closed system.” However, local churches that employ the “immersion in context” approach, can adapt and break the closed loop.³⁸⁴

The value of immersive learning has a wide history in multiple fields and is currently a significant focus in the business realm.³⁸⁵ It is a central practice in the development of cultural intelligence as well. Being embedded in an unfamiliar setting precipitates a form of active learning about the new culture.³⁸⁶ This is a kind of transformative learning that does not typically occur by simply studying data about a culture, but through learning a culture from the inside. McDowell, Goessling, and Melendez, provide a comprehensive study on transformative learning through international immersion with cohorts of graduate students who completed one of two international courses facilitated by family therapy faculty in a U.S. master’s-level counseling psychology department.³⁸⁷

From their research they report that all participants reported an increase in social awareness, including changes in worldviews that incorporated the challenging of cultural

³⁸⁴ Beck, *Deep Roots, Wild Branches*, 24.

³⁸⁵ Jeanne Liedtka, “Why Design Thinking Works,” *Harvard Business Review*, accessed August 17, 2019, <https://hbr.org/2018/09/why-design-thinking-works>.

³⁸⁶ Thomas and Inkson, 24.

³⁸⁷ Teresa McDowell, Kristen Goessling, and Tatiana Melendez, “Transformative Learning through International Immersion: Building Multicultural Competence in Family Therapy and Counseling,” *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy* 38, no. 2 (2012): 365.

pre-misconceptions. For example, there was increased awareness of societal structures: participants observed, analyzed, and reflected on host cultural norms and societal systems of privilege and power relative to social locations such as gender, class, race, sexual orientation, and religion. Additionally, increased global awareness, that is, an increase in awareness of U.S. global position and privilege, power, dominance, and “superiority” at a global level was evidenced.³⁸⁸ Obvious correlations can be made here with the previous treatment of “unlearning,” the participants experienced unlearning through critical reflection in the immersion process.

For many local churches, the community outside our facility doors is the “foreign” context in which we need to be immersed. It is a cross-cultural, and cross-contextual immersion for churches operating in the closed system way. One way to understand this dynamic and the change that’s worked out in persons through the immersion experience can be informed by the work of Pierre Bourdieu. I mentioned earlier the concept of *habitus* which consists, in part, of “bodily beliefs that are passions and drives.”³⁸⁹ More explicitly, habitus is a system of dispositions, “a potentiality, a desire to be, which in certain ways seeks to create the conditions of its fulfilment guided by one’s sympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions, and tastes and distastes.”³⁹⁰

While habitus describes *agency*, it is linked with the concepts of “field” and “capital” which describe *structure*. Bourdieu writes,

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 368-369.

³⁸⁹ Reay, “Habitus and the Psychosocial,” 10.

³⁹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 150.

The social field can be described as a multi-dimensional space of positions such that every actual position can be defined in terms of a multi-dimensional system of co-ordinates whose values correspond to the values of the different pertinent variables. Thus, agents are distributed within it, in the first dimension, according to the overall volume of the capital they possess and, in the second dimension, according to the composition of their capital i.e., according to the relative weight of the different kinds of assets within their total assets.³⁹¹

So, Bourdieu's *field* is a "zone of relationality," or a setting in which agents and their social positions are located, a "field of forces," or of mathematical relations among objects. The position of each particular agent in the field is a result of interaction between the specific rules of the field, which in some way defines the behavioral possibilities of the entities, and perhaps defines the entities themselves. These concepts allow us to make links between "individuals' inner emotional worlds and external social and structural processes." The habitus "both animates the social in the psychosocial and allows us to better understand how the psyche is formed in and through the social." The field is a relational matrix, where the habitus and capital of agents interact.³⁹²

According to Bourdieu, *capital* refers to the "distribution of the powers" and "logic of hierarchies" that take on various forms in the field, such as social, symbolic, economic, and cultural.³⁹³ Diane Reay's research has focused on broader issues of the relationship between the self and society, and she has numerous publications examining the work of Bourdieu. According to Reay, Bourdieu consistently argued that the "confrontation between the habitus and the field is always marked by affectivity, by

³⁹¹ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups" *Theory and Society* 14, no. 6 (November 1985): 724.

³⁹² Reay, "It's All Becoming a Habitus," 432.

³⁹³ Bourdieu, "The Social Space," 724.

affective transactions between habitus and the field.”³⁹⁴ In her research, she shows that dispositions are formed and reformed through inhabiting these social spaces.³⁹⁵

As inhabiting different fields shapes these dispositions, access to, and immersion in, new fields can reshape them. For example, a wealthy person who is forced into experiencing homelessness for a period can experience a transformation of dispositions. A person with no previous criminal record who is incarcerated for a period becomes a career criminal through immersion in a field of criminality. Yet these transformations are often painful and difficult, as suffering can often accompany “a destabilized habitus, torn by contradictions and internal divisions.”³⁹⁶ Bourdieu describes the “comfortable ease” of habitus in “familiar fields.” Where persons are like “fish in water,” they swim freely in the ecosystem without having to think about how to swim. Bourdieu also speaks of a “divided habitus” and an internal conflict, when we are caught between two very different but equally compelling fields.³⁹⁷

When these fields overlap, we can notice obvious contradictions. We cannot take for granted how we swim in the new field. We are forced to think carefully about our environment and how we will move within it. The internal conflict can lead to a new set of dispositions. I refer to this as “minding the gaps.” Local church people who inhabit a well-defined social space of various fields for a significant period (the inherited ecclesial ecosystem), form a well-defined habitus. The old metaphor of the church as a fishbowl

³⁹⁴ Reay, “Habitus and the Psychosocial,” 12.

³⁹⁵ Reay, “Habitus and the Psychosocial,” 12.

³⁹⁶ Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 160.

³⁹⁷ Bourdieu, in L. Wacquant, “Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociological Theory* 7 (1989): 43.

has some validity. Immersion in a new context can literally be a kind of “fish out of water” experience. Habitus can be reshaped through immersion in new social fields, it is “highly adaptive and able to develop ‘a feel for the game’ in new fields,” and yet is also “liable to repression, sublimation and defensive responses as a result of pressures within these fields.”³⁹⁸

Historically followers of Jesus have possessed a certain distinguishable habitus. In fact, Alan Kreider argues that through catechesis and worship, the primitive church was able to transform the habitus of those who were candidates for membership. This became a form of *corporal nonconformity* an embodied way of life in community markedly different from the habitus of Roman society.³⁹⁹ How did this small renegade movement, with no buildings, no professional clergy, no committee meetings, between the time of Jesus’ death on the cross in the 30’s and Constantine in the 300’s, grew numerically across vast geographical distances?

Kreider offers an extended analysis of what he terms “the improbable growth” of the early church in those days. He argues convincingly that one of the most pronounced characteristics of that growth was the habitus of those early Christians, their embodied knowledge, and reflexive, bodily behavior, rooted in predispositions and expressed through practices. How they lived—their habitus—this was their primary *program* of evangelism.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸ Reay, “Habitus and the Psychosocial,” 20.

³⁹⁹ Kreider, 41.

⁴⁰⁰ Kreider, 2, 134.

More specifically, it was how Christians lived among outsiders. This was a key mark of early Christian habitus, and the primary mode of their missional evangelism. Christians immersed themselves among the various capitals and fields of Roman society. Early Christian worship was a mysterious closed gathering of the already catechized. Kreider writes, “It was not Christian worship that attracted outsiders; it was Christians who attracted them, and outsiders found the Christians attractive because of their Christian habitus, which catechesis and worship had formed.”⁴⁰¹

This approach is almost reversed in the U.S. church. We attempt to attract outsiders to a building where they can experience a worship service, rather than living out a distinct Christian habitus in our daily lives. Further, I have noticed a troubling tendency among UMC congregations of retreat and isolation. We have disengaged from the social fields of our contexts. From a sample of 125 white middle-class households in London, Diane Reay notes a tendency among parents who “have retreated from involvement in the public realm and sought refuge in an intensified individualism.”⁴⁰² Reay sees this as strong signs of Bourdieu’s “divided habitus” arising from tensions generated through the contradictory interplay of cooperation and competition, consumerism and welfarism, the “white middle-class subject torn between an acquisitive self-interested self and a more altruistic, public-spirited self.”⁴⁰³

This is the same trend I have observed in many of our FLUMC congregations as well. Yet, Christians who operate in a self-contained, closed system, do not reflect the

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 135.

⁴⁰² Reay, “Habitus and the Psychosocial,” 15.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 16.

habitus of Jesus or the early church, who interacted freely with people across social fields in incarnational ways. Unlearning and immersion are marks of a truly Christian habitus. Our values and beliefs, passions and drives, sympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions are embodied in very real zones of relationality (i.e. the larger communal ecosystems in which we are situated) with outsiders who are not-yet-Christians. Worship and apprenticeship in the Christian community form us for a certain habitus to be lived out in the world. This requires our immersion in the context—as a form of corporeal nonconformity.

The value of immersion is also demonstrated in design thinking. Jeanne Liedtka's article "Why Design Thinking Works" in the Harvard Business Review is helpful here. She describes the lack of understanding organizations often have regarding the way human biases (for example, rootedness in the status quo) or attachments to specific behavioral norms ("That's how we do things here") often block the exercise of imagination and innovation. She describes design thinking as a "social technology," a blend of tools and insight applied to a work process. Not only does design thinking help teams release innovation, it also "reshapes the experiences of the *innovators themselves* in profound ways."⁴⁰⁴

Liedtka explains how corporations typically rely on traditional customer research that has been collected through an impersonal exercise. Experts apply preexisting theories about customer preferences, reviewing feedback from focus groups, surveys, and data on current behavior. They then draw inferences about customer needs. The problems with this approach are how it grounds people in the already articulated needs that the data

⁴⁰⁴ Liedtka, "Why Design Thinking Works."

reflects, and the data is viewed through the lens of their own biases. These methods do not uncover “the needs people have *not* expressed.” Design thinking takes a different approach . . . immersion. This enables identification of hidden needs by having the innovator live the customer’s experience. Learning takes place deeply immersed within the perspective of the customer, co-creating with stakeholders, then designing and executing experiments.⁴⁰⁵

Immersion in user experiences can help us come to fresh and deeper insights about our community. In the contextual intelligence framework, coming back to the Issacharians, the first stage is reading the signs of the context, or “understanding of the times.” Coming back to the work of T.K. Das, we can make the connection here with “perceptions and evaluation of the strategy environment” which involves scanning the context, and immersing ourselves in the target environment. Further, “to know what Israel ought to do” is about “strategy delineation and strategy implementation.” Perceiving changes on the horizon, deciding our target environments, and exploring a strategy that has “real-life” application.⁴⁰⁶

Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky write, “The single most important skill and most undervalued capacity for exercising adaptive leadership is diagnosis.”⁴⁰⁷ In many cases in the local church we have made false assumptions about our environment. In some “closed system” cases, we have not thought about the environment at all. The “environment” which we are acting upon is solely the local congregation. Most of our thinking and

⁴⁰⁵ Liedtka, “Why Design Thinking Works.”

⁴⁰⁶ Das, 19-24.

⁴⁰⁷ Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Martin Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2009), 7.

planning is dedicated to the internal reality of the church, without considering the larger questions of interaction and shaping the environment. How do we properly “diagnose” our context, or “read the signs,” *and* “know what to do.” This requires immersion.

Let’s consider the strategy making process. Das highlights four essential stages:

Stage 1. Perceptions of the strategy environment: This perceptual stage is “a highly individualistic one, so that there is considerable scope for differences among the strategy makers as to the ‘correct’ interpretation of environmental characteristics.” Here Das notes the tendency to lose sight of how individual actors’ perceptions are shaped by their own “personal universes and world pictures.” An individual’s reaction to an environment may or may not have solidarity with real stimuli and constraints. Thus, how responses are formulated depend on the way the environment is perceived. These individual strategic decision makers have “bounded rationality, a restricted field of vision, perceives a situation on a selective basis, and interprets selected bits of information through a filter.” However limiting, it is the “interpretations” of these actors that leads to organizational responses.⁴⁰⁸

Stage 2. Evaluation of Strategic Environment: Primarily this involves a subjective evaluation of the environment, and the selection of a specific “domain” in which the organization will operate. Das lists four stages of “environmental scanning” 1. Undirected viewing: general exposure to information with no specific purpose in mind and general unawareness as to what issues might be raised. 2. Conditioned viewing: directed exposure, not involving active search, to a more or less identified type of area of information, but the viewer is sensitive to specific kinds of data and prepared to assess

⁴⁰⁸ Das, 19-24.

their significance. 3. Informal search: relatively limited and unstructured effort to obtain specific information for specific purposes. 4. Formal search: deliberate effort, usually following a pre-established plan, procedure or methodology, to secure specific information relating to specific issues.⁴⁰⁹

The chosen domain refers to the slice or the *task environment* of the organization, which is composed of those elements which are potentially relevant to goal setting and attainment of the organization. Das discusses various kinds of domains and emphasizes the cruciality of domain selection. The desired strategic actions are dependent on acquiring adequate resources within the domain that is chosen.⁴¹⁰

Stage 3. Strategic Delineation: This is the evaluation of the environment in preparation for a strategic plan, and the organizations efforts to deal with the environment. Organizations are rarely passive agents absorbing environmental pressures. Strategic planning is an organization's attempt to manipulate and influence the environment for the benefit of the organization. Environments exists in a continuous cycle of change, different environments to different degrees than others. Navigating these changes requires a future orientation. This is what a strategy is about, making judgments about that change, and being prepared for it. Thus, *strategy*, can be defined as long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of course of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 25-26.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 26.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 27.

Stage 4. Strategy Implementation: Implementation has two principal aspects, first, the plans have to be feasible and applicable to a real-life situation, the other is acceptance and understanding by the strategy makers. Multiple complications can go wrong in the implementation phase, such as errors on behalf of the implementers, an inability to favorably fashion the task environment, and unforeseen changes. However, there are many examples of organizations' strategic plans failing to yield expected results because incorrect assumptions were made about organizational behavior while carrying out the relative investigation. Das states there are "umpteen examples in business and industry" where strategic plans failed not because of technical fault or inadequacy, but because of decisions made based on false assumptions.⁴¹²

Das argues that "the factor which is crucial in understanding the strategy making process is the role of perceptions. The concept of perceived environmental uncertainty, especially, is central to the entire process, as it affects the initial perception of environmental characteristics by strategy makers."⁴¹³ Das summarizes, "strategy making may be defined as the behavior of the organization toward the environment . . . planned strategic actions are intrinsically the creatures of environmental perceptions of the strategy maker." Or we could also accurately say, "'perceptions are the strategy' and 'perceptions are the plan.'"⁴¹⁴

Leonard Sweet and I have referenced a way of observing one's context as "tracking."⁴¹⁵ For example, expert trackers learn to follow a series of clues in the pursuit

⁴¹² Ibid., 30.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 31.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁴¹⁵ Sweet and Beck, 57.

of other living things. One may notice a track, footprint, scent, or a broken branch in an underbrush path. Following the clues can allow us to observe and integrate our experience as we follow what we are tracking. In the case of local churches, we are always following the Holy Spirit, who is already at work in the context ahead of us.

Tracking requires a different kind of seeing. How we see is important. Jesus said, “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!” (Mat 22-23). Tracking requires having “soft eyes”—another core competency of CI. This is a skill possessed by horse-back riders, athletes, learners, and race car drivers to name a few. Having soft eyes is often contrasted with hard eyes. Hard eyes are fixed and firm. We assume we already know this context. We have a predetermined outcome in our crosshairs. We are locked in on the tree, while blind to the forest. Hard eyes are good for focused tasks that require careful analysis of a single phenomenon. In the Western framework we are trained to see the world through hard eyes. To analyze, deconstruct, critique, reduce to the smallest parts, then reassemble.

Having soft eyes is about taking the wide view, going peripheral, trying to take in the whole scene. CI requires us to “widen the lens” and step back and look at the broad picture.⁴¹⁶

This kind of seeing cannot happen from outside of a context looking in. It comes from within. Louis Pasteur, arguably one of the greatest innovators in history, with his “On-Site Laboratory” can offer us a practical insight on immersion. In the 1870’s when

⁴¹⁶ Brown, Gould, and Foster, 59.

cattle and sheep populations began to be decimated by a strange disease that threatened the economic stability of France, Pasteur was called in to work on the problem. He had already shown how to prevent the spoiling of wine (which now bears his name *pasteurization*), and saved the silk industry by identifying the microbe that caused the decimation of French silk worms.⁴¹⁷

Pasteur had a unique method; he took his laboratory to the site of a major problem out in the field. He produced a series of major innovations in this way in the wine, dairy, silk, and chicken industries. In the case of the cows, he studied how the animals were getting sick on site, and through his discovery saved the sheep and cattle industries. One lesson here according to Denning and Dunham, “look for the dying cows.”⁴¹⁸

Pasteur offers an incredible example of CI. In local churches, looking for the dying cows is about finding the dissatisfaction. Often people will not adopt a new way of thinking or being unless they experience great dissatisfaction first. Unfortunately, folks are most receptive to change only amid a major breakdown. The benefit of this process is twofold. It helps people acknowledge their dissatisfaction and it demonstrates the value of adopting the new way.

Looking for the dying cows is referred to as “minding the gaps” in the CIF.

Minding the Gaps

Minding the gaps is connected to Jesus’ death on the cross in Philippians 2:8 “even death on a cross.” Fundamentally this move is about a willingness to die. Jesus said, “I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a

⁴¹⁷ Peter J. Denning and Robert Dunham, *The Innovator's Way: Essential Practices for Successful Innovation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), xxiii.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xxiv.

single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (Jn 12:24). Jesus’ humble journey to the cross embodies this teaching. Regarding local congregations, in many cases this is actually a form of “self death.” “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mat 16:24). Luke adds “daily” (Lk 9:23). Unless there is a death, there can be no resurrection. What does it look like for local congregations to die, to carry the cross daily, to mind the gaps, and to continue the reconciling work of Christ in the earth?

For the church, “gaps” refer to the fragmentation in our relationship with God and others. Relationally speaking, there are “gaps” in our souls. A gap which God has been seeking to heal since first calling out “where are you?” in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:9). The cross fills the gap. Jesus builds a bridge.

The “ministry of reconciliation,” this work of bridging gaps, has been passed onto the church . . . indeed it is our primary calling (2 Cor 5:18). Through unlearning and immersion in our context, we practice “mindfulness” in a soft-eyed “mind of Christ” kind of way. Thomas and Inkson identify “cultural intelligence” as a combination of knowledge, mindfulness, and cross-cultural skills. They speak of the danger of going into “cultural cruise control” in which we run our lives on the basis of built-in assumptions. In order to develop cultural intelligence, they suggest breaking out of this cruise control and developing an alternative state of mind called “mindfulness.”⁴¹⁹ They define mindfulness as, “actively *paying attention* to the present situation and its context. It means discarding

⁴¹⁹ Thomas and Inkson, 41-42.

our mental programming. It does not mean abandoning who we are but rather using attention to become aware of difference and to think differently.”⁴²⁰

For followers of Jesus, our mindfulness includes noticing the “gaps” in our context. Gaps between truth and falsity, between racism and unity, between hunger and nutrition, between isolation and community, between sickness and health, between addiction and recovery, between consumerism and contentment, between commoditization and sharing, between extraction and stewardship, between violence and peace, between worldly empires and the in-breaking Kingdom of God. Jesus does not send the disciples out and say simply be mindful of your contexts. He says, “Watch, pay attention, be mindful” then say “‘Peace to this house!’ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person ... cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” Lk 10: 5-9.

Minding the gaps involves finding the sore spots in our community. What about your community pricks your soul? Roland Barthes popularized the concepts of the *Punctum* and *Studium* (Latin in origin) in *Camera Lucia*. Barthes describes the *studium* as the kind of education (civility, politeness) that allows discovery of the operator. . . it is an “average effect” or “application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general enthusiastic commitment, or course, but without special acuity.”⁴²¹ The *studium*, for example, is the element that creates interest in a photographic image, but is non-remarkable, drawing a “polite interest,” the “very wide field of unconcerned desire, or

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 49.

⁴²¹ Roland Barthes and Geoff Dyer, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 26.

various interest, of inconsequential taste.”⁴²² Barthes speaks of the “grace of the punctum” in a photograph. The accidental thing that “pricks you” and creates an unintended emotional response. This is the little piercing detail that changes the whole reading of the photograph, a metonymic power of expansion.⁴²³ In the Global Information Age, we are wired to see, analyze, and communicate in *studium*. Contextual intelligence is about seeing the *punctum*, the details that prick the soul, causing us to traverse deeper into the story of our context, even to unravel emotionally.

I want to refocus this “minding the gaps” in the specificity of decline and revitalization. The greatest gap of all is the one that exists between congregations and the larger contextual ecosystems in which they are situated. When a congregation evolves into a *closed system*, decline is inevitable. The McDonaldized Christendom idea of planting a kind of franchised version of the church in any neighborhood and it being ready for business, is a bankrupt mental model. The relentless programmatic modification of congregations, making internal adjustments, (better preaching, better follow up, better programs, better music) in the hopes that people will start packing the pews again is an invalid assumption. There is a fundamental lack of relational scaffolding . . . a gap to be minded.

These assertions are born from observations in the North Central District sample and the creation of the Generative Pioneer Leadership Academy. Often in conversation with the leaders of these declining churches, there is a significant lack of awareness of

⁴²² Ibid., 27.

⁴²³ Ibid., 42-45.

their context, low missional engagement with the larger community, and a profoundly internal orientation—a closed system—what I have termed a *toxic loop*.⁴²⁴

Conversely, the pioneers we worked with had an extensive awareness of context, high missional engagement, and profoundly external orientations. They could easily talk about their communities, what was happening there, local trends, how they were engaging those outside their local church compounds (if they had those), and relationships they had formed. They spoke candidly about “not knowing,” “failing frequently,” and having to “unlearn” old assumptions regularly. There was a high level of willingness to experiment. This was something largely absent in the non-pioneer cohorts. The pioneers possessed an awareness of, and sensitivity to, a context, and a tacit knowledge on how to capitalize on change. They literally embodied Sternberg’s description of *contextual intelligence*, “an individual’s ability to adapt to the environment, solving problems in specific situations.”⁴²⁵

Perhaps the greater challenge regarding minding the gaps is to “know what to do” (1Chr. 12:32). Here are some significant trends I’ve noted regarding this disconnect in the NCD sample: (1) church leaders see the missional movement as another passing fad, “if we just keep doing what we’re doing, things will go back to normal”; (2) churches declining in growing areas report being “too busy” to add another activity; (3) pastors assume their laity are incompetent to plant contextual churches; (4) Churches do not see the benefits of this activity in revitalizing their inherited congregations, “how will this

⁴²⁴ Beck, *Deep Roots, Wild Branches*, 59.

⁴²⁵ Sternberg, “Toward a Triarchic Theory,” 142.

grow our Sunday worship attendance?"; (5) churches assume a strong connection with their community that is often strained or illusory.

Local churches are seemingly stuck in faulty legitimating narratives that blind them to changing contextual realities. The phenomenon of institutional voids is informative here, as local churches try to franchise one version of church, with no contextual sensitivity.⁴²⁶ The “voids” describe the lack of awareness, the absence of scaffolding that can connect churches with their communities, and a viable framework to do so.

Khanna’s concept of *institutional voids* is foundational to his argument for the cultivation of contextual intelligence. Khanna notes that corporate strategies “may not easily transfer across geographies, the same ‘industry’ is rarely structured similarly across disparate geographies, and much, if not the vast majority of, economic activity in the newly emergent world occurs outside the mesh of the formal structures that we take for granted in the countries where much research is currently conducted.”⁴²⁷

For instance, he cites the common assumption “that a cement plant is a cement plant, and the cement industry is organized just-so, no matter where.”⁴²⁸

This established wisdom is not dissimilar to that bandied about in the UMC, that a “Methodist congregation, and the denomination is organized just-so, no matter where.” This may have been true to some degree in the fading McDonaldization of the industrial

⁴²⁶ Khanna, 181.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 182.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

age, but not so in the globalized, dispersed, anti-pyramidal, post-hierarchical, network society.

Khanna's research discovered basic assumptions to be untrue, "It turns out that, in a statistical sense, knowing something about the performance of a particular industry in one country gave you virtually no confidence that you could predict its performance elsewhere."⁴²⁹

Returning to the example of the cement industry, he writes, "It is true that the technology transforming clinker to cement is the same everywhere but it is also true that the cement plant is embedded in a much broader array of contextual variables" ... "These contextual variables appear more important than the unifying effect of a common "technology"—that is, the broader context matters more."⁴³⁰

The contextual variables that Khanna references, are the "voids" that do not translate across contexts. This could include suppliers, potential buyers, specialized intermediaries in the capital markets, or *capital-accumulation voids* which allow the perpetuation of the power of incumbent buyers. These learnings can be easily applied to the *gaps* between the mainline denominational forms of church and the communities in which they are cradled. The morphology of society has changed around us, so that it literally is like we are on foreign soil. Len Sweet captured this reality almost 30 years ago when he wrote that we are always "playing away," but now, "the church no longer will be

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 183.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

playing home games to home crowds.”⁴³¹ Being that Christendom has “lost the home field advantage,” adaption to these massive shifts in contextual variations is required.

Khanna argues then that the task at hand is to develop “a framework that allows us to intelligently account for this contextual complexity, to render it analytically tractable and empirically meaningful.” He identifies this “framework” as contextual intelligence, he writes... “Until we understand better how to develop and apply contextual intelligence, failure rates for cross-border businesses will remain high, our ability to learn from experiments unfolding around the world will remain limited, and the promise of healthy growth that includes all parts of the world will remain unfulfilled.”⁴³²

What leads to the creation of these “institutional voids” Khanna references the work of Peter Senge regarding faulty mental models that powerfully condition how we analyze complex situations. He then asks, “what is an appropriate mental model for emerging markets?” First, Khanna argues, we must analyze the phrase, *emerging markets*. “Markets” refer to institutional arrangements that allow buyers and sellers to connect. “Emerging” refers to the incomplete nature of such arrangements. The various impediments to buyers and sellers coming together, the *institutional limitations*, are the *voids*.⁴³³

I have described the liminality of our time and the position “betwixt and between” two ages. In a stable market, institutions create the “rules of the game” that govern behavior. For the mainline church, we are no longer in an established “stable market” in

⁴³¹ Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality*, 195.

⁴³² Khanna, 183-184.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 185.

which we are clearly offering an unquestionably “quality product.” The safety of institutional credibility, cornering the “brand name” version of religion, and the power of the Eurotribal franchise have diminished in significance. There are other sellers, and there are other buyers. A new protest-ant “spiritual but not religious” tendency, has replaced the safety of the “membership” in a stable institution tendency. Now, people see the Christian church as one choice, among equally valid choices. The UMC is like the Wal Mart supercenter amidst a society moving towards artisan, characterized by unique, contextual, handmade craftsmanship. The massive growth of “nones and dones” is an indicator of an unprecedented shift in U.S. history. Institutional denominational iterations of the church have lost credibility, we don’t make the rules of the game anymore. We are in an emerging market, not a fixed one.

Who steps into fill these “institutional voids” in emerging markets? Khanna and others demonstrate that entrepreneurs do. They turn the “gaps” into strategic opportunities. They find new ways to connect buyers and sellers, offers new services, enhance products, and appropriate funding to finance new ventures. This is exactly what the pioneers of the GPLA are doing. They are turning the melee of the emerging societal transitions into opportunities. Some are planting “fresh expressions” of church that have no need of institutional credentialing, funding, or credibility enhancement. Some are working in between the voids as intrapreneurs, creating fresh entities in the gaps. Others are utilizing the inherited church as a base of operations, creating relational scaffolding between the church and the emerging contexts, living in two worlds at once.

Disorientation

This move is associated with Jesus' descent into the realm of the dead "obedient to the point of death" (Phil 2:8). This is the "tomb time" the fullest expression of liminality in human history, the transition from one age (age of the law) fully into another (the age of faith). The late theologian and author Alan Lewis wrote,

The second day appears to be a no-man's-land, an anonymous, counterfeit moment in the gospel story, which can boast no identity for itself, claim no meaning, and reflect only what light it can borrow from its predecessor and its sequel... Not its number in the series, but its place, bears its significance, as that day between the days which speaks solely neither of the cross nor of the resurrection, but *simultaneously* remembers the one and awaits the other, and guarantees that neither will be heard, or thought about, or lived, without the other.⁴³⁴

While we often pass right over Jesus time in the grave as a non-event, it is of paramount importance. The Scriptures, church tradition, and the creeds affirm a descent into hell.⁴³⁵ We can safely say that Jesus was busy during the darkness of the tomb, while the implications are perhaps beyond our mortal comprehension.

What is perhaps more informative for this discussion, is what the disciples are up to during this time. A cursory review of the Scriptures may respond with "not much" or at least "nothing to be proud of." They had a funeral of sorts (Jn 19: 38-41). They rested (Lk 23:56). They waited (Jn 20:2). They hid out (Jn 20:19). Some doubted (Jn 20:25). Some lamented (Jn 20:11). They talked, they processed, they prayed—they formed relationships while they waited, and they wrestled with the implications of what had

⁴³⁴ Alan Lewis, 2-4.

⁴³⁵ Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I H. Marshall, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 309-312.

happened (Lk 24:36). In actuality this is a huge amount of very important activity. In fact, these are essential competencies of contextually intelligent persons.

In regard to the challenges of innovation Liedtka writes,

Defining problems in obvious, conventional ways, not surprisingly, often leads to obvious, conventional solutions. *Asking a more interesting question* can help teams discover more-original ideas. The risk is that some teams may get indefinitely hung up exploring a problem, while action-oriented managers may be too impatient to take the time to figure out what question they should be asking.⁴³⁶

She highlights two essential points regarding contextual intelligence: asking the right questions and timing. In the “tomb time” for instance, the disciples were asking lots of questions. Was Jesus really the one? What does this mean? Should we go home and go fishing? Can a person cursed and executed on the cross really be the messiah? Have we been duped? Are we going to be executed now too? Also, timing was essential to their activity. In John’s narrative we often emphasize the cowardice of the disciples, hiding out with the “doors locked for fear of the Jews” (Jn 20:19). Yet in another sense, they were doing the only thing they could do. Had they rushed out headlong into the streets of Jerusalem, considering the powder keg it was already, they likely would have met a quick fate.

In the in-betweenness of liminality, one experiences disorientation. It is the ambiguous reality of no longer being what you were, but also not yet what you are becoming. Liminality can be opportunity to embrace this disorientation. To live in the mystery of transition. We can see clearly the past, the events that brought us to this place. From this perspective we can see the good and bad of that previous scenario. However,

⁴³⁶ Liedtka, “Why Design Thinking Works.”

our orientation is towards the future. As we journey through the space between, we are oriented towards what's coming, and we can only imagine the implications.

Contextual Intelligence requires three orientations of time: hindsight, insight, foresight.

- (1) Hindsight: studying times past to chart a path for the future.
- (2) Insight: paying attention in the now, being in-time and present.
- (3) Foresight: accessing the future through imagination and scenario thinking.⁴³⁷

Tomb-time involves consciously pausing to diagnosis our context through these three lenses. Furthermore, we are in a place of powerlessness. We are waiting for God to do what only God can do. Polanyi speaks of how unfinished tasks continue to preoccupy us unconsciously, and how after a period of quiescence a solution can seemingly come to us. He writes,

The fact that our intellectual strivings make effective progress during a period of incubation without any effort on our part is in line with the latent character of all knowledge ... For each step—whether spontaneous or contrived—that brings us nearer to the solution, increases our premonition of the solutions proximity and brings us a more concentrated effort to bear on a reduced logical gap.⁴³⁸

When faced with a challenge, a period of incubation, in which we rest from the effort of discovering a solution, helps us move through the gap. This dormancy, and the lack of purposeful intellectual energy, is a necessary stage in the process of discovery. It highlights the value of “tomb time.”

Expert entrepreneurs understand the importance of timing. Opportunities have a shelf life—move too quickly and you squander the potential, move too slowly and you

⁴³⁷ Kutz refers to these three orientations as “3D thinking” Kutz, *Contextual Intelligence*, 68.

⁴³⁸ Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 129.

miss the window. While in some sense, this is primarily a tacit form of knowledge, we can say with surety that pioneers' tendency is to move too quickly, and churches move too slowly. Entrepreneurs also understand that solutions are much better when they "incorporate *user-driven criteria*." Liedtka notes that market research can help companies understand those criteria, but "the hurdle here is that it's hard for customers to know they want something that doesn't yet exist."⁴³⁹

Contextually intelligent leaders can expose false assumptions through a process of disorientation. The tomb time represents dissatisfaction, the status quo is no longer clear. Waiting in the place of powerlessness is uncomfortable. Many times, churches rush headlong "fixing the problems" of the community with the simple appropriate application of our positional power. In the tomb, we learn the solutions are actually in the community already. It's not about swooping in and doing ministry to people, it's about living in the mystery with people.

This will ultimately move the church into a state of what Hirsch describes as *Chaordic Ecclesiology*. This requires harnessing the power of disruption. The process of moving through the framework often results in this *chaordic* state, or the edge of chaos. Chaordic is a word coined by Dee Hock combining chaos and order. This is the kind of organization that can balance core principles at the center (order), while sustaining experimentation, creativity, and innovation on the edge (chaos).⁴⁴⁰

Drawing from Moynagh's work, we can see that ecclesial innovation begins with a group of people experiencing dissatisfaction who are willing to do some exploration

⁴³⁹ Liedtka, "Why Design Thinking Works."

⁴⁴⁰ Alan Hirsch, Tim Catchim, and Mike Breen, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 218.

and sense-making at the site of the emerging decline scenario. There they can experiment as they start to explore together improvisationally the new possibilities the Spirit is breathing forth. The inherited congregation serves as a “base of operations,” from which we can launch a series of experiments in the larger communal ecosystem. From this experimentation, new ideas and developments arise that have the potential to spread throughout the entire system, leading a community to the edge of chaos, and potentially to a new state of self-organization.⁴⁴¹

In the innovation framework, *edge of chaos* refers to the sweet spot between enough openness to release change, and enough structure to sustain order. Overly stable systems suffocate innovation, conversely too much rapid change destroys systems. Theologically, this is about the liminal space between tomb and resurrection, between creation and new creation. This requires openness to the Spirit’s bringing forth a new future, while balancing this with the Spirit’s activity in the past.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴¹ Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 34.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

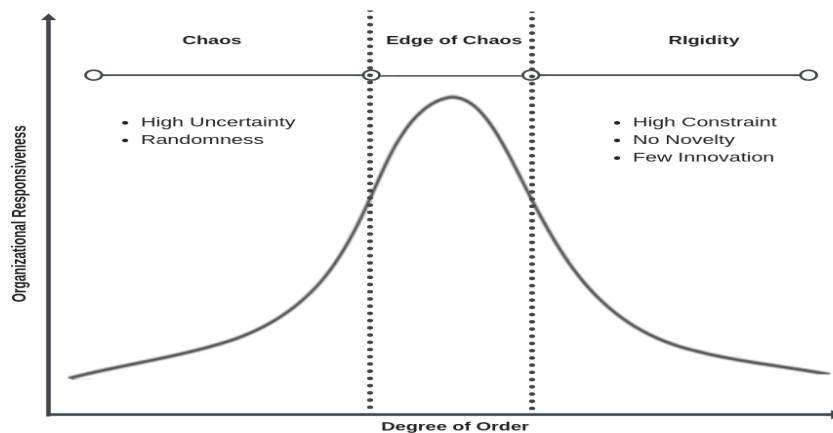


Figure 16. *Edge of Chaos*

The community, through a series of conversations, receives feedback that can catalyze change in new directions. They start to see value in the effects of these “experiments,” how they could open the potential of a new future. In complexity thinking, we seek to understand this potential change with the term *attractor*.

An attractor refers to a system’s direction of travel, or the specific subset of states that a social system may take, which corresponds to its normal behavior towards which it will naturally gravitate. Social systems are organized around these attractors: ideas and practices that have gained support. Churches have a degree of *path dependency*, this refers to the past of an organization directing its future possibilities, being confined to a certain region of possibility. The transformation of a system occurs when a “strange attractor” gathers enough support to successfully challenge the existing pattern of an organization. New attractors create destabilization in the system, and a kind of tug of war can occur between old and new, opening a multitude of possible paths within that defined region.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 24.

At the simplest level, disorientation refers to the realization that the domain in which we are operating has changed in significant ways. Disorientation precipitates the need for adaptation.

A way to approach understanding this is through the phenomenon of wicked vs. kind learning environments. In the institutional voids the rules change. Most clergy education is preparation for a kind learning environment. In that, we assume clergy are being deployed to a fairly uniform experience, like a chess game. We know the board; we know how the pieces move. For instance, UMC elders are ordained to preach and teach, administer the sacraments, order the life of the church, and serve the congregants and community. These essential roles can be expressed in a multitude of environments in an endless array of contextual variations. Yet those roles also carry a set of Christendom assumptions—for one, that there will be congregants to provide these services for.

Increasingly clergy are deployed to settings where the number of congregants are dwindling. The Western educational paradigm is largely deficient in cultivating an understanding of contextual and cultural variation. Every church is a unique context, and a degree of adaptation will always be necessary. However, clergy encounter “wicked problems” in “wicked domains” in a post-Christendom culture, where acquired learning does not have a linear progression to assumed predictions. Experience does not always lead to expertise. It depends to a large degree on the “domain” in question.

Robin Hogarth et al. describes *wicked learning environments* as, “situations in which feedback in the form of outcomes of actions or observations is poor, misleading, or even missing.” Contrasting this with *kind learning environments*, in which “feedback

links outcomes directly to the appropriate actions or judgments and is both accurate and plentiful.”⁴⁴⁴

Inference involves reaching a conclusion on the basis of evidence. Yet inference must take place in an actual environment. At the simplest level the process involves two settings: (1) information is acquired (learning), (2) information is applied (predictions or choices). However, the environment will shape the outcomes. Kind learning environments “involve close matches between the informational elements in the two settings and are a necessary condition for accurate inferences,” while wicked learning environments involve “mismatches.”⁴⁴⁵ This conceptual framework allows us to identify sources of inferential errors. It can also provide a means to target corrective procedures and maximize behavior. In other words, context matters trumps training.

While Hogarth et al’s study is primarily concerned with pinpointing the sources of errors, for instance between task structure and/or person, we can make some obvious correlations here with church ecosystems. In kind learning environments, patterns repeat consistently, and feedback is accurate and rapid. (Thus, deliberative practice, instinctive pattern recognition, and narrow, repetitive experiences are needed for mastery.) In contrast, wicked learning environments may not include repetitive patterns, rules of the game are unclear, status quo changes, and feedback is often delayed, inaccurate, or both. (Thus, a range of skills, applying knowledge from one pursuit creatively to another, adaptation, and outside experience, are needed for mastery.)⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁴ Hogarth, Lejarraga, and Soyer, 379.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Epstein, 20-21.

For people trained in and for kind learning environments, being deployed to wicked learning environments is like moving from life in the jungle, to now learning to survive in a desert. Or being trained as a classical musician, then being launched into outer space to be an astronaut. It requires significant adaptation, and the ability to learn the new environment. Contextual adaptation requires applying relevant knowledge and jettisoning irrelevant knowledge. This reality is even more pronounced due to the level of societal change in the U.S. In this sense, every church is a wicked learning environment.

Further, a person taking actions based on false inferences can *create* a wicked learning environment. For example, a clergy person who has a track record of serving declining congregations uses the same old methods at a new church, and once again decline results. A kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. Another clergy person with a history of serving growing congregations employs the same tried and true methods, and this congregation declines. Their actions are guided by a range of irrelevant data from past experiences, and they fail to understand the variations of the new environment.

A group of church leaders in a declining congregation receive a new pastor. They are convinced their decline is because of the last three pastors' ineffectiveness. They enculturate the new pastor into their program, but the decline continues. Again, they are triggering the mismatch by forming their predictions on previous data that is no longer valid. They are creating a wicked environment by basing inferences and actions on data that is neither reliable nor valid.

Contexts consistently change; understanding a context is less like a clock and more like observing cloud formations: "Cultures are more like clouds than clocks."⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁷ Robert W. Service, "Leadership and Innovation Across Cultures: The CIQ—Contextual Intelligence Quotient," *Southern Business Review* 37, no. 1 (2012): 25.

Just when we have an accurate picture of the cloud, the environmental variables create changes. The formations are always responding to the greater conditions of moisture, atmospheric pressure, and wind. Contextual intelligence involves a continuous process of unlearning, immersion, minding the gaps, and disorientation. Taking in new data, and then basing predictions and choices on that new data.

Disorientation requires a comfortability with messiness. Alan Roxburgh describes how leaders will need to use disruption to create just enough mess to shake up the local church, without causing a complete system breakdown. He refers to this as an “art” that involves listening well to the Spirit and to the congregation.⁴⁴⁸ This is our “edge of chaos” in the process of ecclesial innovation.

This is what is occurring among the disciples during the tomb time. The cross is a trophic cascade event that sends the whole system into a state of disorientation. The disciples can only move through that liminality, until a new discovery, a strange attractor, can draw the system in a new direction. This is provided by the resurrection of Jesus.

Discovery

Discovery refers to the unveiling of a new level of reality. It is a form of epiphany. In the “mind of Christ” this move refers to the resurrection of Jesus (Phil 2:9). Resurrection is a form of *emergence*, under the broader umbrella of complexity theory, emergence refers to novel and coherent forms (structure, pattern, order) arising from the dynamic self-organizing interplay among elements at successive layers within a complex

⁴⁴⁸ Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God*, 174.

adaptive system,⁴⁴⁹ and the irreducibility of the properties of the whole to the characteristics of its parts.⁴⁵⁰

The resurrection of Jesus is the greatest form of emergence in the history of the universe: his physical body, reconfigured, transformed, and fully alive. However, the next move will describe another form of emergence, the embodiment of Jesus in the earth—the Church.

Jesus' resurrection changes everything. Paul reminds us that without it, we are without hope and pathetic (1 Cor. 15:17-19). We believe in a God who put on flesh and broke the power of the grave, who redeemed creation from the inside out. Resurrection is the way God does business. The ultimate hope for all the universe is not a dumpster, but a recycling bin. God takes what has been thrown away and makes it new creation. The power by which God does this is *resurrection*.

It's a force of remix, of working with the existing material, reshaping and recreating. The hope of creation is not that God will scrap the project of a "very good" universe in a cosmic dumpster and start over from scratch. It is to recycle the content of marred star-and-mud-stuff, to strip it free of all the residue of sin and death and repurpose it in a grand new amalgamation we call new creation.

Resurrection is all about emergence. A new thing comes into being, but it's a remix. It's self-organized, ground-up, emergence.

Tod Bolsinger's insight on the process of changing a church's DNA through giving birth is helpful here: "The new birth won't be all you or all them but a new

⁴⁴⁹ Yezdani, Sanzogni, and Poropat, 597.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

creation, a new living culture that is a combination of the past and the future that you represent.”⁴⁵¹ Once we move through the disorientation and liminality of the tomb time, discovery is about examining and reconfiguring the new identity in light of the change. Some pieces of the previous scenario will be brought forth and imbued with new life. For instance, pioneers cultivating and grafting fresh expressions into inherited congregations. This reconfigures the existing church in a new way; *emergence* occurs as the new whole can no longer be reduced to the smaller parts but have blended together in a novel resurrection form. The reconfigured organism is now constantly reproducing. The innovation has taken root.

In an organizational sense, this can be described as traditioned innovation: a way of thinking and living that holds the past and future together in creative tension, a habit of being that depends on wise judgment, requiring both a deep fidelity to the patterns of the past that have born us to the present and a radical openness to the changes that will carry us forward⁴⁵²

Part of the decline of the U.S. church is exactly because denominations adopted the corporate business model of the 20th century and continue to employ it, even though it is growing less relevant in a globalized economy. Thriving institutions are learning to adopt a more fluid structural organization to harness the power of these changes. The church is an institution in the pure sense of the word. In the current perception, institutions are bad and the enemy of post-modern, revolutionary, communities of

⁴⁵¹ Bolsinger, 82.

⁴⁵² L. G. Jones, *Christian Social Innovation: Renewing Wesleyan Witness* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016), 51.

innovation. But this is simply not true. As Alan Roxburgh argues, institutions are formed from the underlying narratives that give meaning and purpose to our lives.⁴⁵³

Institutions are good and needed, but they can often become museums. The inherited church, particularly mainline denominational manifestations, has been a central institution of North American society for much of its existence. Institutions that are responsive to the seismic shifts can adapt, grow and thrive. Institutions that try to preserve the idealized status quo of ages past typically die. Rigid institutionalism is never good.

What pioneers are doing by creating new things in the institutional voids can be described as “traditioned innovation.” L. Gregory Jones reminds us, “For most of American history, faith-based communities led the way in innovative approaches in sectors such as education, health, housing, food, just to name a few.” He calls for a rediscovery of Christian social innovation, in which the church takes an active role in building, renewing, and transforming institutions to cultivate human flourishing.⁴⁵⁴

Jones goes on to list the Fresh Expressions movement as a strategy deeply rooted in the kind of disruptive innovation the church needs to adopt—traditioned innovation.⁴⁵⁵ He catalogs some of the various past social innovation projects of the church, which have become the major institutions of today’s society: hospitals, universities, schools, and so on. These social innovations were created when contextually intelligent Jesus followers “minded the gaps” and found ways to fill those “institutional voids.” Pioneer ministry is

⁴⁵³ Roxburgh, *Structured For Mission*, 32.

⁴⁵⁴ Jones, 3-5.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

an entrepreneurial approach that demonstrates the reemergence of Christian social innovation. Traditioned innovation is the blended ecology way, a both/and approach.

The NCD churches benefited from traditioned innovation departments in the form of fresh expression teams. Dwight Zscheile challenges the Christendom assumptions of the church in the West. He speaks of the “The Great Disintegration” combining a plethora of resources to describe the severity of U.S. church decline. He suggests that inherited churches must challenge long held assumptions, including dedicated buildings and professional clergy, and refocus energy on reaching disaffiliated neighbors.⁴⁵⁶

He proposes innovating simpler, experimental, more cost-effective and contextually specific expressions of church. Zscheile echoes Jones and others in arguing that the church, largely dependent on sustaining innovation, will need to embrace “traditioned innovation.” He describes “the innovator’s dilemma” referring to the position clergy in declining systems now find themselves: the challenge of sustaining the established organization while simultaneously embracing and harnessing disruptive innovation. Zscheile describes competencies that parallel the contextual intelligence framework: unlearning, immersion, listening to neighbors, iterative small experiments, good failure, and improvisation, and implies how they could revitalize inherited congregations.⁴⁵⁷

Discovery takes the system to the edge of transformation, but this is not the end of the story. Can emergence be spread? Thomas and Inkson say, “Cultural intelligence is not

⁴⁵⁶ Dwight J. Zscheile, “Disruptive Innovations and the Deinstitutionalization of Religion,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 14, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 5-30.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

just a mind game—you have to be able to perform.”⁴⁵⁸ This moves from *reading the signs*, to *knowing what to do*. If the discovery is not scaled or “downloaded” and spread throughout the system, it fails. This leads us to the final move—embodiment.

Embodiment

In Philippians 2, Paul is trying to persuade the community to *embody* the “mind of Christ” in their communal living, (Phil 2:2-5). Paul’s description of the mind of Christ is purposeful; it’s through the embodiment of this “mind” this “mental model” that the church enjoys true unity and communion with the Risen Jesus. Ephesians 4 shows the ascended Christ giving the church “gifts” (Eph 4:11) the purpose of which is “building up the body of Christ ... to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ (Eph 4:13) and “whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love” (Eph 4:16).

The image here is the ascended Lord as the “head” of his body, called the church. Jesus is embodied in the earth, through these gifts of “apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers” (Eph 4:11). The gifts are actually people, who like the cells of a living organism, make up the body. This embodiment leads to a “collective intelligence” described by Paul as the mind of Christ. A “mental model” or attitude that brings us into communion with Jesus, shared by the “great cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1-2). These five “giftings” are actually five forms of tacit knowledge. Every human being is wired to

⁴⁵⁸ Thomas and Inkson, 52.

function in these giftings from birth, but they are transformed and amplified by the infilling of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵⁹

It is the profuse outpouring of the Holy Spirit that marks the dawning of the new age for Peter (Acts 2:14-47). Peter connects the outpouring of the Spirit directly to the ascension “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear” (Acts 2:33).

Thus, the *discovery*, the resurrection of Jesus that unveils the great mystery hidden from the foundations of the earth, is now spread throughout the universe. The “mind of Christ” has been downloaded into the church, distributed throughout the entire body.

One way to apprehend this in an organizational sense comes from Moynagh’s innovation framework. Embodiment is about amplification: the process through which the Spirit multiplies and expands small changes through positive feedback.⁴⁶⁰ In overly stable systems, we need to establish kinds of onsite laboratories where small changes can occur through experimentation that will eventually feedback into the system.

Let’s return to Louis Pasteur and his method of bringing his laboratory to the site of a major problem. By doing this, he discerned the problem from a position of immersion. His perspective was from within the problem, not removed in a distant laboratory. His solutions were improvisational. In the case of the dying cows and sheep, through experimentation, he discovered the cause was a microorganism. He devised a

⁴⁵⁹ Hirsch, *5Q*, 19.

⁴⁶⁰ Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 33.

way to control the microorganism, then he conducted a dramatic experiment to demonstrate his solution—showcasing his “discovery” before the world. Pasteur attracted powerful allies to his experiments, who supported his science, enabling his discoveries to amplify throughout the whole system.⁴⁶¹

Amplification is achieved through *feedback loops* that begin to transform the whole system. For example, as the team engages in this messy work of missional experimentation, their discoveries feedback into the inherited church, pulling the system towards the edge of chaos. Feedback Loops refer to outputs of a system being routed back as inputs thus forming a loop. Seemingly small inputs eventually magnify into large scale transformation.⁴⁶²

Pentecost is an “onsite laboratory” where the discovery of the Risen Jesus becomes a “feedback loop” into the whole religious system in Jerusalem. To apprehend how this “spreading” takes place in a practical sense, let’s examine the *Positive Deviance Approach*.

Positive Deviance refers to an approach to social change based on the observation that in any community there are “deviants” whose uncommon but successful strategies enable them to find better solutions to a problem than their peers, despite facing similar challenges and having no extra resources or knowledge than their peers.⁴⁶³

Balzer summarizes the Positive Deviance Approach as follows:

⁴⁶¹ Denning and Dunham, xxv.

⁴⁶² Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 22-23.

⁴⁶³ Balzer, 161.

- Culture must be engaged from within culture. Transformation of a culture comes from within and not from above or outside the culture as in the exercise of cultural colonialism or imperialism.
- Cultures and communities self-navigate and create their own identity through their resources and social assets to solve a problem.
- A community exercises collective intelligence by designing their own practices and is not focused within the leadership of a community alone, nor is it sourced from external experts but is scattered amid the community.
- The community adapts to the internal diversity and transformation, thereby creating distinctive practices and strategies.
- Sustainability is essential to the approach. The community seeks and creates the solutions to their problems in order to sustain change and the existence of a healthy community.
- It is easier to change behavior by practicing it rather than knowing about it. “It is easier to act your way into a new way of thinking than think your way into a new way of acting.”⁴⁶⁴

Organizations can become learning organizations through this process, increasing their capacity for contextual intelligence. For example, when churches and districts started “fresh expressions teams,” they became a form of “positive deviance.” The collective effort of these pioneers, supporters, and permission givers had cascading effects on the entire ecclesial ecosystem. In the NCD sample, eighty-six congregations, the majority of whom are in decline, became a blended ecology district, now with eighty-one fresh expressions. Some of the inherited congregations involved with the work have to started to experience forms of revitalization.⁴⁶⁵

I have explained this interaction elsewhere as a process like a *trophic cascade*, an ecological phenomenon that is catalyzed by the absence or addition of keystone species (usually predators at the top of a food chain), which often trigger dramatic surging changes in an ecosystem when three or more trophic levels interact.⁴⁶⁶ For instance, an

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 30-31.

⁴⁶⁵ See data in chapter 1.

increased number of predators effects the number and behavior of herbivores, which in turn effects the flourishing of plant life. A “cascade” can be triggered by the addition or removal of keystone species, which often results in dramatic changes in ecosystem structure and nutrient cycling.⁴⁶⁷

While the resurrection of Jesus is the most profound form of emergence in universal history, it is the “prototype” of what Jesus creates in the church. The church is a form of emergence, the body of Jesus, indestructible and embodied in the earth. It is a polycentric, dispersed, organism, consisting of many living cells. Each of these cells possess the very DNA of Jesus himself. The cells take forms that resemble the tacit drives of Michael Polanyi discussed earlier. The “mind of Christ” is a distributed and shared reality.

Hirsch, Catchim, and Breen inform the distribution of these intelligences throughout the church. They explain that the loss of the fivefold ministry from Ephesians 4:1-16 is in a large part responsible for the massive decline of pastor-centered Christianity in the West.⁴⁶⁸ In the primarily attractional model of Christendom where the basic assumption is that “if you build they will come,” being that most of the population are already Christian, the gift set of pastor/teacher is most needed. The pastor is tasked primarily with caring for those already in the flock. This thinking is partly what contributes to the continued decline of the church.

⁴⁶⁶ Beck, *Deep Roots, Wild Branches*, 57.

⁴⁶⁷ J.A. Estes and John Terborgh, *Trophic Cascades: Predators, Prey, and the Changing Dynamics of Nature* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2010), 3.

⁴⁶⁸ Hirsch, Catchim, and Breen, 5-9.

Let's look at some brief working definitions for each of these giftings from Hirsch, Catchim, and Breen:

Apostles: are those tasked with the extension of Christianity through direct mission and church planting. Their focus is moving the church outward, seeding the Gospel in different host cultures.

Prophets: are those tasked with maintaining faithfulness to God among the people of God. They speak and embody God's now truth into the community. They are typically located on the edge of the center, both speaking a word into the community, and to those outside of it.

Evangelists: are the naturally infectious persons who recruit others to the cause. They are outwardly focused, enlisting others into the movement, and casting the seeds of the Gospel throughout the world.

Shepherds: (pastors) are tasked with nurturing the spiritual development and maintaining the communal health of the church. They serve the inward function of engendering the community in love towards God and each other.

Teachers: pass along the wisdom and understanding bequeathed to the church. They, too, are focused internally on protecting and passing on the faith.⁴⁶⁹

While the pastor/teacher roles are immensely important among the body of Christ, they are not sufficient alone to advance the body into the "full stature of Christ." We are so deeply engrained in this attractational way, that it is extremely difficult to make any other proposal to long-term church attenders.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 8.

Hirsch and Breen pull together research to demonstrate that all human beings operate in one of the APEST giftings. In other words, all people are wired primarily in one of these personality categories. When we become Christians, God harnesses that potential for the greater good of building up the body. Most people operate in one primary personality gifting, with others secondary to their very nature.⁴⁷⁰

When we see Jesus, we see what it means to be each an apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, and a teacher in the fullest sense of each word. Hirsch calls Jesus the “exemplary” of all five APEST roles.⁴⁷¹ Yet no other individual embodies the APEST fully. More simply, as the “body of Christ,” it takes all of us collectively to make one Jesus. The church is in actuality the body of Christ in the world, an “embodiment” of Jesus. A flesh and blood organism, consisting of each Christian as a kind of cell in the body.

Hirsch, Catchim, and Breen believe that not only were the Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists disregarded in the Christendom model, they were actively suppressed and silenced. They refer to this as “The Exiling of the APE’s.” In this scenario, all ministry has been forced into the predetermined molds of shepherd and teacher, with pastors and theologians the only legitimate leadership within the church.⁴⁷²

In order for the “body of Christ” to “grow up” in every way (Eph 4:11), it requires each of the cells operating together. Each person embodies one of the tacit forms of intelligence APEST. The “mind of Christ” is the framework that holds them all together

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 74-77.

⁴⁷² Ibid., 17.

and brings unity to the church. This embodiment can take many forms, firstly, a new kind of person. As we embark on the journey through the “mind of Christ,” we mature as a believer, taking on the distinct habitus of Jesus which leads to selfless service.⁴⁷³ Communal forms of embodiment can be new ministries, social justice movements, creation of business entities, recovery programs, pioneer cohorts, and obviously fresh expressions of church. These embodiments are the entities of reconciliation that bring healing. As we “mind the gaps” these new communities of resurrection fill the “institutional voids” and provide the relational scaffolding that helps churches connect with their communities, denominations connect with their constituencies, and those experiencing isolation to connect with communal life in Jesus.

Thus, we saw with Paul and his teams in the early church, and John Wesley and the army of early Methodist lay preachers that embodiment was achieved through a shared communal leadership arrangement. Equally, for fresh expressions of church with teams of “pioneers, supporters, and permission givers,” embodiment requires a communal arrangement, with a shared, dispersed, leadership approach. Historically this is the “priesthood of all believers.”

Embodiment requires us to rethink “leadership” using the Trinity as our model. In the Triune God, we see a dynamic, relational, movemental dance of leadership that contrasts sharply with the hierarchal model so prevalent today. The Trinity is not a hierarchy, with one person in authority over the other persons, but an interactive, non-linear, relational community.

⁴⁷³ Recall the move from knowledge to experience, or from semantic memory to episodic memory. Groninger and Groninger, 745.

Complexity thinking helps us rethink the phenomenon of leadership itself. Leadership is an emergent phenomenon, which occurs in a series of relational interactions among agents. It's not simply a skill that one has, but an exchange of dynamic interactions within a complex system. While this complexity leadership approach moves the focus away from a single individual with concentrated power acting on a system as the "leader," it does not in any way minimize the importance of leadership as an organizational phenomenon.⁴⁷⁴

A complexity view suggests a form of "distributed" leadership that does not lie in a single individual in a managerial role only, but rather in an interactive dynamic in which any particular person will fluctuate between being a leader and a follower. The emerging leadership approach of the twentieth-century, called *shared leadership* which has emerged from leadership research in the last 25 years, is the fastest growing style of leadership today, particularly in the form of leadership teams.⁴⁷⁵

Margaret Wheatley began to wrestle with the implications of the emerging knowledge from physics, and how it applied to the structuring, management, and leadership of organizations. She demonstrates how organizational power is purely relational. Wheatley challenges long held assumptions of leadership, which seem to have been built at least partly on faulty assumptions.

She writes,

We need fewer descriptions of tasks and instead learn how to facilitate *process*. We need to become savvy about how to foster relationships, how to nurture growth and development. All of us need to become better at listening, conversing, respecting one another's uniqueness because these are essential for strong

⁴⁷⁴ Craig Pearce and Jay A. Conger, *Shared Leadership: Reframing the Hows and Whys of Leadership* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), xi.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

relationships. The era of the rugged individual has been replaced by the era of the team player.⁴⁷⁶

The Eurotribal church borrowed heavily from the leadership assumptions of the corporate world—we have bought fully into the “rugged individual” model of the “great man or woman” theory. The pastor as CEO, a mid-level corporate manager, who develops vision statements, leads board meetings, determines strategic goals, communicates the big ideas from the pulpit, raises funds, all while providing personalized professional chaplaincy care for the aging flock.

The new protest-ant “spiritual but not religious” dichotomy is in part a response to the overly bureaucratic procedures and overly rationalized institutional forms of the McDonaldized church, where pioneers report to find no real avenue for self-expression, or true community in which to wrestle with the irrationalities of faith, or even opportunities to bring their God-given gifts and abilities.

Thus, this shared leadership flattens the dominating hierarchal mode of denominations. Again, we draw upon the communal life of the Trinity as the “model” for the kind of leadership required for embodiment. Perichoresis, the relational dance of mutual indwelling is much less Abimelech, and much more of the Tola variety. It is a shared mode, each making room for the other, each taking “the lead” in the divine dance at different times. This requires strategic partnerships and a communion of mutuality. Perhaps Issachar and Zebulun were onto something after all? Contextual intelligence ultimately finds embodiment as a collective intelligence with the APEST distributed throughout the Body, usually in the form of teams.

⁴⁷⁶ Wheatley, 39.

Conclusion

I have sought to explore the phenomenon of Contextual Intelligence (CI) and suggest a Contextual Intelligence Framework (CIF) for its cultivation in local churches. I've captured learnings from the eighty-six congregations and eighty-one fresh expressions in the North Central District of the Florida Conference United Methodist Church, as well as pioneer samples from the Generative Pioneer Leadership Academy, and blended ecology leaders. I have demonstrated that while CI has been shown to be a critical competency for leaders across multiple fields, it is yet to be explored theologically or assessed for practical application ecclesiologically. I have suggested the cultivation of CIQ is a profound opportunity specifically for UMC's. I've followed the *golden thread* of CI through key Scriptural passages, as well as three contextually intelligent movements in church history—specifically, the primitive church, early Methodism, and Fresh Expressions. I have examined the emerging missional frontier. Finally, I have weaved those insights together with research from sociology, psychology, organizational science, and complexity thinking to suggest a Contextual Intelligence Framework (CIF).

Most importantly, I have sought to show that contextual intelligence is truly the *mental model* of Jesus, and that the CIF, based in Jesus' own incarnation, provides a pathway for its cultivation in the local church.

APPENDIX A

CIQ MANDORLA RING—ONE INTELLIGENCE TO SERVE THEM ALL

Len Sweet and I have developed The CIQ Mandorla Ring, as a practical tool for local churches. It complements the Contextual Intelligence Framework.

The ring outlines a very simple process of contextualization that can be summarized in the symbol of two overlapping circles which birth a third almond-shaped ring (mandorla) and four words that formularize the process: BE THERE WITH ALL. The sweet spot of contextual ministry is found in that mandorla overlapping space of “Connectedness” that metabolizes the first circle of Content (BE) with the second circle of Context (THERE), creating the third space of Connectedness (WITH). Hence BE (Content) THERE (Context) WITH (Connection) All (cosmos).

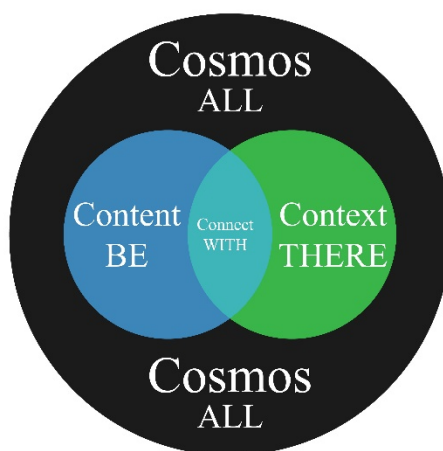


Figure 17. CIQ Mandorla Ring⁴⁷⁷

BE: Content is fixed.

⁴⁷⁷ Sweet and Beck, 37.

THERE: Context is flux.

WITH: Connection is flow.

ALL: Cosmos is fulfilment.

Contextual Intelligence involves living the fixed Jesus story (content) through the flux of indigenous cultural elements (context) and expressing that contextualized flow (connection) in order that the fulness of Christ and the faithfulness of the church be embodied with such local integrity, indigenous industry and accented identity that there is universal resonance (cosmos). In Roman Catholic terms, this is the process of *inculturation*, which integrates the life of faith (content) within the local traditions and customs of a people and place (context). The inculturation of the gospel becomes an animating force giving that culture a new orientation and recreating it (connection). Thus, within that culture a new “communion” emerges, which in its turn enriches the Church universal and creation itself (cosmos).

The One Ring—One Intelligence to Serve them All

In J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* series, the One Ring was an artifact of incredible power. Crafted by the Dark Lord Sauron in the fires of Mount Doom, the single ring could exercise control over the other Rings of Power, therefore bringing all peoples under Sauron’s tyrannical rule. Rather than a dark lord, seeking to rule over all others, those under the Lordship of Jesus are to become servants of others, bringing reconciliation and healing where there is fragmentation. In the Contextual Intelligence Mandorla Ring, CI is the “all” that brings together and unites all the other multiple intelligences. It is the one intelligence to *serve* them all.

APPENDIX B

EXAMINATION OF PARALLEL FRAMEWORKS

This first appendix examines five parallel frameworks that intersect with and inform the Contextual Intelligence Framework: (1) Fresh Expressions Journey (2) Design Thinking Framework (3) Innovation Framework (4) Cultural Intelligence Framework (5) 3D Thinking Framework and the Contextual Intelligence Model for Organizational Leadership.

1. Fresh Expressions Journey

In the Fresh Expressions movement there exists a missional framework simply called the “Fresh Expressions Journey.”



Figure 18. Fresh Expressions Journey

Stage One: Listening

The first stage of planting fresh expressions within the community is prayerful listening. This cannot be overemphasized. Graham Cray, in a discussion about the “mixed economy” and connecting the center and the edge reminds us that planting fresh expressions of church start with an act of “double listening.” Double listening includes

listening to both “God and context.”⁴⁷⁸ Rather than assuming we already know, this requires us to take a posture curiosity and wonder. There is a clear connecting here with what I will describe in the CI framework as “unlearning.”

Stage Two: Loving/Serving

This is simply about finding ways to be with people in our community, loving and serving them with no agenda. As we do so, we may need to stand in the gap to meet physical needs, providing clothing, food, resources, or whatever other lack there may be. Cray reminds us that if we are planting fresh expressions as a “strategic agenda” he writes, “I think you are doomed from the start – this is God’s initiative – it’s about his kingdom.”⁴⁷⁹ Once we understand this dynamic, from a place of genuine witness, as needs emerge within the community, we can work together to meet those needs. There is a clear connection here with the “immersion” stage of the CI framework.

Stage Three: Building Community

Cray calls this approach “long-term incarnational engagement.”⁴⁸⁰ It is through the repeated patterns of witness that loving and serving becomes authentic community. Time is the fertilizer of relationships. As relationships gain strength, trust begins to build among the group.

A profound sense of connectedness begins to form, as we gather around the habitual practices. The community becomes a source of life as we experience the healing of our isolation.

⁴⁷⁸ Graham Cray, “Connecting the Center to the Edge,” August 2017, <https://acpi2017.wordpress.com/2017/07/26/connecting-the-centre-to-the-edge-graham-cray/>

⁴⁷⁹ Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby, and Aaron Kennedy, *Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012), 22.

⁴⁸⁰ Cray et. al., *Fresh Expressions of Church*, 20.

Not only do we enjoy being around each other, but it becomes something we look forward to. We start to find an authentic sense of *belonging*. This also has parallels with the immersion phase of the CIF. Once we sense this kind of belonging and community has formed, we begin to evolve organically into the next stage.

Stage Four: Exploring Discipleship

In this stage, the group begins to intentionally explore the Christian faith. This occurs through a mixture of both formal learning (intentional conversations) and social learning (simply sharing in the rhythms of life together). More mature believers may begin to form mentorships with younger apprentices, spending time outside the group, discipling them through the messy relational process. There is no formal program. We are operating primarily in the realm of improvisation, sensitive to the nudging of the Holy Spirit, responding and adjusting as we go.

Len Sweet has written an entire book on “nudge evangelism” in which he argues that evangelism in the twenty-first century “will be built on nudges that have more to do with life before death than death and the afterlife, that focus more on the love of Christ than the wrath of God, that worry less about dying than about never having lived.”⁴⁸¹

This kind of evangelism requires us to be sensitive to the fact that God is already at work in every life. Cray reminds us, that “Evangelism and disciple-making are inseparable. Evangelism calls people to lifelong discipleship, by setting before them a way of life, as a follower of Christ the king.”⁴⁸² This is utterly a relational approach to discipleship. Jesus models this throughout the Gospels, befriending and coming alongside

⁴⁸¹ Leonard Sweet, *Nudge: Awakening Each Other to the God who's Already There* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010), 32.

⁴⁸² Cray et. al., *Fresh Expressions of Church*, 24.

people of various walks of life. Through their relationship with Jesus, they are experiencing a profound transformation. In the CIF this correlates with minding the gaps. When disciples of Christ are beginning to be formed, we are moving fully into *ecclesia*, a community centered around the risen Jesus, or simply ... church.

Stage Five: Church Taking Shape

When people are beginning to enter into relationship with Christ, bend their life to the truth of scripture, and become passionate about self-giving, other-oriented, witness, church is taking shape. This may not appear to be our conventional understanding of church. Each fresh expression may be as diverse as the group or practice it is centered around, but the marks of the church begin to become a kind of compass for the journey: *one, holy, apostolic, catholic*—in fresh expressions language, we appropriate and remix those words to speak of the essentials as *inward, upward, outward, and ofward*. These churches in the flows are incarnational, missional, contextual, and ecclesial. In the CIF this stage correlates with embodiment.

Stage Six: Do It Again

The potential for multiplication with fresh expressions is huge. In the McDonaldized church we are often focused on durability, something is healthy if it withstands the test of time. However, a close reading of Scripture and Christian movements in history show that “durability” is not the main concern. There are periods of the church’s life when it flourishes briefly then goes underground or takes a new form, for instance in Jerusalem or Antioch. The greater concern is multiplication. While there is certainly a sameness and stability in the church, she has survived the test of time not by staying the same for long periods of time, but through multiplication in an unending array

of contextual variations, while staying rooted in the first principles revealed in Scripture. While this stage has no precedent in the CIF, it is assumed that the framework will be repeated again and again in endless contextual varieties.

2. Design Thinking

Another helpful parallel framework can be found in the design thinking model. *Design Thinking* is a model of thought and reflection centered on people. It refers to design-specific cognitive activities applied *during* the process of designing. This methodology is widely used as a tool across disciplines. One prominent motto in this framework: “fail early in order to succeed sooner.”⁴

Failing forward faster is a foundational design thinking principle that helps to maximize learning and insights crucial for human-centered innovation. The focus on collaborative work in small groups where everyone is fueling the creative capacity of the team is part of the magic of the design thinking process. Following are brief descriptions of the design thinking framework:

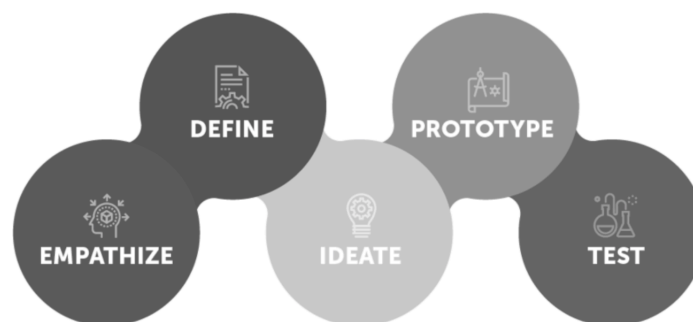


Figure 19. Design Thinking Framework

(1) Empathize: The team must first gain an empathic understanding of the people we are trying to reach. Who is our other and how can we be with them? What struggles do they face, and how can we be a witness within those realities? In the fresh expressions journey, this is about listening, then loving and serving. In the CIF this is about unlearning.

(2) Define: In the ecclesial sense, this is a journey of understanding what's sore in the community. What are the needs here? How do we come together in a mutual exchange of blessing to find healing together? How do we offer communal life with Jesus, and love and serve each other around the sore spots? In the CIF this is correlated with minding the gaps.

(3) Ideate: This is about asking "what if" with our eyes towards God's promised hope for the future. There are many techniques to cultivate healthy brainstorm sessions, but the main idea is for the team to come up with as many ideas as possible, and nothing is too outside the box. This takes place within the immersion stage of the CIF.

(4) Prototype: This is an experimental phase, in which we get out in the first, second, and third places and simply try stuff. For example, we use prayer walking and establish a small go team to become an incarnational presence in a space. We form relationships with the "persons of peace" who grant access to those spaces. This correlates with immersion, minding the gaps, disorientation, and embodiment in the CIF.

(5) Test: It's important to remember here that this is a non-linear process, so we remain reflexive as we move through the interweaving stages. It is a fluid process, in which the team will flow and recycle in different directions. The test stage involves iterating

frequently based on continuous feedback, experimenting, failing, and using improvisation as you go. This is the embodiment phase of the CIF.

The design thinking methodology helps to eradicate the complexity and disorder in the initial stages that usually paralyze churches from starting to engage their community. The advantage of design thinking allows the team to immerse themselves in a problem to innovate a potential solution. We start from the perspective of the people we are seeking to be with. It is in essence an incarnational approach. The emerging forms of church take shape in a collaborative process, where responsibilities are shared among the team and the host culture.

The process involves iterating frequently based on continuous feedback, experimenting, failing, and using improvisation as you go. It is often not a neat, clean process in the sense of thinking through all the potential implications then starting. It is starting, then dealing with emergent implications as they arise. This process also untangles us from outdated missional methodologies in which we view the larger community and its people as a problem we can fix and shifts us into joining the people in their reality, working together in an adaptive way to bring healing to the community. It's messy stuff; one that requires a particularly artistic approach to creativity.

The small changes emerging from the experimentation of a team employing design thinking can be amplified through the feedback loops we will discuss next. These seemingly small developments can become the strange attractor that draws the whole system in new a direction over time.

3. Innovation Journey

In *Church in Life: Emergence, Ecclesiology and Entrepreneurship*. Michael Moynagh most brilliantly explores fresh expressions as a form of ecclesial emergence. Using primarily sources from complexity thinking and effectuation theory, Moynagh creates an innovation framework.⁴⁸³

The six stages of the innovation framework can be described as follows.

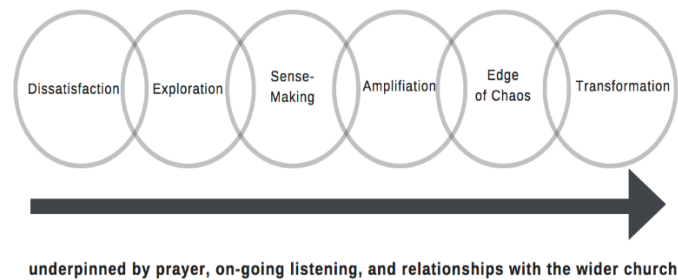


Figure 20. Innovation Framework

(1) Dissatisfaction: This is the initial disequilibrium or instability that must occur in a system in order to release innovation. Moynagh describes this theologically speaking, as the gap between the present and God’s future, or between the current realities and the promised kingdom. This is “prophetic dissatisfaction.”⁴⁸⁴ The main idea here is that “we’ve always done it like this” is no longer healthy or effective. Embracing, and even catalyzing dissatisfaction allows for adaptation to a new context to occur. This is the unlearning stage of the CIF.

(2) Exploration: Is the process of the community reflecting upon their current experience and releasing experimentation. In response to the dissatisfaction, old norms

⁴⁸³ Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 11.

⁴⁸⁴ Moynagh, *Church in Life*, 29.

and assumptions are challenged, driving improvisation. Moynagh refers to this as a “Spirit-led process of trial and error, which is a means of discerning God’s rule.”⁴⁸⁵ Essentially this resembles making it up as you go along. It’s the design thinking concept of failing-forward, iterating, trying something, then interpreting the results. Rather than creating a plan and trying to implement it (causal reasoning), this is exploring truth as it emerges through action (effectual reasoning). This is the immersion phase of the CIF.

(3) Sense-Making: Has to do with helping the organization understand what it’s experiencing. This is a shift in our Western understanding of leadership. Rather than emphasizing the individual effort of a particular person “leading the change.” A community of leaders enter a process of discernment to interpret the emerging realities. During the change, various leaders in the community help a group create a new narrative, tethered to the historic identity of the community, but responding to the Spirit’s activity now. This also parallels the disorientation stage of the CIF.

(4) Amplification: Refers to the process through which the Spirit multiplies and expands small changes through positive feedback.⁴⁸⁶ New ideas and practices start to go viral within the community through “feedback loops.” Feedback can be both verbal and action oriented, as people describe and respond to the change. The small changes begin to restructure the communal organization as a whole by introducing “strange attractors” that draw the system in a new direction. This correlates with the discovery stage of the CIF.

(5) Edge of Chaos: Systems that are excessively stable dampen innovation. Moynagh says “edge of chaos is about being open to what the Spirit is bringing from the

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 33.

future, while building on what the Spirit has done in the past... Hope and history rhyme."⁴⁸⁷ Instability is a sign of openness to change. However, too much change can tear the system apart. This process refers to the balance between an openness to novelty and faithfulness to a community's identity. This is the disorientation stage of the CIF.

(6) Transformation: Is the end result of the previous five processes. It occurs when bottom-up, self-organizing change leads to the creation of a remixed organism. The new organism retains the same DNA but is transfigured in new ways. The greater whole can no longer be reduced to the sum of its parts. Through a series of synergistic interactions, the Spirit has birthed a new creation, a resurrection community. To use a more organizationally friendly term, the transformation could be considered a form of *revitalization*. This is the embodiment stage of the CIF.

While these six processes are not sequential stages, but rather coevolving phenomenon, we can easily see the parallels with the CI Framework.

4. Cultural Intelligence Framework

In *Cultural Intelligence: Surviving and Thriving in the Global Village* David Thomas Kerr Inkson suggest a simple framework for becoming culturally intelligent.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁸⁸ Thomas, and Inkson, 15.

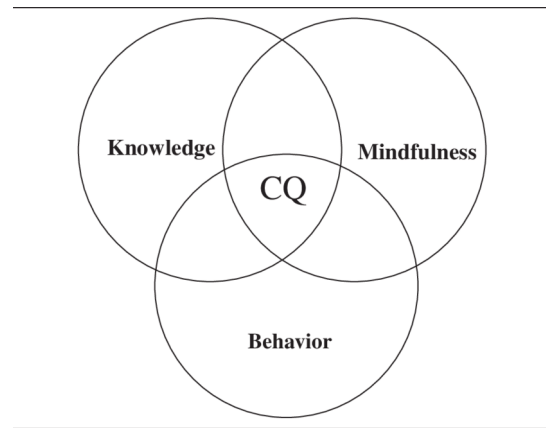


Figure 21. Cultural Intelligence Framework⁴⁸⁹

They suggest there are three “components” of cultural intelligence (CQ), knowledge, mindfulness, and behavior. To become culturally intelligent, one must develop skills in understanding a culture, interact with it to learn more about it, then “reshaping your thinking about it to have more empathy for it,” and developing skills to interact with people within the culture you are seeking to engage.⁴⁹⁰

From Thomas and Inkson:

- (1) Knowledge: First, the culturally intelligent person must acquire knowledge about what the culture is, how cultures vary, and how culture affects behavior. In the CIF this correlates with unlearning and immersion.
- (2) Mindfulness: Second, the culturally intelligent person needs to practice “mindfulness,” the ability to pay attention reflectively and creatively to cues in the situations encountered and to one’s own knowledge and feelings. This involves “embedding” in the new culture. For the CIF, there are correlations with minding the gaps, disorientation, and discovery.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 14.

(3) Skills: Third, based on knowledge and mindfulness, the culturally intelligent person develops cross-cultural skills and becomes competent across a range of situations, choosing the appropriate behavior from a repertoire of behaviors that are correct for a range of intercultural situations. This correlates with the embodiment stage of the CIF, and the competencies that can be cultivated for each stage.⁴⁹¹

5. 3D Thinking Framework and the Contextual Intelligence Model for Organizational Leadership

Kutz and Anita Bamford-Wade have developed what they define as the 3D Thinking Framework and a Contextual Intelligence Model for Organizational Leadership. Their work has greatly informed the Contextual Intelligence Framework I've proposed. 3D thinking, developed by Kutz, refers to the need for leaders to simultaneously consider the past, the present, and the future. He argues that the application of the "3D-thinking model of contextual intelligence requires all decisions and actions be based on hindsight (H), insight (I), and foresight (F), and can be expressed in the equation $H+F=I$."⁴⁹² Hindsight and foresight equally contribute to the insight that is needed to inform real-time actions and behaviors.

⁴⁹¹ Thomas and Inkson, 14.

⁴⁹² Kutz and Bamford-Wade, 63.

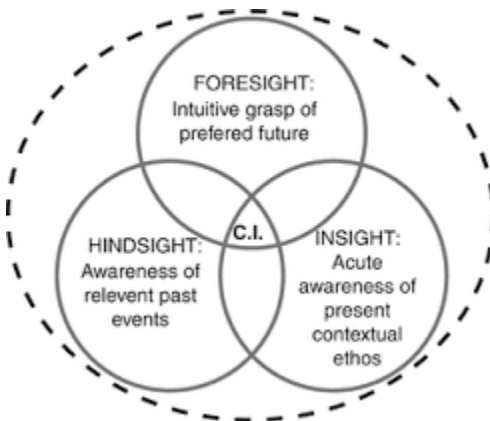
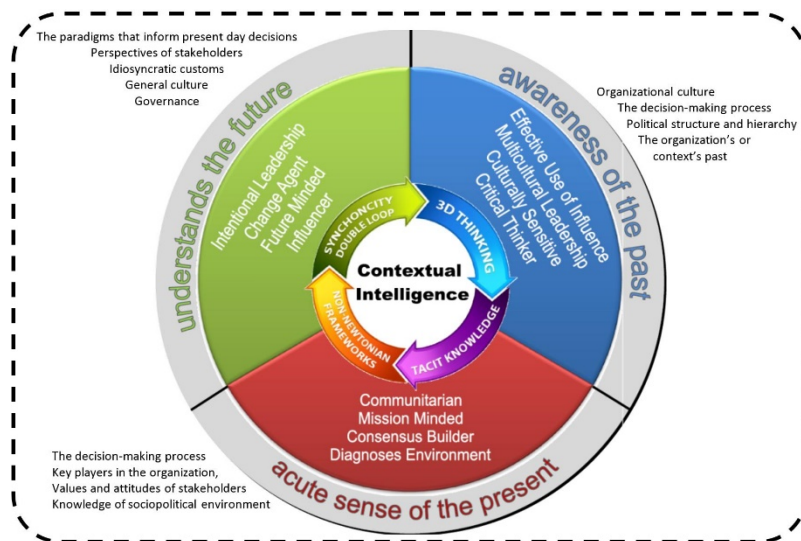


Figure 22. Three-dimensional Aspects of Context⁴⁹³

Kutz identifies twelve empirically based behaviors for this model, that are like the spokes of a wheel, or the “air filling the CI tire,” the hub of which is contextual intelligence. The “rubber” of this wheel, the tire itself, is the 3D orientation to time. The 12 contextual intelligence behaviors are organized in three groups, according to their 3D category.



⁴⁹³ Kutz, *Contextual Intelligence* (2013), 68.

*Figure 23. Contextual Intelligence Model*⁴⁹⁴

These are the 12 behaviors and descriptions categorized by a 3D time orientation from Kutz, *Contextual Intelligence: Smart Leadership for a Constantly Changing World*, 2013:

Foresight

1. Influencer: Uses interpersonal skills to non-coercively affect the actions of others.
2. Change Agent: Raises difficult and challenging questions that others may perceive as a threat to the status quo.
3. Future-Minded: Has a forward looking mentality and a sense of where to go in the future; sees beyond present contradictions.
4. Intentional Leadership: Is aware and proactive concerning own strengths and weaknesses, and has delineated goals for achieving personal best and for influencing others.

Hindsight

5. Effective Use of Influence: Appropriately uses different types of power to create a desired influence, or create a desired self-image.
6. Critical Thinker: Makes connections, integrates, and makes practical application of different actions, opinions, outcomes, and information.
7. Culturally Sensitive: Works to provide opportunities for diverse members to interact in a nondiscriminatory manner.

⁴⁹⁴ Kutz, *Contextual Intelligence* (2013), 95.

8. Multi-Cultural Leader: Can influence the behaviors and attitudes of ethnically diverse people or groups.

Insight

9. Communitarian: Expresses concerns about social trends and issues and participates in civic and community activities.
10. Mission Minded: Communicates how the performance of others affects the mission; aware of how their attitude affects others' perceptions of who they represent.
11. Consensus Builder: Convinces other people to see the common good, or a different point of view.
12. Diagnoses Context: Knows how to appropriately interpret and react to shifts or changes in surroundings.⁴⁹⁵

Conclusion

The Contextual Intelligence Framework integrates key learnings from these parallel frameworks into a series of moves, which can potentially enable church teams to grow in their contextual intelligence.

⁴⁹⁵ Kutz, *Contextual Intelligence* (2013), 91-94.

APPENDIX C:

BLENDED ECOLOGY INTERVIEWS

In 2018 I interviewed eight racially, theologically, and denominationally diverse leaders who are cultivating the blended ecology at various organizational levels ranging from district/diocesan oversight and mega-churches to mid to small sized local congregations and grassroots missional communities. They represent both inherited and pioneer cohorts. These individuals were June Edwards, Jorge Acevedo, Verlon Fosner, Travis Collins, Luke Edwards, Mike Snedeker, Mia Chang, Evelyn Sekajipo, and Jonathan Dowman. Seven are from the United States, and one from the Church of England.

Each of these persons demonstrated contextual intelligence in their different roles. They observed that the church(es) under their care were not engaging their communities in contextually appropriate ways. As I have shown, the Fresh Expressions movement has demonstrated effectiveness in engaging “nones and dones.” Through these interviews, I was able to gain insight into CI. Each respondent answered the questions through an email exchange.

June Edwards

District Superintendent

North Central District, Florida Conference UMC

From the time I landed on this earth, the one constant in my life besides my family has been the Methodist church. I have the Cradle Roll certificate to prove it. It has been the place where, through my baptism and the caring witness of many people, I became aware of my identity as a child of God. When my family moved to three different states in three years during very formative time in my life, the Methodist church (which later became the United Methodist Church) stood ready to receive us. The denomination which I have served as a child, youth and adult, as both lay and clergy, has been an integral part of my life experience. In August 2016, I began one of the most exciting and daunting roles of my pastoral ministry—that of District Superintendent and was appointed to the North Central District of the Florida Conference of the UMC. There are currently 86 churches in the North Central District where I am charged to serve as the Chief Missional Strategist. The majority of these churches are experiencing the decline that the rest of Western Christianity is facing, which proves to be a great challenge.

1. Can you briefly describe the fresh expression(s) of your District?

When I arrived in the North Central District, I was fortunate that my predecessor, now a bishop in our denomination, had already begun plowing the ground for Fresh Expressions. Creating a part time position for someone who was already cultivating and leading Fresh Expressions, Rev. Michael Beck, and inviting pastors and churches to consider the possibilities of Fresh Expressions, I found myself joining a conversation that was already in process. Building on an image that arose out of a sermon I preached at my Service of Installation, a district wide event was planned. A district Fresh Expressions team was formed and soon planning for 'From the Steeple to the Streets—13,628 Going' was underway. Every church in the district was asked to mobilize the average worship attendance of their congregations in order to visit identified locations in their communities and do three things—Pray, Observe and Encounter. This was preceded by a District Training Event focused on the fresh expressions process to prepare the churches to begin to envision and explore this whole idea of fresh expressions. Now from gatherings in restaurants, pubs, tattoo parlors, and dog parks to yoga, tai chi, prayer on the porch and dinner church, people have begun the journey to move beyond the walls of the church to those Jesus would have them meet. We are only at the beginning, barely having started the journey into the new and unknown territory. But the vision and energy of fresh expressions has begun to take hold and I have no doubt it will continue to put down deep roots and bear fruit in that future to come that we have yet to know.

2. Explain the “mixed economy” dynamics, between the inherited church and your fresh expressions. What kind of tension, if any, goes on between the two?

The challenge before those churches whose pastoral leaders along with the pioneers that join them face when they seek to engage in fresh expressions is the challenge that faces every entrenched system and institution that moves toward innovation and change—there is resistance. The notion that the pastor will be spending time in the community with those that they do not know, nor wish to venture out to get to know, is mystifying to

many in the church as we know it. It is counterintuitive to consider that the church would commit resources—both human and financial, for the purpose of creating groups that are not intended to regularly participate in formal worship or in other ministries of the church that takes place on their campus. The cry goes out, “Why them? What about us?!” So ultimately, the ‘mixed economy’ can lead to conflict as persons fear the loss that comes from change. However, knowing that from the outset, helps in riding the rapids of conflict when it does come. It is possible to hold in tension both the ministry requirements of the inherited church and fresh expressions. One image is that of a new church start within an existing congregation. The necessity of the continued vision casting of the kingdom, combined with a large dose of prayer and patience, goes a long way in helping people embrace a new way of being and sending in the church. Another important factor is the need for solid support by denominational leaders who provide oversight and accountability for local church ministry. This provides much needed cover for pastors who are ready to respond to the call of innovation and creativity to move beyond the church property into the mission field of their communities. To have a foot in both worlds is hard and exhausting work, but it is possible and necessary.

3. How have you seen the fresh expressions have a positive impact on the existing congregations? In what ways?

If anything, just having the conversation about fresh expressions has begun to raise the consciousness of some of the need to be the church in the context where they are located. Beyond that, churches that have established ongoing fresh expressions are experiencing renewed energy and vitality and it is making a difference in their individual personal faith journeys as they discover a much greater and expansive vision of the kingdom. It is shifting the vision outward and opening the door for imagining possibilities for ministry that had not previously existed. And though the intention is not to grow worship attendance or membership, fresh expressions has given permission to form new relationships outside the church and created an environment for learning to authentically share one’s faith gently and gracefully and can result in some folks coming into the sphere of ministry as well as part of the worshipping community.

There are several examples that come to mind of churches experiencing a positive impact through initiating fresh expressions ministry. The most prominent example would be Wildwood UMC. A small congregation located in what was a sleepy little town until a large retirement development was established nearby, now has multiple fresh expressions that have been launched. Though there are those that have resisted this notion, there have been many benefits as a result and the inherited church is growing because of them.

Another small church located in a nearby small community has begun a dinner church. Through this fresh expression, new teams of people have been formed and they are finding a place to share their gifts of hospitality through preparing meals for guests that come to dinner. This church has a food pantry serving clients who are not part of the church. These folks are the ones receiving the invitation to come to dinner and worship. Nearby, the much larger church in the retirement development is reaching seniors in assisted living and skilled nursing facilities reaching a senior population that their church cannot reach. Residents have accepted Christ that have never done so before. At a large church in a university town an associate pastor has initiated a runners group that is

connecting with the fitness culture and reaching millennials the inherited church cannot reach.

4. Knowing that launching fresh expressions in your congregation involves time, sacrifice, resources and people power, why do you believe it's worthy to pursue?

Fresh expressions brings us back to what it means to be the church. It's a wakeup call for congregations to take stock and consider what their missional purpose really is. In the Florida conference as is the case across the Methodist connection, if its fall, its Charge Conference season. In an effort to provide a visual demonstration of the situation most congregations are facing, I took a very unscientific poll asking persons in the churches gathered at the various charge conferences a series of questions:

- Raise your hands if you have been committed to Christ and/or a member of a church for 50 years or more. In every case, close to half of those present raised their hands.
- Raise your hands if you have been committed to Christ or a member of a church for 25 years or more. Again, another large group raised their hands.
- What about 10 years or more? Maybe 8-10 people responded.
- What about 5 years? 2-3 responded.

I then said, "Did you pay attention? What will your church look like in 10 years? This is the challenge of the church before you right now." There is no question, we must learn to move beyond the walls of the church to connect with the communities around us. I have challenged both pastors and leaders in our district to consider Jesus' ministry as described in the gospels, asking them to show me the place where it says that Jesus made his way to temple and put a sign out front that reads, 'If you want to get to know me, you are welcome to come any time between 11 and 12 on Sunday mornings.' Jesus did no such thing. He went to cities, countryside, crossed bodies of water and met anyone who came his way. We are called to do the same.

Elaine Heath tells a story of a pastor going into a declining church where she was being asked to lead a significant transformation process. As she walked into one of the Sunday School rooms, she described it as smelling of 'old hymnals and despair.' I'm sure each one of us knows both that image and that smell quite well. We are experiencing great forces at work around us as the new expression of church is being formed in the crucible of transition of generations and culture with no clear path or outcome before us. With the unmistakable smell of 'old hymnals and despair' of declining churches in our nostrils, we stand atop the mountain Todd Bolsinger describes in the book, *Canoeing the Mountains*, where the Lewis and Clarke expedition reaches the summit and gazes out at the unexpected expanse before them. What they saw was not the great waterway they expected to find. Instead, stretched out as far as they could see was more mountains. They realized that from then on, they were 'off the map' and would have to innovate and trust their guide, Sacagawea, to find their way. We stand at the same summit and must do the same—let go of our assumptions, presumptions and plans we now have about the church and innovate and seek guides that can take us to the places we do not know.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁶ Bolsinger, 191.

The primary work of the church is outside the walls of the church. Fresh expressions gives us a vehicle to join God there. We have done a good job teaching churches how to be good institutions, but in so doing we have taken our eye off the ball. The challenge before us now is to do just as thorough a job teaching churches to be missional, because that is our core value and purpose. It does not mean that we let go of the institution that has brought us to this place and time. It just means that we put mission at the center of the primary purpose of the church again and put the institution in its proper place of supporting the work of mission. The mixed economy allows every local church to meet that challenge.

Verlon Fosner

Pastor of Westminster Community Church,
Pioneer of Dinner Church Collective

Dr. Verlon Fosner has lead Westminster Community Church, a progressive congregation in Seattle, Washington since 1999. In recent years the congregation transitioned from a traditional proclamation church into a multi-site Dinner Church. Verlon holds a Doctorate of Ministry from Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, and has written several books: “Dinner Church”, “Dinner Church Handbook”, and “Welcome to Dinner, Church.”

1. Can you briefly describe the fresh expression(s) of your church?

Our fresh expressions churches are developed around the dinner table theology that was historically employed during the Apostolic Era. We serve large feasts at dinner time in community spaces located in sore neighborhoods, along with worship music being sang, artists painting sketches from the gospel, and a speaking segment focused on something from the gospels. Following the speaking and group prayer, the Christ Followers who are eating and sitting among the guests engage in discipleship conversations as the opportunity presents itself and the Spirit leads.

2. Explain the “mixed economy” dynamics, between the inherited church and your fresh expressions. What kind of tension, if any, goes on between the two?

Though our church was a traditional church for 85 years, we have now shifted to make our dinner churches the front burner congregations of our ministry. Our only traditional gathering is held on Saturday nights, and is a worship service to strengthen our pastors and core teams so they can go strengthen their dinner congregations throughout the week. There is not any tension, because the traditional congregation has taken on a supportive and supply-line role for our front-lines congregations.

3. How have you seen the fresh expressions have a positive impact on the existing congregation? In what ways?

Our congregation had become hopelessly ingrown. However, once we started our first fresh expression congregation, a new sense of mission began to flood into the existing congregation. Missional Envy (in a healthy sense) started to form and soon everyone wanted to get out to the front edges of evangelism and work in one of the dinner churches. We started to say, “attend the weekend gathering or yourself, but attend the dinner church for the benefit of others. And if you have to miss one, make it the weekend gathering.” That repeated phrase changed us all. Our FX congregations were on the front-lines of evangelism, and that is where the most potent sort of mission exists. Once our long-term saints went to the front-lines, they brought that same spirit back. Soon it was dominating our weekend gatherings, our classes, our leadership meetings, and even our board room. It truly was like leaven that spread through the whole ministry.

4. Knowing that launching fresh expressions in your congregation involves time, sacrifice, resources and peoplepower, why do you believe it’s worthy to pursue?

For a church to rediscover its mission and calling, it needs a praxis to form them. All the talk in the world simply will not reshape the soul of the church; a great commission environment is needed. And if a FX congregation is anything, it is a great commission environment.

Jorge Acevedo

Lead Pastor Grace Church, a multi-site United Methodist congregation
Southwest Florida

I was not raised in a Christian home or church. At 17, I was addicted to drugs and alcohol. A Campus Crusade for Christ Area Director led me to Jesus a few days before my 18th birthday. I landed in a United Methodist Church in Orlando because they had an amazing youth ministry. From there, I was called to vocational ministry and attended Asbury College (now University) and Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. I am married to Cheryl. We have two adult sons, Daniel and Nathan and four grandchildren, Mia, Levi, Seth and Zoe. I have been the Lead Pastor at Grace Church for more than 22 years.

Grace Church is a multi-site United Methodist congregation. Our original campus is in Cape Coral and we have three other campuses in Fort Myers, one in Sarasota and campus under development in downtown Fort Myers. Grace Church is unique in that we are a blue collar, working class congregation. Several of our campuses are in under-served, impoverished communities.

1. Can you briefly describe the fresh expression(s) of your church?

After a pilgrimage to England with my Bishop to see several Fresh Expressions, Grace Church experimented with our first “dinner church” in the Suncoast community. Suncoast is the second largest trailer park in southeast America and has hundreds of families trapped in cycles of poverty and addiction. For years, we have been in ministry to elementary school in that community. On Thursday nights, a team prepares a meal and

a simple program for the adults and children. In less than two years, this has grown from 75-100 weekly. We have seen many first-time commitments to Christ and are developing discipleship ministries in the community.

We also have a Fresh Expressions for adults with special needs called Exceptional Entrepreneurs and a boutique/thrift store where we are experimenting with developing targeted fresh expressions. Several of our campuses have also launched dinner churches and outdoor activity fresh expressions.

2. Explain the “mixed economy” dynamics, between the inherited church and your fresh expressions. What kind of tension, if any, goes on between the two?

The staff and leadership for all of our fresh expressions are tethered to one of the campuses of Grace Church. Heather Evans leads all the fresh expressions at the Grace Church, Cape Coral campus and she coaches leaders from other campuses in developing and sustaining fresh expressions. Funding for fresh expressions comes from the host campus. Accountability for results is also maintained by the host campus. We have not found much tension between our inherited churches and our fresh expressions. I believe this is because of our clear vision as a church.

3. How have you seen the fresh expressions have a positive impact on the existing congregation? In what ways?

There is a “buzz” about fresh expressions at Grace Church in great part because Grace Church is a profoundly outwardly focused church. We exist to transform people from unbelievers to fully devoted disciples of Jesus to the glory of God. Our prayer is “Lord, send us the people nobody else wants or sees and send us to the people nobody else wants or sees.” 365 days a year, Grace Church is making inroads into people groups often forgotten by the church; the addicted, the poor, the under-educated, etc.

4. Knowing that launching fresh expressions in your congregation involves time, sacrifice, resources and peoplepower, why do you believe it’s worthy to pursue?

It’s simple math for me. Generational statistics clearly indicate that especially younger generations in large numbers will not come to church no matter how cool the music is and how wonderful the lights and coffee are. The Great Commission was a command by Jesus to “go.” Focusing only on what happens on Sunday morning is a sure sign of congregational drift from the mandate of Jesus.

Travis Collins

First Baptist Huntsville, Alabama

Travis is the Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church, Huntsville, Alabama, and Director of Mission Advancement for Fresh Expressions US. He served as a missionary in Nigeria and Venezuela. Travis holds a PhD in Christian Mission and is the author of multiple books. Two of those books, *From the Steeple to the Street* and *Fresh Expressions of Church*, have become basic texts for the movement. Travis got involved

in the Fresh Expressions movement during his previous pastorate of a church that began three of these new forms of church—among people in recovery, the international community, and persons trapped in prostitution. In his role at FBC, Huntsville he is advancing the blended ecology way to reach people where they are.

1. Can you briefly describe the fresh expression(s) of your church?

In October 2017, we launched two fresh expressions of church. One is in the recovery community, and we call it “Bright Star.” They are gathering weekly in a building near our church campus, led by a gentleman who is in recovery. It is an informal time of sharing, teaching and worship. We experienced a recent influx of creativity when we were joined by new partners from the First Methodist Church of Huntsville.

The second fresh expression of church launched in October of 2017 is in the arts community and is called “Heartfelt Expressions” (I did not encourage names, but the lead teams decided they wanted names). Heartfelt Expressions gathers weekly at Lowe Mill, a converted cotton mill that now houses all kinds of shops and studios frequented by artists. The gatherings now consist mainly of painting sessions and lessons. They have begun to introduce “gospel kernels” into their sessions, saying things like, “We paint because God is creative and instilled that creativity in us.” The devotional time has been well-received, and participants are now invited to a once-a-month prayer breakfast at a local restaurant.

In January 2018, we launched Dinner Church in Butler Terrace, an underserved neighborhood. The Holmes Avenue Methodist church joined us as partners in the endeavor for a year as they prepare to launch their own Dinner Church (The partnerships with our Methodist brothers and sisters has been a very cool thing).

In the fall of 2018 we began Gamer.Church, a fresh expression of church among people who are immersed in the video gaming community. That began when students from University of Alabama at Huntsville who were visiting First Baptist expressed their passion for reaching their fellow “gamers.” Now the point person for Gamer.Church is a student at UAH who grew up in First Baptist. They are still figuring out their strategy.

On the horizon, we believe, is a fresh expression of church among scientists. This could be a thrilling venture. Dr. John Christy, a Climate Scientist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, has a Master of Divinity as well as a Ph.D. in Climatology. Here is an excerpt from an article I invited John to write for our church newsletter about this potential fresh expression of church among scientists:

Our hope is that we can create a venue that attracts those scientists who want to examine the big questions of life and who are open to consider the realm of faith as a pathway for answers. We are putting together a core team to develop this Fresh Expression to touch this considerable, challenging, smart and influential community.

2. Explain the “mixed economy” dynamics, between the inherited church and your fresh expressions. What kind of tension, if any, goes on between the two?

So far there has been no tension between First Baptist as we know it and the new forms of church. I think we are simply too early in the process. But we definitely see a symbiotic relationship.

For example, our church has a huge (40 feet high, 120 feet wide) mosaic of Jesus on our external wall. The mosaic is an icon in Huntsville. The tiles (50 years old) have been

falling to the point that the mosaic was in need of repair. So, we have contracted with Italian artists to restore the mosaic, maintaining the design but replacing the tiles completely. The tiles that have made up the mosaic have such sentimental value to our congregation and community that someone had the idea of making jewelry out of those tiles and donating the profits to a local mission project. The church chose fresh expressions to be the recipients of that project, and we have raised over \$50,000 to support our efforts to launch new forms of church.

As I type this, I am about to head out to the funeral home to be with a young man named Shaun, whose uncle, who raised Shaun, passed away a few days ago. Shaun was the first person to be baptized through our fresh expressions of church. We took our portable baptistry to the parking lot of the venue that hosts Dinner Church, the firefighters from across the street came and filled it up, and four of us (including the pastor of Holmes Avenue Methodist) baptized Shaun.

3. How have you seen the fresh expressions have a positive impact on the existing congregation? In what ways?

I do believe our church has been energized by the launch of the fresh expressions, in these particular ways:

People are thinking more creatively. The fresh expressions initiative has unleashed innovative thinking among us. It's almost as if people have been granted "permission" to think about church differently. Granted, sometimes people use "fresh expressions" language too loosely—calling any new and creative initiative a "fresh expression"—but at least they are out of the proverbial box.

People (pioneers) have stepped forward to lead—people who had no real leadership role in the church. All three of our fresh expressions are being coordinated/facilitated/led by people who held no official position in the church before. This confirms what we have been saying: There are Pioneers in our pews who simply need to be blessed, unleashed, and given the opportunity to serve.

Our entire church will celebrate this coming Sunday when Trisha will be baptized in our 8:15 service. Trisha came to faith through Dinner Church and her baptism will inspire people far beyond the Dinner Church Team.

4. Knowing that launching fresh expressions in your congregation involves time, sacrifice, resources and peoplepower, why do you believe it's worthy to pursue?

These fresh expressions of church do require work and sacrifice. They also involve risk. All of the new fresh expressions of church don't "make it," and although I am trying to prepare our congregation for that inevitability, I do wonder how the church will respond when (if) we announce the discontinuation of one or more of our fresh expressions.

It is all worth it, however, given the fact that there are so many people in Huntsville who are almost certainly not going to engage with any church as we know it, no matter how wonderful the music, or how beautiful the facilities, or how creative the programming.

Luke Edwards

Fresh Expression Pioneer, Pastor of King Street Church

My name is Luke Edwards and I am the pastor of King Street Church, a campus of Boone United Methodist Church. I'm a provisional elder in the United Methodist Church.

1. Can you briefly describe the fresh expression(s) of your church?

King Street Church is a network of fresh expressions. We have fresh expressions that meet in a downtown storefront, a homeless shelter, and the county jail. We've prioritized folks who are not yet connected to a church, particularly those who have been discarded by society. Many of our church members have criminal records, struggles with mental illness, addictions, and traumatic pasts. We come together in chaotic little fresh expressions of church to read scripture, apply it to our lives, and reflect on where God is moving among us.

2. Explain the "mixed economy" dynamics, between the inherited church and your fresh expressions. What kind of tension, if any, goes on between the two?

King Street Church has a really beautiful relationship with our inherited church. We are a campus of Boone UMC. King Street Church is not its own entity. We are not chartered. We are fully under the umbrella of Boone UMC. This allows KSC to focus fully on creative ministry. The administrative staff of Boone UMC handles our finances, statistical reporting. In addition, as the KSC pastor I am held accountable by the traditional systems in place at Boone UMC (i.e. staff parish committee). In exchange, Boone UMC is able to extend its reach to folks they were not able to connect with. Folks at Boone UMC take great pride in the impact that King Street Church is making in our community.

3. How have you seen the fresh expressions have a positive impact on the existing congregation? In what ways?

King Street Church has widened the church family of Boone UMC. Because of King Street Church, Boone UMC now has family members who are incarcerated, folks who are experiencing homelessness, folks that would not set foot in the church building. In addition, KSC has given Boone UMC members a refreshed sense of mission and reminder of why the church exists. Once or twice a year a formerly incarcerated member of King Street Church shares their story in Sunday morning worship at Boone UMC. They're always greeted with applause, hugs, and warm encouragement.

4. Knowing that launching fresh expressions in your congregation involves time, sacrifice, resources and peoplepower, why do you believe it's worthy to pursue?

Starting new congregations remains one of the most effective ways of making new disciples. Starting an inherited church is expensive and our resources continue to dry up. Starting a fresh expression is an excellent way to make new disciples that costs little to no money. The sacrifices of time and peoplepower quickly feel worth it when children of God who have been outcasts find a family. There's nothing like looking around the table at King Street Church, seeing my friends laugh and cry together, some of them finding a sense of belonging for the first time in years, others for the first time in their life. There's nothing more worthwhile than that.

Mike Snedeker

Lead Pastor, Community Evangelical Church

I have been the lead pastor of Community Evangelical Church in Reading, Pennsylvania for the past 6 years. I have been at the church for 25 years serving as the Youth Pastor and Discipleship Pastor before moving into my current role. The church is a part of a small denomination of about 120 churches with the majority of the churches in decline and on the verge of shutting their doors. Our congregation is a wide range of ages and runs approximately 400 people on a Sunday morning. We have one liturgical worship service and two contemporary services. We have engaged in the Fresh Expressions adventure for about 4 years now.

1. Can you briefly describe the fresh expression(s) of your church?

We currently have 5 fresh expressions of church with 2 or three in the oven. Each of the current fresh expressions is in a various stage of its life-cycle.

- Triple Tree: This is our biker ministry which is a concentrated outreach to the one percent motorcycle culture. Triple Tree engages in multiple event and rides each year which brings them in close contact with the motorcycle clubs from around the area. These events are primarily relationship building events. On Thursday night is Biker Church which is a gathering of bikers to seek Jesus together.
- First Responders Connect: This is our ministry to first responders. This fresh expression started as a gathering of various member of the first responder community. The purpose was to create a safe place for first responders to connect and share the struggles unique to their line of work. They share each other's burdens and help to encourage each other through prayer and sharing scripture together.
- Open Hands House Church: This began as a typical house church but has morphed into a house dinner church. The host family opens their home every Tuesday night to their neighborhood for dinner and conversation. They share stories of Jesus life and talk about the impact of those stories on their lives.
- Early Inspiration: This is a new fresh expression for our church. It happens at the local YMCA 20 minutes before opening time (5:30 am) and is a time of challenge and inspiration from God's word as well as sharing prayer concerns and questions.
- Sportsman's Launch: This group is in the process of loving/serving and building community at a local sportsman's club. They are involved in helping with archery shoots and youth education programs, as well as just serving everywhere possible at the club. They have begun to meet with groups there to discuss life and sharing from their own lives what faith in Jesus has meant to them. They have recently begun to be asked to pray at various club events and are developing a regular club meeting for the sake of specific Jesus centered conversation.

2. Explain the “mixed economy” dynamics, between the inherited church and your fresh expressions. What kind of tension, if any, goes on between the two?

When we decided to pursue healthy multiplication as a church, fresh expressions of church seemed to be not only the best fit for our congregation, but it also seemed to resonate with our leadership as the “future” of the church in America. Being a mixed economy church is not always easy. We strive to do our established church ministries with excellence. We want to be sure that anyone who comes to the church finds Jesus through the ministries we offer. We strive to have excellent worship and preaching on a weekly basis, as well as active and engaging children and youth ministries, and effective small group ministries. At the same time, as we recognize these ministries are not effective at engaging a large population of our culture, thus the need for fresh expressions of church. In order to do our best to make sure both of these facets of ministry are thriving, we offer try to engage people and leadership in shared ministry and stories. While we never expect anyone from a fresh expression to become active and involved in our established church, we do want to make sure the two groups know about and love each other as the body of Christ. We have leaders and participants in our fresh expression churches on a monthly basis involved in the worship service of the established church in order to keep up the excitement for the fresh expressions of church. We have them shares stories, prayer concerns, and updates. This has helped create a culture of cooperation and partnership between the groups.

One of the tensions that we are regularly dealing with is jealousy. We will hear from congregation members of the established church comments like, “those fresh expressions are great but don’t forget about taking care of us!” While this spirit of discontent is rare, it is still present and a normal tension in ministry. On the flip side, we have had a dedicated staff working with our fresh expressions until recently. The lessened attention from staff has caused some tension there as well with expectations of support and effort from the paid professionals.

3. How have you seen the fresh expressions have a positive impact on the existing congregation? In what ways?

A couple of real benefits of the fresh expression work on our existing congregation have been:

- 1) A heart for the world around them is developing. Our county in PA has not been known for its kindness and hospitality. Fresh expressions has given people who are typically shy and removed, motivation to see others through Jesus’ eyes. Even those who readily admit to not being called into fresh expressions of church are feeling moved to engage their neighborhood in conversation and at times invite them into the established church.
- 2) A new openness to what church looks like. While we still fight the “we’ve never done it that way before” battles, people are much more willing to explore ministry creativity and innovation in the established church.

4. Knowing that launching fresh expressions in your congregation involves time, sacrifice, resources and peoplepower, why do you believe it’s worthy to pursue?

First and foremost, Jesus specifically called his church to reach the world with the gospel. He never ever called his church to a life of ease or wealth or comfort. To be obedient to one of Jesus greatest commands requires time, sacrifice, resources and people power. Secondly, one of the main themes you will hear in my preaching is walking in Jesus footsteps as his followers. Fresh expressions of church is how Jesus lived his life. Not inside the walls of the Temple or synagogues. He lived out among people, meeting them where they are. Finally, Jesus always calls his followers to selflessness. Any excuse that prevents us from pursuing fresh expressions of church probably has at its core, selfishness.

Mia Chang

Church Planter, Fresh Expression Pioneer, NextGen Church

I am Mia Chang, church planter, lead pastor of NextGen Church wife to Steven Ku, and mother to two young adult children. I was born in Korea but immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 9; hence, I consider myself as a 1.5 generation Korean American. I grew up in Jersey City, New Jersey and studied early childhood education in college. I worked as a public school teacher in New York City and New Jersey for nearly ten years before stepping into a full-time pastorate role.

NextGen Church is a growing, multicultural community of faith in Princeton Junction, NJ. The church is located in an affluent New Jersey suburb where the average household income is one of the highest in the nation. Having a train station to New York City and Philadelphia, many of the residents are commuters working in either of the two cities. Princeton University is the focal point of the community and draws many young families with children to the area. In this milieu, NextGen Church seeks to reach the unchurched members of the Princeton and its neighboring communities. The church celebrated its tenth anniversary Sunday, December 12, 2018.

1. Can you briefly describe the fresh expression(s) of your church?

NextGen Church was planted in an organic way, where I did not intentionally and strategically set out to establish a church. It began with three families coming together to share a meal and explore the Bible together. The weekly gatherings led to worship, then community outreach events, and prayer gatherings. Discipleship occurred naturally out of our time together. At the time, I was unaware of the Fresh Expressions movement, but NextGen's birth and growth reflected the formation of the Christian communities in the Book of Acts.

When I first came to learn about Fresh Expressions, it was as if NextGen was not alone but part of a greater community of fellow risk takers and pioneers for the Kingdom of God.

Currently, we are engaged in two fresh expressions: Capital City Academy and Epostlenaut Media.

Capital City Academy is an afterschool ministry in Trenton, New Jersey. It operates daily from 3pm to 6pm in one of the public schools in the city. This ministry came about when one of our members became a teacher at the school. Upon visiting her classroom, we learned that the school was one of the lowest performing schools in the state and its needs were vast. With the purpose of being a good neighbor and witness for Christ, we became an active supporter. Working closely with the school's administration, we provided various needs of the school. For example, we collected "wish lists" from the classroom teachers and provided resources for their classrooms; we provided 6 air conditioning units for classrooms; water cooler for faculty lounge; and luncheons for teachers' appreciation month. In addition, we provided academic tutorial services on Saturdays to struggling students. We were engaged in the life of the school; in their graduation ceremonies, PTA events, and school festivals.

After three years, we were asked by the administration to take over an after school program when a prominent youth organization moved out of the area. We are now three years into leading the afterschool program. The challenges of operating an afterschool program are great; however we hope that it will provide the opportunities to one day begin a worshipping community. We have partnered with a neighboring First Baptist Church of Trenton, and are working towards building deeper relationships with the families of the afterschool students.

Our second Fresh Expressions is Epostlenaut Media. It is an attempt to reach the post millennial generation, specifically those in the autistic spectrum. One of NextGen's members, Randa Yee, is a parent of an autistic teen. Her heart for the autistic community and passion for anime and manga led to the birth of this fresh expression. Autistic young adults seem to possess a natural proclivity to media; therefore, using media as the forum, we are meeting to create stories and publish them online. Currently, the members are meeting at Randa's home to develop the stories for publication. As God's nod of approval and provision for our fresh expression, we have just received a \$10,000 grant from the Palmer Foundation to purchase more softwares and computers. We are in the process of building a studio in our church space so we can host more young adults and deepen relationships with one another.

2. Explain the "mixed economy" dynamics, between the inherited church and your fresh expressions. What kind of tension, if any, goes on between the two?

I would not consider NextGen an inherited church since we still young in our developmental stages; however, tension is natural and is helpful component for growth. For example, approximately five years ago, we began a weekly after school program for the children of Hightstown, a neighboring town about 15 minutes away. We attempted to address the concerns of the Spanish speaking immigrants who needed an after school care for their children. NextGen, in partnership with a local pastor, Oscar Guerrero, led a program that provided academic support and enrichment activities in the areas of art and music. NextGen members served as teachers and drivers to these children. We transported students from their apartment complex in Hightstown to Princeton Junction for their activities. The tension arose when the ministry grew; it was becoming more difficult for NextGen to care for the children and families in ways that would lead to further growth. The work was becoming more taxing and financially draining. It was not

feasible to transport the children from their home to NextGen. This tension was an indication that God was leading us to the next step. At this critical time, the First Baptist Church of Hightstown opened its doors and invited us into their space. They wanted to partner with us and work together in planting a church. At that point, the FBC of Hightstown, a historic, inherited church of over 200 years, came alongside the fledgling fresh expression of church to share God's vision. In 2016, New Heights Christian Church was birthed; and it is continuing to reach and serve the Spanish speaking families of Hightstown. The church is fully independent from NextGen, although we are good friends who continue to inspire one another in the work of the Kingdom. (For more information about the relationship between FBC of Highttown and New Heights, please contact Oscar and Bruce Wood.)

3. How have you seen the fresh expressions have a positive impact on the existing congregation? In what ways?

Fresh Expression gives the church vitality and new life. Led by the Holy Spirit, the church continues to look outside its walls and consider the needs of their greater community. This leads to prayer for others and the courage to take risks for the Kingdom of God. The church then become actively engaged with their world and witness the power of the Holy Spirit, since it is the Spirit who plants and raises the fresh expressions.

4. Knowing that launching fresh expressions in your congregation involves time, sacrifice, resources and peoplepower, why do you believe it's worthy to pursue?

Yes! Fresh expressions is not easy and it is not for those who do not rely on the power of the Holy Spirit. Fresh expressions can be messy, frustrating, and downright painful, but when the Holy Spirit is at work, we are able to persevere and witness the transformation in our own hearts and in the hearts of others. Being part of fresh expression is a privilege because we get to partner with the Spirit who is alive and active in our world; this makes our Christian journey all the more thrilling!

Evelyn Sekajipo
Mama Africana Network

My name is Evelyn Sekajipo, I founded and oversee the Mama Africana Network.

1. Can you briefly describe the fresh expression(s) of your church?

In a society where black girls and black women are misunderstood, misrepresented, silenced, and devalued, Mama Africana stands as a beacon of hope and light in the city of Tampa. Mama Africana was birthed out of a dire need that my friends and I witnessed while doing work with the neighborhood kids. We wanted to offer a safe space for black girls to express themselves, to grow, and to develop strong sisterhood amongst themselves all while learning about God's heart for them, their family and community.

The mission of Mama Africana is to empower Black girls in their ethnic identity and in their relationship with Jesus. We accomplish this through one on one and group mentoring, conferences, retreats, academic advocacy, and weekly gatherings. We have existed in the Tampa Bay area since 2005 as a modest, yet dynamic grassroots organization/ministry.

2. Explain the “mixed economy” dynamics, between the inherited church and your fresh expressions. What kind of tension, if any, goes on between the two?

I believe that a fresh expression like Mama Africana can impact existing congregations if the congregation and its leadership freely allow it to do so. It is problematic when churches take on the responsibility to “fix” what they believe is wrong about the fresh expression. Unfortunately, we’ve painfully encountered churches like this, and we’ve learned to dismiss them, as we nod our heads, and smirk #onward. It’s not about the fresh expression fitting into the mold of a traditional church but rather the traditional church bending to better serve and learn from the fresh expression, in such a time as this. Many times when I would present Mama Africana to churches, their first inclination is to figure out ways to bring MA into their church- as in serve the girls that already attend their service. Well, MA wasn’t designed to operate within a church’s blueprint, it was designed as an entity that carries with it the essence of the bride. MA was built to stand beside an existing congregation, reminding its people that its mission is also to those on the outside- hey! That’s where Jesus found his brightest disciples.

3. How have you seen the fresh expressions have a positive impact on the existing congregation? In what ways?

When I first started Mama Africana in 2005, the church didn’t really know what to do with it. I mean, we promoted Jesus, which was well embraced by congregants, but there was one element that served as some sort of nuisance to them: we were a Black ministry, designed for Black girls only, operated by black women only. Mama Africana started at a time before the #blacklivesmatter era and sorts came into existence, so many of the White, Latino, Asian, and even Black Christians I associated with weren’t completely sold on the idea of ethnic specificity. Many secretly believed (they confessed) that Mama Africana was just another way of bringing division to the church, a reawakening of segregation. In the beginning, it was rough, and it caused me to question the mission of MA and its biblical relevance. There were times I wanted to pull the plug, but dear friends reminded of the ministry’s importance and necessity. The first support we received was from a local black church; the senior pastor, the late Reverend Abe Brown, met with me and my friend in his office to hear about our mission. Reverend Abe Brown was the pioneer of a prison ministry in our city that has existed since 1976; He was our city’s gem, and we looked up to him because of his laboring to build up the Black community in Tampa. Extremely pleased by what he was hearing, Reverend Abe Brown gave us a donation, saying he believed in our vision. We cherished his words more than his monetary donation. We were also able to gain support from our friend’s church, which was a predominately white family-oriented church. The congregation was overjoyed when they heard stories of how our mentees were progressing; it was as though they were a part of mentoring the girls alongside us. They became familiar with our girls’ names and their stories, and they even prayed for them often. There was a time that we brought our girls to service, and they were treated with the utmost respect as if they were a part of the family. It was an affirming experience to feel the support from a church in

this way. At the same time, I know that the Mama Africana presence in that congregation sparked up an inspiration that stimulated their understanding of the missional role of the church. I wish I can tell you that people in that church started their own fresh expression, I can only hope.

4. Knowing that launching fresh expressions in your congregation involves time, sacrifice, resources and peoplepower, why do you believe it's worthy to pursue?

Launching a fresh expression is not an easy feat, it comes with several sacrifices, failure, and disappointment. In the end, it is all worth it because:

1. It revitalizes your city. What the church has to offer is unique, eternal, and transformative. Time and history have proven that the value the church brings to a city, to the world, rather, is immense- whether it is through schools, healthcare, or social work. Globally, Black girls are hurting and in need of a savior that offers hope when their future seems bleak and uncertain. Mama Africana is an entity that comes alive as it is sent out into the city of Tampa to provide the hope of Jesus to Black girls.
2. It revitalizes the church's mission. Often times being internal can be the death of the church. The church is meant to be a vibrant entity that goes out into the world offering the good news of Jesus- you know, like that Isaiah 61 verse Jesus selected to debut his ministry. Yes! of course, it was followed with backlash and discreditation: but if there's one thing I've learned from Jesus, it is that people will get upset when you try to mess up their order of doing church. Mama Africana is one of many beautiful expressions of the church: we eat a meal together, we laugh, we share life, we read scriptures, we discuss current events, we pray, we share, we cry, we learn, we grow and transform. It is another way of doing church; it is concentrated, and it is invigorating, and it inspires congregations to be the hands and feet of Jesus.
3. It revitalizes your soul. Launching a fresh expression is humbling because we can't do it without the working of the Holy Spirit. When God places a vision on our heart, it can be overwhelming to the point of disarray that leads to a cry for help. It is in this desperation that we confidently approach the throne of grace asking for wisdom. Once we have reached this point, it's time to begin the pioneering work. The best part of Mama Africana for me is when God surprises me with his unfathomable acts. He helps me to remember that Mama Africana is HIS, and I am just a worker, tending to it. One time, a friend of mine in Kenya randomly told me that she and her best friend were going to launch a Mama Africana in Nairobi and in Nakuru. Here I am, strategizing ways that Mama Africana can expand in the city of Tampa, and here Jesus comes, talking about, "no, boo! Hush! The world". This work is God's work. We are privileged to step into it, and we are silly to believe that we have the power to elevate to the place it needs to be. God's plans aren't ours, His ways aren't ours-- they are perfectly beyond our imagination. That alone is a reason to pursue launching a fresh expression- it is the opportunity to marvel at our Great God and His great heart for the world.

Jonathan Dowman

Pioneer Development Worker

Diocese of Leicester Church of England

I work full time in training, supporting and encouraging, both lay and ordained pioneer leaders of fresh expressions of church in Leicester Diocese (Church of England), here in the UK. We have over 56 Licensed Lay Pioneers, who are mostly voluntary and a further five pioneers who are training for the priesthood (as pioneers). There are probably a further 100+ lay pioneers who are unlicensed and many are quite happy being so!*

As part of my work I spend 20% of my time as a practitioner, so that I practice what I preach, modelling (hopefully in a good way!) what I encourage others to do and put my own shoulder to the wheel. From mid 2019 I will become a permanent member of diocesan staff and will become a Training Incumbent (the Ministerial oversight lead for new deacons and priests) for four newly Ordained Pioneers.

*(*In Leicester Diocese we license pioneers as we do Lay Readers and other such ministries. This gives them access to diocesan support and training, working agreements and the Bishop's authority to minister, Many pioneers don't want or seek this recognition though but we still support them!)*

1. Can you briefly describe the fresh expression(s) of your church?

My wife Emma and I are the leaders of Watershed.

A Watershed is a ridge of land that separates waters flowing in different directions. It is also an important event that represents a change in how people do or think about something...

A few miles west of Market Harborough (our home) sit the Hothorpe Hills. These hills mark Great Britain's east/west watershed, with rain water eventually flowing out to the Wash and the North Sea to the east, or the Avon and the Bristol Channel to the west. Our connection with this local landscape caused a small group of us to question our spiritual way of living as families and individuals: which way was our life flowing? Was there anything we could do together to live happily and holistically?

Watershed emerged as a community of all ages, gathering throughout the year to retreat from the hectic pace and pressures of the everyday. We plant, discover, create, harvest and celebrate life through the seasons; spending time in the beauty and flow of God's creation, instead of merely passing through it.

Meeting monthly in the beautiful grounds of Launde Abbey, space and time are created for refreshed perspectives and direction to be kindled.

We gather on Sunday afternoons and are joined by between 30-60 regularly, many of these coming from smaller local villages and generally consisting of people who want to engage in something soulful. For two thirds of our regulars Watershed is their only connection to Christian community or church. We are growing, largely through invitation and word of mouth.

Each time we gather we have a central meeting purpose, for example building bird boxes. This is usually linked to the season. We'll do this together, while also allowing people to explore the grounds, for children to play and friends to catch up. Towards the end of the afternoon we'll gather people in a small chapel or around a campfire and share a Christian reflection based around the activity we have been doing

together. This will be all aged and offer a time of reflection, prayer and scripture, and will usually have a practical application (something simple to take away and put into action in the week). This time is always optional, but most people at Watershed join us and contribute to it. We always end with tea and cake.

We don't yet consider ourselves to be a fresh expression of Church (FxC).

Although we are working towards being a FxC, we feel (even three years in) that this would be to make Watershed something we have no right to make it yet. Watershed is based around relationships, our shared environment, the land, the seasons and those natural activities or points of the year where earth and heaven seem close. Our prayer is that we grow and deepen, we start to meet with a smaller group from Watershed who say *'and this is how we want to live...'* this smaller group, meeting in a Watershed way might be Church.

2. Explain the “mixed economy” dynamics, between the inherited church and your fresh expressions. What kind of tension, if any, goes on between the two?

In Leicester Diocese we have over 60 recognized fresh expressions of Church. These meet at least monthly, are missional, see themselves as church, have clear discipleship taking place and show loving service to the world. Watershed covers most of these, but those who come do not *yet* see it as church (see above). Out of these 60 about 75% remain within the local parish boundaries. They remain linked with the sending and resourcing church (though the church may be smaller than the fresh expression at times!). This link can work very well in smaller rural communities, where numbers are smaller and the wider community may also be small. Many of our churches have multiple small congregations, so a fresh expression meeting in a pub, school or library (for example) can simply be an extension of that church, though it meets in a different way.

In addition to our recognised FxCs we have approaching 200 Pioneering Missional Activities. These PMA activities are neither the existing church community nor yet a FxC. Some of these PMAs end up becoming fully fledged FxCs, but some end up changing the existing church instead. Either is good, but what unites both the PMAs and FxC is:

- The activity is missional
- It is new - we've never tried this before
- It is probably lay led
- We're dependent on finding people of peace and working with them (rather than doing to or for them)
- We'll go where the Holy Spirit leads us
- It will be costly – either as we are called to become a FxC or people start joining the existing church...we will change and sometimes it will be hard!

We find that this approach opens new possibilities with churches. It releases them from trying to imagine a FxC from the outset, or trying to force one into being and instead frees them to thinking about who God might be leading them to serve and what the first steps of pioneering might look like.

As most of our fresh expressions are rooted in their parishes most relationships are good. They become strained when both the FxC and the existing church make assumptions about worship, people and expectations:

- **Worship**

Many assumptions are made and FxCs can land themselves with serious problems because questions like ‘can we baptize people in the woods’ have never been worked out with the sending church until it becomes a pressing issue. There is often no ‘right’ answer, but there is an issue about not working it out until the week before an answer or policy is needed! The same can be said for communion, sermons, sung worship etc...

- **People**

Tensions can arise when practicing Christians end up joining the FxC which changes the charism significantly unless they are called to the particular mission of the FxC. These Christians can often be seeking alternative church, rather than a FxC to serve.

Tensions can also arise when members of the FxC end up seeking to join the existing church. Many FxC leaders have read all the right books and can be distressed when people show up to the things they are not supposed to be interested in!

- **Expectations**

Tensions can arise when there is little understanding regarding where the FxC could lead in the future. Should it become a new Church of England church within the parish (through a process called a Bishop’s Mission Order), should the FxC be temporary, for a time and a season, or should it actually remain a PMA and not develop into a FxC are all things that need to be considered and reviewed in partnership.

We tend to use the phrase ‘mixed ecology’ rather than ‘mixed economy.’ For us the metaphor of the garden with many complimentary plants is more helpful than a monetary image.

For **Watershed**, we experience tension as being part of the other 25% of our pioneering communities who don’t sit within parish boundaries!

Our community comes from 14 different settlements over a large (for the UK) geographical area. This together with how we meet means that we don’t fit easily within our existing ecclesial governance structures.

3. How have you seen the fresh expressions have a positive impact on the existing congregation? In what ways?

We see many of our existing congregations begin further PMAs and FxCs. About 25% at present. Often it seems that the initial pioneers then encourage others to follow.

About 2/3s of our PMAs seem to gravitate towards growing the existing church congregation in some way, though this will (in most instances) lead that congregation into change.

Over 80% of all of our pioneering in the diocese comes out of churches with congregations of less than 100. Increasingly we are seeing much smaller churches begin to explore pioneering and fresh expressions, some because they need to do so in order to ‘survive’ but many others because they see other churches like theirs ‘giving it a go’ and ‘if they can do it, why can’t we?’

For Watershed, the 1/3 of members who are already Christian, Watershed gives them something to invite friends and family to (rather than church) and it helps them to remain rooted in their small rural church where they may be the only family. Being dispersed, Watershed is able to serve the wider deanery (a larger group of parishes – 37 in ours) and in the future hopefully work to complement their work.

4. Knowing that launching fresh expressions in your congregation involves time, sacrifice, resources and peoplepower, why do you believe it's worthy to pursue?

I grew up in the Church of England (my father is a priest), and I loved it. Being part of the church gave me a narrative for life, a community to belong to and introduced me to the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of the world. I think I came to faith several times in my teenage years, as I understood better who I was and who God is...and I guess I still am.

Today however the families I work with are often now 4 generations removed from church. That doesn't bother me too much, but what does is that they are possibly 4 generations removed from knowing and walking with Jesus Christ.

For myself (and Emma too), our calling has been to honor, celebrate and yet leave the church that loved and formed us and set out to create new Christian community with those (not too them), who are yet to share in knowing Jesus. This isn't to say we won't ever end up back in traditional ministry as this is calling away from, so we may well be called back in the future.

Jonny, a member of Watershed (whom I married last year – a great privilege) said to me recently '*Jonathan, Isabella and I just want to know what it means to live a wholesome life.*' Knowing something of their context I knew this wholesome life encompassed the spiritual, material and emotional aspects of personal family and community life. My response was '*So do we (Emma and our children), but we find that hard to do on our own.*' I then shared why we started Watershed, in part to help people do just that together and that in our experience seeking follow Jesus helped us to live that wholesome life, so why not explore this together?

Jonny and his family are not part of any church and they have never been. Yet his statement is essentially one of discipleship. It reminded me of John 10:10 (life to the full). At this stage, they are not looking for church, they are looking for life.

For us, this is reason alone to journey to them and not them to us.

APPENDIX D

GENERATIVE PIONEER LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

On Tuesday 3-27-18 three cabinet members from The Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, Rev. June Edwards, Rev. Sara McKinley, Rev. Dan Jackson and myself gathered in Ocala for a day to discuss the creation of a “pioneer track.” We each had ongoing observations about the distinct mental models and strategies of pioneers. While in the beginning we didn’t have the language of “contextual intelligence” it emerged through the creation of the academy. The team concluded that our current educational and ordination systems are not prepared for the identification and appointment of pioneer ministers. Through studying emerging research in fresh expressions of the UK, engagement with key Biblical texts, and whiteboard exercises, we conceived three tiers of needed training: lay, licensed, and ordained. In 2018 we created the first iteration of this Generative Pioneer Leadership Academy. Contextual intelligence is a key component of the training.

Description of Curriculum Modules

Pre-Session: Pioneer Coaches Training with J.R. Briggs

March 9th, 9am to 4pm at the Florida Conference Center (450 Martin L King Jr

Ave. Lakeland, FL 33815) (7 hours)

Approximately 12 pioneers gathered for training with J.R. Briggs to learn the essentials of coaching. Briggs defined coaching as, “The ongoing, purposeful process of listening, asking questions and allowing others to find their own solutions to issues or problems in order to help others deepen their awareness and make them feel empowered, confident and responsible to take action in their personal lives.” The day was divided into four modules with interactive experiences in between.

The training focused on preparing coaches to work with the pioneers in the Generative Pioneer Learning Academy. Pioneers will go through a series of trainings. In between these trainings they were assigned a coach (or “learning partner”). The academy adopted a contextual learning approach, in which pioneers are learning in the process of doing (experimenting with cultivating fresh expressions as they learn). The coaches committed to coach 1-3 pioneers, electronically for an hour session monthly, as a group or individually. Then one face to face meeting each quarter with their pioneer(s).

Generative Pioneer Leadership Academy (GPLA) Session 1

Session 1: March 22-23. The Portico, Tampa, FL.

Eighteen pioneers of various races, genders, ages, and of lay, licensed, or ordained statuses were selected for the first academy (11 women, 7 men).

Day 1: Friday

9am-12pm. Module 1. Fresh Expressions Intro.

Rev. Dr. Michael Moynagh taught about the genesis and development of the fresh expression's movement. The highlight of his teaching was laying out pioneering in the metaphor of "essentials for the journey," explaining that we need four things: 1. Compass (the four essentials: missional, formational, contextual, and ecclesial); 2. Map (the fresh expressions process of listening, loving and serving, building community, exploring discipleship, church taking shape, do it again) 3. Food for the journey (the scriptures and how to engage them with not-yet-Christians), 4. Destination (the four sets of interlocking relationships upward, inward, ofward, and outward—four marks of the church—one, holy, catholic, apostolic).

12:30-1:45pm. Module 2. Leading in the Inherited System.

Rev. Dr. Audrey Warren offered an institutional narrative of the Fresh Expressions Florida initiative. Then shared about what's happening at her church, First Miami UMC. Pioneers explored how to use inherited church space in innovative ways.

2-4pm. Module 3. Pioneer Leadership: Strengths and Teams.

Alice Williams. Focused on leading from strengths, healthy leadership, and team-based leadership. She is specialized in maximizing employee potential. Alice walked the pioneers through their Clifton Strength Finder results and taught about pioneering from a healthy sense of self.

5pm. Module 4. Reverse Mentoring. Process Session.

The Fresh Expressions Florida team, consisting of Dan Jackson, Caitlin White. Heather Evans, and Michael Beck, led a processing session and fielded questions with the pioneers.

Day 2. Saturday

9am-12pm. Module 5. Contextual Intelligence.

Dr. Leonard Sweet shared about cultural shifts and introduced the concept of contextual intelligence. He described the kind of thinking that is needed on the new missional frontier ... CI.

1:00-3pm. Module 6. Pioneering 101.

Dave Male taught about the history of pioneer ministry in England and fundamental pioneering do's and don'ts.

3-5pm. Module 7. Entrepreneurship and Intrapreneurship.

The Fresh Expressions Florida team. Introduced the concepts of entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship, and laying out next steps for the pioneers. This was followed by a questions and answers time with pioneers.

Generative Pioneer Leadership Academy (GPLA) Session 2**Session 2: July 19-20. Lakeland, FL.****Day 1 (Friday July 19)****9-11am. Module 8. What is. Observing Our Situation and Context**

9-11 Dave Male led the pioneers through introductory material on observing one's context. Fundamentals of pioneer ministry were set forth.

11.15- 12:30pm Module 9. What is. Observing Our Situation and Context

Dave Male led interactive exercises with pioneers on interrogating the context. Pioneers used group processing to integrate their learnings.

2-3 Catapult Tour and Story.

Pioneers toured the Catapult Systems shared workspace. They learned about entrepreneurial ventures and repurposing inherited space.

1-45pm- Module 10. What Is—Integration.

Fresh Expressions Florida team (Heather Evans, Michael Beck, Caitlin White), integrated learnings from throughout the day by sharing contextual observations from their own settings. The pioneer gift of “not fitting in” was discussed. Contexts were described as “clouds not clocks” to emphasize the ever shifting nature. Kind Vs. Wicked Domains (learning environments) were described.

3-5pm Module 11. What Could Be? Dreaming of a New Future

Dave Male led session on adopting a future orientation. Male shared the research of Dr. Saras Saravsathsky from “What Makes Entrepreneurs Entrepreneurial.” He taught about the difference between effectual and causal reasoning. Male laid the groundwork for understanding entrepreneurial (pioneer) thinking.

Day 2 (Saturday July 20)

9.30am -11am Module 12. What Could Be? (continued)

Dave Male led further discussion on the need for entrepreneurial thinking. The church no longer enjoys a privileged position in the center of society, we are “always playing away.” This contextual shift must be considered as we explore how to be the church in a new space. Pioneers were led through the preparation of a S.W.O.T (Strengths. Weaknesses. Opportunities. Threats).

11am-12pm Module 13. Reverse Mentoring.

Rev. Dan Jackson facilitated a reverse mentoring session. Pioneers shared emerging learnings from their own contexts in between sessions.

12pm-1pm Module 14. End of the Homefield Advantage

Bishop Ken Carter shared personal stories of how he discovered the fresh expressions movement. He pointed to his writings about the “End of the Homefield Advantage” further describing the points made by Male earlier. New contextual forms of church are needed, as we are always “playing away.” Carter described what these shifts look like in the Florida Conference.

2pm-4pm Module 14. What Will Be. Making plans

Dave Male led pioneers through the exercise of making a “missional map” and then provided time for pioneers to write up their plans. Each pioneer then shared their plans and three specific next steps.

Generative Pioneer Leadership Academy (GPLA) Session 3

Session 3: September 13-14. Wildwood, FL.

Sessions led by prominent fresh expressions scholar and missiologist Michael Moynagh.

Multiple immersion experiences in real fresh expressions of Wildwood UMC.

(MM = Mike Moynagh)

Day 1 (Friday September 13)

9.30am -11am *Module 1 (MM)* 21st century discipleship - Biblical foundation and models for FX ministry

Mike Moynagh laid out the theological foundations for fresh expressions, the blended ecology, and discipleship on the new missional frontier. Actual working models were provided and discussed.

11.15- 12:30pm *Module 2 (MM and MB). Mission through communities in life - Wesleyan theology and models for FX ministry*

Michael Moynagh laid out a missional approach that is contextual, formational, and ecclesial. The incarnational mode of “church planting” was set forth. Moynagh demonstrated how the early Methodist movement was an example of this. Michael Beck examined historical Methodist movement, then showed how the fresh expressions movement is the modern recapitulation of early Wesleyan theology.

1-3pm- *Module 3 – MM Session 3. Joining in with God’s generosity*

The ecclesiological foundations of fresh expressions were set forth. A Wesleyan, instrumental view of the community of faith will be explored. The church is the only entity in the world that can offer “communal life in Jesus.” A gift the world desperately needs. The eucharistic nature of the church is to break pieces of itself off and give them to a hungry world. A sign of God’s generosity.

3:30-5pm *Module 4 MM Session 4. What can and can’t we change?*

The realities of the institutional church were explored. We discussed the tension that exists in a blended ecology of church, in which inherited and emerging modes live together. How can we navigate the attractional and movemental aspects of the mixed ecology of church life?

Day 2 (Saturday September 14)

9am- 11am. FX immersion experiences.

Pioneers were immersed in actual fresh expressions of Wildwood UMC.

11-12:30 Tea and coffee process session

Pioneers shared learnings and observations from the immersion experiences.

1-3 Module 5 MM. The pioneer's mindset

Moynagh unpacked the theology undergirding pioneer ministry. Explorations of entrepreneurial thinking and the innovation framework were set forth.

3:30-5 Module 6 MM. Sustainability.

Is sustainability the right question for fresh expressions of church? Should we be talking about multiplication and generativity as signs of health? How do we sustain the blended ecology of church life? Theology and praxis were explored.

5.00pm Prayer for each person and commission for next stage**Generative Pioneer Leadership Academy (GPLA) Session 4****Session 4: March 20-21. Deland, FL.**

Reverse mentoring. Pioneers self-organize and teach the final session. They will each give a presentation from their coaching and immersion reports. Then they will teach each other. What do we need to do to train pioneers? How would you design the academy? What would you add or take away? Also, more immersion experiences of Collective in Deland.

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