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Why We Fail to Enact the Change We Need: A Framework for Adaptive Change at Large Churches

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DEDICATION

The process of writing is mostly selfish. While we read, write, and edit, those around us carry silently what our fingers preoccupied with typing cannot. While one hopes the product of writing will come to some helpful result, it is but a hope; one shared by the people closest to us that their sacrifice, too, will be worth it. In this way, their work is the most selfless. They carry the responsibility of thankless hours, so that someday someone else may thank us. They pray someone might benefit, even if the primary beneficiary is the writer.

Chuckles, none of this happened without you. Neither of us would have it any other way. ~~Never change~~. Let's keep changing, together.

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EPIGRAPH

And, as imagination bodies forth

The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen

Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing

A local habitation and a name.

- Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* V, I

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PREFACE

Every day, pastors at churches large and small think about quitting. They work within models that no longer most effectively serve the mission, vocation, or congregation; most often one they still believe in, are called to, and love. These hopeful change agents have personally discovered why so many opt to leave: change to anything is exhausting; change to big (especially successful) things appears almost impossible. While Jesus promised the church would always stand, he never promised that yours would survive.

For any hopeful change agents, perhaps the invitation is more than a sincere prayer and a compelling vision. Perhaps to move toward the ongoing fulfillment of a big vision requires a deeper understanding of how big things move into new directions. If the mission has not yet grown cold, but the ministry feels increasingly heavy, this is for you.

ABSTRACT

It is difficult for leaders at large churches to make changes to their ministry models. As culture rapidly evolves, large, attractional churches look to adapt their approach to reaching the unchurched. Attendance and participation in large churches continues to decline, despite the breadth of suggestions for what and how to change. These suggestions for change are often top-down, leader-centric, and rarely grounded in the academic research about change management. This paper seeks to address a comprehensive model for leading adaptive changes at large, established churches. Chapter One describes the problem, describing trends in cultural change and the impact on church participation.

Chapter Two describes the theological foundation for change. There are four biblical perspectives of change, the last of which transforms a preexisting reality into something new. This transformational approach is on display through the leadership of Moses' successor Joshua and Jesus' brother James, both of whom take a preexisting missional community into a new season.

Chapter Three explores the best practices of change management as described in the academic research. The research of two primary voices are compared, as are several secondary and alternative perspectives.

Chapters Four and Five describe a four-part framework for change within large organizations: narrative discovery and role clarity (Four), and organizational structures and vital measurables (Five). Chapter Six applies the principles in the above to the specific ministry context of large, established churches.

CHAPTER ONE:

WHY WE FAIL TO MAKE THE CHANGE WE NEED

"One should...be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise."[1] *-F. Scott Fitzgerald*

Introduction

Janice is on the leadership team at Central Church, a large, multi-site network of churches based in the Southeast whose mission is to reach people who are disconnected from faith. As cultural and attendance patterns have changed, the staff at Central Church recognizes the need to shift its approach to continue reaching the disconnected. However, making significant changes has proven challenging.

Janice feels pressure to cast a compelling vision for the future, but does not know where to begin. Recently, a conference speaker encouraged her and other hopeful change agents to dream big and throw caution to the wind; now she questions if her insecurity or lack of authority is the reason change is so difficult. Janice wants to lead through change for her staff and volunteer teams, yet for their size and success, change feels fragile. Janice's staff team fears how any change may impact their jobs. Though many volunteers see the need for a new approach, they feel invested in current programs and ministries. Even if change is possible, the complex structure of Central Church makes it difficult to adapt quickly. How should Janice lead through change?

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[1] F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-Up* (New York: Directions, 1945), 57.

It is difficult for leaders at large churches to make changes to their ministry models. For leaders like Janice, stepping into the fray of change management is often vulnerable, and usually unknown.[2] Yet, for churches who desire to be relevant to changing culture, adaptation is essential. To survive in unfamiliar territory requires vigilant observation and responsive change.[3]

This chapter will explore how changing cultural conditions necessitate adaptations to churches, particularly large, established churches like Central. Decreasing attendance patterns and rapid cultural changes are causing churches to re-think the sustainability of their models. This chapter demonstrates that proponents of change often fail to recognize or apply best practices in change management literature. They overly rely on the authority, vision, and charisma of a singular leader, often to their demise.

The Change We Need

Decreasing Church Engagement

This year, between 6,000 and 10,000 churches will close their doors.[4] Church attrition is outpacing population decline.[5] Fewer people attend church, and those who do

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[2] This is particularly true for large, established churches, where decades of following the same leader or model has created both stability and success.

[3] The lessons of survival in the wilderness provide application to church leaders facing the unknown of adapting current systems to new landscapes. Laurence Gonzales, *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017).

[4] Jonathan Merritt, "America's Epidemic of Empty Churches," *The Atlantic*, November 25, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/what-should-america-do-its-empty-church-buildings/576592/.

[5] In 2019, there were fewer than 1,000,000 births for the first time in four decades. US Census Bureau, "New Estimates Show U.S. Population Growth Continues to Slow," The United States Census Bureau, December 30, 2019, https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/12/new-estimates-show-us-population-growth-continues-to-slow.html.

go attend less often.[6] Since 1991, the percentage of unchurched people in America has increased by 92%.[7] This decline is not new, but it is accelerating. Between 2005 and 2013, Christianity grew by only.62%.[8] In 2007, 70 to 80% of churches were in decline.[9]

Churchlessness is on the rise in America. If all the unchurched people in the United States were their own nation, it would be the eighth most populous country in the world.[10] In their 2014 book *Churchless*, the Barna Group explores the movement of adults leaving the church. In the 1990s, 30% of America was churchless. That percentage crept up to 33% by the early 2000s. Fourteen years later, 43% of America was churchless and 33% of America was de-churched, that is, once active in church but no longer participating at any level.[11] Perhaps even more strikingly, this trend is not isolated to a particular demographic. In fact, "there is not a single demographic for which church attendance is on the increase."[12] Furthermore, "most of what gets counted as 'church growth' is actually transfer growth" as people move from church to church.[13]

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[6] Thom Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1998).

[7] Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can, Too* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2007).

[8] Gina A. Bellofatto and Todd M. Johnson, "Key Findings of Christianity in Its Global Context," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 37, no. 3 (July 2013): 159.

[9] Stetzer and Dodson, 19. According to Eric Reed, in 2005 340,000 churches self-reported they were in decline. Eric Reed et al., "Back from the Brink: A Leadership Special Report," *Leadership Journal* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 24.

[10] Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches,* 32-34. The unchurched as a demographic were more likely than the rest of the population to be male, white, Millennial, single, live on the West Coast, and not have furthered their education past high school.

[11] David Kinnaman and George Barna, eds., *Churchless: Understanding Today's Unchurched and How to Connect with Them* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 2016), i.

[12] Kinnaman and Barna, *Churchless,* 9.

[13] Kinnaman and Barna, *Churchless,* 9.

This decline is even more significant in that up to 2007, religious attendance at some denominations had been relatively stable since WWII.[14] Since that time, the unaffiliated *nones*[15] have increased to 22.8% of the population.[16] From 2000 to 2016, the percentage of Americans who identified as unaffiliated with religion doubled, from 10% to 20%.[17] In 2019, that number had leapt to upward of 25%.[18] Yet, despite the growing percentage of *nones* across all demographics, a "significant majority of the *nones* say religion plays a role in their life."[19] They have not necessarily left religion, but they have left church. In a 2013 Barna study, 38% of the population qualified as post-Christian.[20] For adults born between 1984-2002, 48% are post-Christian.[21] Twenty-five percent of adults have no experience in a church setting.[22]

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[14] Stanley Presser and Mark Chaves, "Is Religious Service Attendance Declining?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46, no. 3 (2007): 417–423.

[15] A rising group across all demographics, the term *nones* refers to those who check "n/a" or "none" when asked about religious/spiritual identification.

[16] Chris Cox, "The Decline of the American Church, Boy Meets World, and Me," *Next Sunday* (blog), May 14, 2015, https://www.nextsunday.com/the-decline-of-the-american-church-boy-meets-world-me/.

[17] Frank Newport, "More U.S. Protestants Have No Specific Denominational Identity," Gallup.com, July 18, 2017, https://news.gallup.com/poll/214208/protestants-no-specific-denominational-identity.aspx.

[18] Frank Newport, "Millennials' Religiosity Amidst the Rise of the Nones," Gallup.com, October 29, 2019, https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/267920/millennials-religiosity-amidst-rise-nones.aspx.

[19] Michael Lipka, "A Closer Look at America's Rapidly Growing Religious 'Nones,'" Pew Research Center, May 13, 2015, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/13/a-closer-look-at-americas-rapidly-growing-religious-nones/.

[20] Kinnaman and Barna, *Churchless*, 16. Post-Christian refers to the lack of primacy or alignment of a standard Christian worldview among people and culture.

[21] Kinnaman and Barna, *Churchless*, 17.

[22] Kinnaman and Barna, *Churchless*, 21.

Mainline denominations have experienced significant decline. In 2000, 50% of U.S. adults identified with a particular denomination. In 2016, that number dropped to 30%.[23] Meanwhile, non-specific religious affiliation grew from 9% to 17%, nearly doubling.[24] While regionally much of this shift is due to people leaving the Catholic church,[25] the trend reaches across Protestantism. Most *nones* were raised in a religious household.[26] Yet, in 2015, the majority of Americans no longer identify as Protestant.[27] Membership in the Southern Baptist denomination has declined by 100,000 people since 2007, and in 2013, membership was at its lowest since 1950.[28] The United Methodist Church is more expensive and less effective than ever.[29] This denomination does not

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[23] Newport, "More U.S. Protestants Have No Specific Denominational Identity."

[24] Newport, "More U.S. Protestants Have No Specific Denominational Identity."

[25] Robert David Sullivan, "Two U.S. Churches: One Is Closing down Parishes, the Other Is Standing-Room Only," *America Magazine*, April 19, 2019, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/04/19/two-us-churches-one-closing-down-parishes-other-standing-room-only. The Roman Catholic Church built churches across New England and the Midwest in response to European immigration. Many of these churches are closing. Yet, a "new generation of immigrants" from Central and South America is yielding up to a 900% increase in Catholic attendance in the South and West.

[26] Pew Research Center, "Chapter 2: Religious Switching and Intermarriage," American Religion Statistics: Trends in U.S. Religious Affiliations, May 12, 2015, https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/chapter-1-the-changing-religious-composition-of-the-u-s/.

[27] This is relatively new in U.S. History, from 51.4% in 2007 to 46.5% in 2015. Pew Research Center, "Chapter 1: The Changing Religious Composition of the U.S.," American Religion Statistics: Trends in U.S. Religious Affiliations, May 12, 2015, https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/chapter-1-the-changing-religious-composition-of-the-u-s/.

[28] Bob Allen, "Southern Baptist Numbers Drop for Baptisms, Membership," *The Christian Century* 130, no. 14 (2013): 15. No denomination makes up more than 5.3% of the population, the nondenominational affiliated only account for 6.2%. Atheist/agnostic makes up 7% of the population, and the unaffiliated 15.8%. One explanation for the difference in percentages across reports is that some studies combine atheist/agnostic with unaffiliated, and some continue to maintain separate numbers.

[29] Dottie Escobedo-Frank, "The Church Revolution from the Edge" (DMin diss., Portland Seminary, 2012), 11.

believe itself to be financially sound and is experiencing structural schism over human sexuality.[30]

Charitable giving to churches is in decline. From 1990 to 2015, giving to religious organizations as a percentage of all charitable giving decreased from 50% to 32%.[31] While in 2005, 64% of Americans donated to a religious charity, that number slipped to 52% in 2017.[32]

Perhaps giving is in decline because churches do not provide what the next generation expects or seeks. Author, podcast host, and blogger Carey Nieuwhof believes the next generation is looking for a different experience than large, multi-site churches typically provide.[33] Thom Rainer says the American standard for excellence has changed, and churches have suffered.[34] While many churches attempted to create more seeker-friendly environments, loyalty to particular congregations has decreased. In the late 1990s, 85% of Americans reported they would expect to attend just one congregation.[35] Today, church hopping is the norm[36] and no longer requires you visit a church building to

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[30] Jody Glenn Ray, "The United Methodist Church and the Willingness to Embrace Change" (DMin diss., George Fox University, 2015), https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/115/, 10.

[31] R.J. Reinhart, "Religious Giving Down, Other Charity Holding Steady," Gallup.com, December 21, 2017, https://news.gallup.com/poll/224378/religious-giving-down-charity-holding-steady.aspx.

[32] Reinhart, "Religious Giving Down, Other Charity Holding Steady." By contrast, financial support continues to be strong to Muslims and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Alina Tugend, "Donations to Religious Institutions Fall as Values Change," *The New York Times*, n.d.

[33] Carey Nieuwhof, "5 Reasons Charismatic Churches Are Growing and Attractional Churches Are Past Peak," accessed December 6, 2019, https://careynieuwhof.com/5-reasons-charismatic-churches-are-growing-and-attractional-churches-are-past-peak/.

[34] Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth*.

[35] Kinnaman and Barna, *Churchless*, 26.

[36] Church Misfits, "Church Hopping as the New Norm," accessed March 13, 2020, https://churchmisfit.libsyn.com/church-hopping-as-the-new-norm

access its content. Christians have unprecedented access to preachers and streaming worship through YouTube channels, conferences, podcasts, and video platforms like Instagram TV.[37]

Nevertheless, congregations are often slow to change and increasingly hesitant to adopt strategies to reach people they do not know and embrace values they do not understand.[38] Churches in decline or plateauing need turnarounds; yet, the risks to pastors willing to lead change are significant.[39] Furthermore, churches are not convinced about the significance of the decline because they cannot agree on what to measure and why.[40]

Alternatively, there are several less dire explanations for the noted decrease in church attendance. The mortality rate for churches is only about 1%, which is the lowest in any type of observed organization.[41] Some claim numerical attendance numbers by were inflated in many of the decades after WWII.[42] Furthermore, church attendance may be in decline, but that does not mean people have lost their faith.[43] Richard Krejcir says

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[37] Some may argue that Millennials avoid large churches due to their size, but their increased trust in big corporations demonstrates an increased willingness to engage with large entities. Perhaps size is not a deterrent. Jones, "U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades."

[38] Paul J. Dunbar and Anthony L. Blair, *Leading Missional Change: Move Your Congregation from Resistant to Re-Energized* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 6.

[39] Gene Wood, *Leading Turnaround Churches*, ed. Kimberly Miller, 1st ed. (Bloomington, MN: Churchsmart Resources, 2001).

[40] Alan Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition*, Leadership Network (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 43.

[41] Shawna L. Anderson et al., "Dearly Departed: How Often Do Congregations Close?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 2 (2008): 321–328, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2008.00410.x.

[42] C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler, "How Many Americans Attend Worship Each Week? An Alternative Approach to Measurement," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44, no. 3 (2005): 307–322.

[43] Josh Packard and Ashleigh Hope, *Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People Are DONE with Church but Not Their Faith* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2015).

not to worry, we are not responsible for growth anyway![44] In their book *You Found Me*, Richardson and Stetzer show that, perhaps, the sky is not falling.[45] Perhaps the problem is less about growing cultural disdain for church, and more about the churches need to pivot their approach. Perhaps the enemy is not changing culture, but the model we use to engage it.

Constant Cultural Change

In addition to declining metrics, churches face the headwinds of continuous cultural change. "The rate of change over the past 25 years is significant," the CEO of Porsche North America says. Porsche has responded to Millennials' requests for dynamic experiences with the Porsche Driving Experience and their preference for options with the Porsche Passport.[46] Despite this initiative, Klaus said in 2018, "We expect to see more change in the next five years than we did in the previous twenty-five."[47] Churches, like every organization, face both internal and external cultural changes.[48]

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[44] Richard Krejcir, "Statistics and Reasons for Church Decline," accessed December 3, 2019, http://www.churchleadership.org/?articleid=42346&columnid=4545. Put another way, this rationale argues that churches are not accountable to numeric growth but to faithfulness (described a myriad of different ways). This paper's focus is large churches, whose explicit mission is often to reach unreached people. Therefore, numeric grown is an essential indicator for how those churches are fulfilling their Great Commission mandate.

[45] Rick Richardson and Ed Stetzer, *You Found Me: New Research on How Unchurched Nones, Millennials, and Irreligious Are Surprisingly Open to Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2019).

[46] The Porsche Driving Experience has dining, a test-drive track, and driving instructors. Learn more at https://www.porschedriving.com/. The Porsche Passport is an app-based monthly subscription allowing users to choose whatever car they want for that day. Learn more at: https://www.porschedriving.com/.

[47] Klaus Zellmer, Personal Conversation, Buckhead Business Breakfast, January 25, 2018.

[48] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 17.

American culture is changing, the change is constant,[49] and the rate of change within culture is increasing.[50] Americans' confidence in organized religion is at an all-time low. Only 38% of Americans have "quite a lot" of confidence in organized religion.[51] This is quite a shift from 1975, when 68% of Americans had high confidence, and from 1985, when the church was still the most revered institution.[52] This decline is in part due to ongoing church scandals in the Catholic and Baptist churches, divides over same-sex marriage, and vocal Evangelical support for Donald Trump.[53]

However, church attendance and spiritual interest is not dead. Among Americans under 35, those who are married with children are more likely to re-engage with religion, a pattern each generation follows somewhat predictably.[54] Furthermore, decreased interest in religion does not mean decreased spiritual attentiveness or interest.[55] Despite having

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[49] Sarah Cook, Hilary Coldicott, and Steve Macaulay, *Change Management Excellence: Using the Four Intelligences for Successful Organizational Change* (London: Kogan Page, 2004), 17.

[50] John P Kotter, *A Sense of Urgency* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2008), 11.

[51] This is about the same confidence level as Americans have in the Presidency. Net positivity is the difference between positive confidence and negative confidence. In 2018, the highest confidence was given to small business, the military, and police. Lydia Saad, "Military, Small Business, Police Still Stir Most Confidence," Gallup.com, June 28, 2018, https://news.gallup.com/poll/236243/military-small-business-police-stir-confidence.aspx.

[52] Frank Newport, "Why Are Americans Losing Confidence in Organized Religion?" Gallup.com, July 16, 2019, https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/260738/why-americans-losing-confidence-organized-religion.aspx.

[53] Michele F Margolis, "From Politics to the Pews," Michele F. Margolis, accessed February 14, 2020, https://www.michelemargolis.com/book.html.

[54] Newport, "Why Are Americans Losing Confidence in Organized Religion?"

[55] Frank Newport, *God Is Alive and Well: The Future of Religion in America* (Washington, D.C.: Gallup Press, 2012)

"an integral part" in most Americans' lives, 72% believe religion is losing influence in culture.[56]

In their recent trend evaluation, Barna overlays research on church and culture in order to describe the landscape and setting for religious life in America.[57] These trends, listed below, underscore the limited viability of continuing to approach culture with the same models and assumptions.

The Tension and Polarization of American Politics.[58] The 2016 and 2020 election seasons were among the most contentious in U.S. history, with a growing divide between liberals and conservatives and Christian advocates on either side. The tensions between factions regarding social issues like environmental sustainability, LGBT+ rights, and the environment continue to rise. To regain trust and re-engage culture, churches must adapt their approach to an increasingly doubtful audience.

America's New Moral Code: Self-fulfillment.[59] As culture attempts to fill the void of a lost moral compass, self-fulfillment has become America's new salvation.[60] In this framework of value, the highest good lies in self-discovery. Churches may need to

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[56] Frank Newport, "Five Key Findings on Religion in the U.S.," Gallup.com, December 23, 2016, https://news.gallup.com/poll/200186/five-key-findings-religion.aspx.

[57] The Barna Group, "Barna Trends: What's New and What's Next," 2017, https://www.barna.com/research/barna-trends-whats-new-whats-next/.

[58] The Barna Group, "Barna Trends," 32-39.

[59] The Barna Group, "Barna Trends," 50-53.

[60] John Mark Comer and Mark Sayers unpack this idea in their podcast This Cultural Moment. Tim Keller describes the shift toward self-fulfillment on the *Carey Nieuwhof Leadership Podcast*, "CNLP 339: Tim Keller on How to Bring the Gospel to Post-Christian America, How He'd Preach Today if He was Starting Over Again, Why Founders Get Addicted to Their Churches and Why He Left Redeemer" (May 12, 2020).

learn to speak differently to their communities to continue to be present with and influence them.

How Mobile Technology and Social Media Have Already Changed *Everything*.[61] Increasingly, culture is experienced digitally. Church leaders may need to change their approach to continue to engage it and shepherd their community's ability to handle it. Andy Crouch says, "The pace of technological change has surpassed anyone's capacity to develop enough wisdom to handle it...We are stuffing our lives with technology's new promises, with no clear sense of whether it will help us keep the promises we already made."[62]

Perceptions of the Black Lives Matter Message.[63] Increased racial tension divides our country and communities. Black Lives Matter and the public response to the deaths of unarmed Black men and women captured on video have brought renewed attention and tension to the racial divide.[64] How will the church respond to a racist world they helped create?[65]

The church is "calibrated for a world that no longer exists."[66] Our approach, our structures, our assumptions, and our models need to change. But, how? The church and

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[61] The Barna Group, "Barna Trends," 24-28, 56-57.

[62] Andy Crouch and Amy Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place* (New York: Baker Books, 2017), 4.

[63] The Barna Group, "Barna Trends," 44-49.

[64] The Barna Group, "Barna Trends," 49. White Americans were more likely than to agree or strongly agree with the statement, "There is a lot of anger and hostility between the different ethnic and racial groups in America today."

[65] Jemar Tisby and Lecrae Moore, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019).

[66] Scott Cormode, "Calibrated for a World That No Longer Exists," Depree.org, September 2, 2020.

non-profit literature is filled with solutions to the symptoms above (declining attendance, giving, and interest in religion). Many of these changes are tactical, technical, and quick-fix. Others are long-term, adaptive, and transformational. Almost without exception, these authors communicate a sense of urgency to get moving. However, a solution on paper has not necessarily led us to be able to put change in action. Though we have new ideas, we need more than new ideas; we need new models of imagination and new strategies for enacting change within established large churches.[67]

Proposed Solutions

What solutions to these cultural changes are being proposed by thought leaders in the church? To face the challenge of decreased attendance, some propose growing attendance through personal evangelism[68] or in church programs designed for the outsider.[69]

Others, like Richard Niebuhr, caution against increasing attendance as a primary goal.[70] Concerned about chasing attendance as an end to itself, Don Cousins calls numeric

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[67] Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition.*

[68] Peter Wagner believes whole communities can make decisions to follow Jesus, especially when the right leaders within the community lead the way. C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth: State of the Art*, 1st ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Pub, 1986).

[69] Examples abound. Alan Nelson and Gene Appel advocate for church services designed for outsiders. Alan E. Nelson and Gene Appel, *How to Change Your Church (Without Killing It)* (Nashville: W Pub Group, 2000). This isn't new. In 1992, James White and Rick Warren advocated for worship services to be more celebrative, friendly, relaxed, positive, and expectant. James Emery White and Rick Warren, *Opening the Front Door: Worship and Church Growth* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1992), 19-20. More recently, Andy Stanley described North Point's approach to being a church unchurched people love to attend. Andy Stanley, *Going Deep and Wide: A Companion Guide for Churches and Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017).

[70] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Hamden, CT: The Shoe String Press, 1954).

growth a "success heresy."[71] Willow Creek learned that increased activity did not necessarily produce spiritual growth.[72] Perhaps attendance has never been the church's most important metric.

Some are rethinking church participation through digital strategies.[73] The data suggest these efforts may have marginal impact, as only 6% of the unchurched looking for faith-related information start online.[74] While social media and digital strategies may appear to help connect more people, researcher Sherry Turkle believes this can lead to increased isolation and decreased satisfaction.[75] For all the value of digital engagement, 57% of churchless adults still believe their most likely first step would be to attend a Sunday service.[76]

Some propose using church buildings for new purposes, adapting once exclusively religious spaces to engage local communities through the week. The Missional Wisdom Foundation[77] helps churches create co-working spaces, living quarters, art studios, retreat centers, and community gardens.[78]

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[71] Don Cousins, *Experiencing Leadershift: Letting Go of Leadership Heresies* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2008), 59.

[72] Greg L. Hawkins, Cally Parkinson, and Eric Arnson, *Reveal: Where Are You* (Barrington, IL: Willow Creek, 2007).

[73] Valerie Crumpton, "The Church Has Left the Building: A Leadership Perspective of Online Church versus Traditional Church" (DMin diss., Portland Seminary, 2018).

[74] Crumpton, "The Church Has Left the Building," 19.

[75] Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

[76] Kinnaman and Barna, *Churchless*, 26. Plainly, this data was compiled before the 2020 novel coronavirus pandemic. This will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

[77] "Missional Wisdom Foundation," Missional Wisdom Foundation, accessed February 14, 2020, https://www.missionalwisdom.com.

[78] Merritt, "America's Epidemic of Empty Churches."

Some authors propose changing the church's internal culture.[79] For example, G. Hambric Brooks interviewed pastors who returned their churches to the Great Commission, yielding increased cultural impact. Brooks argues churches "are too slow to change, which hastens their death."[80] Speaking broadly about the church, Leonard Sweet believes it needs to shift its thinking from being attractional, propositional, and colonial to being missional, relational, and incarnational.[81] Alan Hirsch believes circumstances are dire, that if we do not change our culture, the church will "continue to decline and eventually become a mere cultural footnote to Western history."[82] Les McKeown and Jim Collins both advocate for organizational change before symptoms of decline appear; for churches who do not adapt early, it will become much more difficult to adapt later.[83] However, Samuel Chan believes any wholesale approach to changing internal church culture is easier said than done.[84]

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[79] Lovett H. Weems Jr., *Take the Next Step: Leading Lasting Change in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 59.

[80] G. Hambric Brooks, "Revitalization of Moderate Baptist Churches" (DMin diss., Portland Seminary, 2016), 11.

[81] Leonard Sweet, *So Beautiful: Divine Design for Life and the Church* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009), 18.

[82] Alan Hirsch and Lance Ford, *Right Here, Right Now: Everyday Mission for Everyday People* (New York: Baker Books, 2011), 258.

[83] McKeown describes "a deep rut" in which organizations eventually lose self-awareness and the ability to diagnose their own decline. Les McKeown, *Predictable Success: Getting Your Organization on the Growth Track--and Keeping It There* (Austin, TX: Greenleaf Book Group Press, 2010), 113-134. Collins describes the path of decline for successful organizations, the pinnacle of which is a "denial of risk and peril" where external signs of decline are less prevalent than internal, ultimately leading to erosion of health and expedited decline.

[84] Chan says changing culture is the most difficult change to make at a church. Samuel K. Chan, *Cracking Your Church's Culture Code: Seven Keys to Unleashing Vision & Inspiration* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 44.

Perhaps it would be easier to change others. Chuck Colson, James Dobson, Jim Wallis, and Brian McLaren propose vast external cultural change by winning the hearts and minds of people.[85] Andy Crouch suggests changing culture by becoming what he calls "culture makers."[86] James Hunter debunks the effectiveness of these approaches to cultural change.[87] Instead, he invites Christians' faithful presence within culture: developing expertise, maintaining networked relationships to "exercise varying degrees of leadership in…different spheres of life."[88]

Some suggest change comes through increased spiritual vibrancy. Although he says there are 1,000 churches planted every year, Jimmy Dorell believes churches deepest need is a fresh encounter with the Holy Spirit.[89] Randy Maxwell argues that churches who want growth must first return to prayer.[90] Rainer writes, "We are not hindered by external forces; we are hindered by our own lack of commitment, selflessness, and evangelistic urgency."[91] He emphasizes the need to return to discipleship, worship, prayer, and evangelism. David Scafide suggests churches change through the

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[85] Albeit, the former and latter propose alignment to vastly different political and theological ideologies. James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 111-149.

[86] Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013).

[87] Hunter, *To Change the World,* 30.

[88] Hunter, *To Change the World*, 257.

[89] Jimmy Dorrell, *Dead Church Walking: Giving Life to the Church That Is Dying to Survive* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011).

[90] Randy Maxwell, *If My People Pray: An Eleventh-Hour Call to Prayer and Revival* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1995), 31. The callings to prayer often limit their definition or form of prayer to repentance and supplication.

[91] Thom Rainer, "Hope for Dying Churches," *Facts & Trends* (blog), January 16, 2018, https://factsandtrends.net/2018/01/16/hope-for-dying-churches/.

implementation of a new narrative, namely a biblical narrative that invites churches into a story of transformation.[92]

Others suggest overhauling churchwide operating systems and structures. Andrew Kumpel proposed suspending normal activities and replacing them with new trainings. His goal is to change culture; his solution is to start over with a new system.[93] Robert Marshak writes that ongoing and wholesale changes to systems and structures create realignment toward change.[94] Dan Southerland describes reorganizing church to become more purpose-driven.[95]

These intentions are good, and yet miss a key ingredient: how we change. Rather than changing, some proponents advocate for starting over. Peter Coutts suggests the only way to enact significant change is to start a new congregation.[96] Peter Wagner agrees: "It's easier to have babies than to raise the dead!"[97] Dottie Escobedo-Frank says frankly, "the church must accept death."[98]

Perhaps change is possible, but the question is not *what* to change but *how* to change it. How can pastors lead congregations back to a culture of prayer (if indeed that

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[92] David Scafide, "Toward a Corporeal, Biblical Narrative: A Study in Church Transformation," (DMin diss., Portland Seminary, 2015), https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/dmin/95, 156.

[93] Andrew J. Kumpel, "Changing Church Culture among Church Leaders by Moving from Meetings to Mission" (DMin diss., Denver Seminary, 2019), https://rim.atla.com/index.php/node/37068, 5.

[94] Robert J Marshak, "Morphing: The Leading Edge of Organizational Change in the Twenty-First Century," *Organizational Development Journal* 22, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 10.

[95] Dan Southerland, *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

[96] Peter Coutts, *Choosing Change: How to Motivate Churches to Face the Future* (Herndon, VA: Alban, 2013), 61.

[97] C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest: A Comprehensive Guide* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990).

[98] Escobedo-Frank, "The Church Revolution from the Edge."

is the answer)? How do we make changes to care more for outsiders than insiders? How could churches change the way they think about their buildings, dollars, and neighbors? Perhaps the problem is not a shortage of ideas, programs, pundits, or opinions. Perhaps the challenge is the way we have thought about how to make changes, and the need, in the words of Ted Bolsinger, is to "learn to lead all over again."[99]

Why Change Fails

With a mountain of evidence to support change and experts weighing in with suggestions, why have some large churches been unable to make changes? Perhaps having an idea about what to change is not the same thing as being able to lead through it. The previous section unveiled the plethora of imagined solutions to commonly identified symptoms. The real challenge, however, is not in whiteboarding a new idea, but in implementing the changes necessary to make that idea a reality. The problem is exacerbated by a general lack of awareness of and attentiveness to the best-practice literature about change among advocates of church changes.

With so much attention about *what* to change, we have not identified *how* to it. The literature often proliferates data, stories, and suggestions about the changes we *must* make, while often decidedly absent of proven strategies for *how to make them*. While talking about chang*es*, we often fail to talk about chang*ing*. The trouble is, as renowned change expert John Kotter emphatically attests, change fails without a plan.[100]

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[99] Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 23.

[100] John P Kotter, *The Heart of Change: Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), xi.

The research cites myriad reasons for organizational change. Change efforts fail because they are uncoordinated,[101] and because leadership team members often have different motivations, goals, and perspectives.[102] Organizational change often fails because leaders do not invest in figuring out the right questions before they rush to answers,[103] reaching for a silver bullet without identifying the core problem.[104] Leaders often fail to slow down and identify roadblocks to change.[105] Furthermore, leaders who fail to focus, measure, and find vital behaviors are doomed before they begin.[106]

These pitfalls of change are often overlooked by Christian change agents and change authors. They fail to acknowledge the principles of change management in the academic literature. Too often, Christian authors advocate a leader-centric approach to change that overvalues charismatic leadership and spiritual fervor.

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[101] Chris Zook and James Allen, *The Founder's Mentality: How to Overcome the Predictable Crises of Growth* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2016), 106.

[102] Les McKeown, *The Synergist: How to Lead Your Team to Predictable Success* (New York: St Martins, 2012), 88-89.

[103] Jim Collins, *How the Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In* (San Francisco: JimCollins, 2009), 2.

[104] Collins, *How the Mighty Fall*, 89. In *Deep Survival*, wilderness survival expert Lawrence Gonzales says those who survive are able to identify which problem to solve first. Stay alert, he encourages, there are other realities than what we can see.

[105] Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey, "The Real Reason People Won't Change," in *On Change Management* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2011), 119.

[106] Joseph Grenny et al., *Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2013), 13.

The Problematic Approach to Change

Christian literature often over-emphasizes what the academic literature calls executive[107] or coercive leadership.[108] While rarely advocating for true militant or directive leadership, Christian authors do tend to isolate and distance the leader, relying on a leader's ability to compel their followers with inspirational vision.[109] A cursory review of books and blogs about change management at churches would lead a reader to believe an inspiring leader and a sincere prayer can result in meaningful change.[110] This approach, described below, often positions the leader and their vision as the center of the change, rather than the organization's mission and its people.[111] Authors Dunbar and Blair cite a 2004 study of change in which one pastor sums up this perspective well: "If the group trusts the pastor/staff and feels they have researched/prayed, the amount of resistance [to change] is minimal."[112] The authors interpret this comment and others by doubling down on the importance of trust in a central leader and a top-down orchestration in the change process.[113] Brad Powell, in his book *Change Your Church for Good*, also

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[107] Collins refers to leaders with a high power distance, like that of a CEO, as able to operate within an executive style of leadership. Jim Collins, *Good to Great in the Social Sector*: *Why Business Thinking is Not the Answer* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 11.

[108] Goleman referrs to the militant approach to leadership as the coercive style. Daniel Goleman, "Leadership That Gets Results," in *HBRs 10 Must Reads on Managing People* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2011), 1-27.

[109] The suggestion of this essay is to think less like an executive and more like a fellow explorer. The leader can position themselves as a guide rather than a General.

[110] This section cites several examples.

[111]. Through this essay I will refer to this as a leader-centric or vision-centric approach. While a leader is essential, they are not the hero or the star of the change effort. Rather than the leader or leader crafted vision as the center, this essay suggests the organizational narrative is the center of the change.

[112] Dunbar and Blair, 108.

[113] Dunbar and Blair, 108.

emphasizes the role of the senior leader. Lead pastors, he says, are those making the difficult decisions, establishing trust, and creating vibrancy *through their vision*.[114]

Dan Southerland outlines an eight-step strategy for leading through change in your church. Each strategy is centered on a vision from a leader, with a nod to opposition, as if the only team member's voice worth noting is one to win over or overcome.[115] In Rainer's call to change, the work prescribed is predominately assigned to the leader.[116] Gene Wood's book *Leading Turnaround Churches* starts with the leader-centric question: are you are a turnaround leader? His change strategy also focuses on leadership and vision.[117] This perspective of an isolated and independent leader is a stark contrast to the work of John Kotter, Harvard's renowned change expert, whose first step toward change in any organization is to build a guiding coalition.[118] Peter Senge attests that vision from a singular leader "leads to superficial visions imposed upon larger groups."[119]

Biases towards top-down change were echoed in Rainer's more extensive book, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*.[120] In it, Rainer identifies twelve signs of church decline

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[114] Brad Powell, *Change Your Church for Good,* rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010). Empasis mine.

[115] The steps are: 1. Preparing for vision, 2. Defining the vision, 3. Planting the vision, 4. Sharing the vision, 5. Implementing the vision, 6. Dealing with opposition, 7. Making course corrections, 8. Evaluating the results. Dan Southerland, *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

[116] Rainer, "Hope for Dying Churches."

[117] Wood, *Leading Turnaround Churches*, 2001.

[118] John P Kotter, "Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail," in *On Change Management* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2011), 1–16.

[119] Riane Eisler, "A Conversation with Peter Senge: Transforming Organizational Cultures," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* 2, no. 1 (2015), https://doi.org/10.24926/ijps.v2i1.98.

[120] Thom Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2014).

(e.g., low evangelism, prayer, pastoral retention, mission, deteriorating facilities), with no proposal for or guidance through how to make changes. This approach fails to grasp the complicated nature of change management. By contrast, change experts Heifetz and Linsky believe adaptive problems "require individuals *throughout* the organization to alter their ways."[121] If we fail to involve our teams, they will have aversion to our initiatives and "strive to restore order, maintain what is familiar to them, and protect themselves from the pains of adaptive change."[122]

Change in the Christian literature is often depicted as a linear and controllable process, following concrete steps in an objective process.[123] Though leaders lead through adaptive change, they cannot dictate it. It requires the work and contribution of every team member, as initiated and inspired through a central influential team. Change is dynamic and includes multiple factors that are often outside the control of a point leader.[124]

Leading through change is a not the task of an isolated or independent leader, no matter how inspiring their presentation or fervent their prayer. Inspiring leadership may be important, but it is not necessarily correlated to more effective management of

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[121] Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, "A Survival Guide for Leaders," in *On Change Management* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2011), 100. Emphasis mine.

[122] Heifetz and Linsky, "A Survival Guide for Leaders," 100.

[123] Cliff Oswick, "Reflections: OD or Not OD That Is the Question! A Constructivist's Thoughts on the Changing Nature of Change," *Journal of Change Management* 13, no. 4 (2013): 371–381, https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2013.776728.

[124] David Buchanan and Patrick Dawson, "Discourse and Audience: Organizational Change as Multi-Story Process," *Journal of Management Studies* 44, no. 5 (2007): 669–686, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2006.00669.x.

change.[125] A leader-centric approach implies if *their* change fails, they had not been inspiring enough, their prayers fervent enough, or their leadership decisive enough. While leadership, vision, hope, and prayer are important, they are not the only tools at the leader's disposal for leading effectively through and toward change.

The leader is essential, yes. To make large-scale systemic changes requires more than a passionate leader with vision, but not less.[126] The challenge is to create change that is sustainable for the long haul.[127] Change is often short-lived not because it takes root quickly, but because the new organizational structure, implemented process, or core behavior fails to be fully deployed.[128]

Change is Complicated, Dynamic, and Long-Term

Change experts Heifetz and Linsky say organizational change "often involves radically reconfiguring a complex network of people, tasks, and institutions that have achieved a kind of modus vivendi, no matter how dysfunctional it appears to you."[129] Change is structural; it is embedded in systems and motivations, it never lives alone at the top.[130]

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[125] Varying approaches to change leadership, including research about *Transformational Leadership* are included in Chapter Three.

[126] In the story of organizational change, the leader is the guide, not the hero. This plot is not about the distribution of the leader's idea, but a community's engagement with their vocation.

[127] David Buchanan et al., "No Going Back: A Review of the Literature on Sustaining Organizational Change," *International Journal of Management Reviews* 7, no. 3 (2005): 189–205, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2005.00111.x.

[128] Michael Beer and Nitin Nohria, "Cracking the Code of Change (Statistical Data Included)," *Harvard Business Review* 78, no. 3 (2000): 216.

[129] Heifetz and Linsky, "A Survival Guide for Leaders," 102.

[130] I believe one exception is the type of change that creates something new, a topic I explore in

Yet, the Christian change literature often fails to grasp the complexity of managing change. In their 2007 report, Stetzer and Dodson explain how 300 churches were able to create a turnaround culture.[131] In their research, they found that new pastors were more likely to be able to bring in new change. While the authors show what kinds of changes are needed in different phases of a church, they do not explain the process of making those changes. Starting something new, it is assumed, is as easy as saying it will be so.[132] The change literature says otherwise. Change to established organizations is more about adapting than demanding; it requires more listening than convincing.[133]

Rick Warren, in a blog post about leading through change, offers quick-fix solutions such as building campaigns or assigning a pastor to an identified problem.[134] These ideas may be well-intentioned, but they overlook the difficulty of long-term change. "Responding to an adaptive challenge with a technical fix may have some short-term appeal," say Heifetz and Linsky, "…but to make real progress, sooner or later those who lead must ask themselves and the people in the organization to face a set of deeper issues—and to accept a solution that may require turning part or all of the organization

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Chapter Two. This type of change is not seeking to adapt, but birth. In this regard, a solo leader seeking a vision may be completely legitimate. Still, the solo entrepreneur is largely a Western phenomonen. Examples of non-Western approaches to community discovery are described in Chapter Four.

[131] Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*.

[132] These approaches to leaders, "especially in organizations shaped by heirarchies or by modern management theories, focus on experts who have answers and can manage and control outcomes." Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez, *Churches, Culture and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 54. These authors recommend a community that attends to their collective insight.

[133] Peter M. Senge, *The Dance of Change: The Challenges of Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations*, 1st ed. (New York: Currency/Doubleday, 1999).

[134] "Before You Lead Your Church Through Change," Pastors.com, June 13, 2013, https://pastors.com/before-you-lead-your-church-through-change/.

upside down."[135] We need more than vision. We need to learn how to create cultures that are open to changes, and we need people who can adapt to new ways of thinking.

Leaders chronically underestimate the requirements and energy needed to produce systemic change.[136] Josh Hunt tackles the issue of church change by specifically addressing John Kotter's model for change and Jim Collins' flywheel analogy, both of which he believes are flawed. In his book *Change Your Church or Die*, he writes, "[change] is normally about trying a thousand things and keeping what works."[137] Does this shotgun approach lead to lasting change, or is this another hyper-example of seeing change as technical process for discovering the secret ingredient? Later, incidentally, he says to do less.[138]

Though the call to change or die may be compelling, Jim Collins writes, "Clearly, the solution to decline lies not in the simple bromide 'Change or Die'; Bank of America changed a lot, and nearly killed itself in the process."[139] Demanding change does not necessarily equate to enacting successful change.

The temptation is overvaluing the technical improvements of leadership without dealing with the deep-rooted structures, behaviors, and stories of the people impacted by change. Nieuwhof says, "The trap most leaders fall into is believing that a change in form

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[135] Heifetz and Linsky, "A Survival Guide for Leaders," 100.

[136] Malcolm Higgs and Deborah Rowland, "All Changes Great and Small: Exploring Approaches to Change and Its Leadership," *Journal of Change Management* 5, no. 2 (2005): 121–151.

[137] Josh Hunt and Ken Hemphill, *Change Your Church or Die* (N.p.: Pulpit Press, 2014), 21.

[138] Hunt and Hemphill, *Change Your Church or Die,* 69.

[139] Collins, *How the Mighty Fall*, 22.

will be an adequate substitute for a change in substance."[140] Nelson and Appel acknowledge the nuanced complexities present in a change effort. While their approach is often top-down, they appeal to the leader to listen, understand context, creating plans, and attend to emotion.[141]

We need to understand how change happens so we can adapt to a changing world. After all, "God's promises in Christ are steadfast, but the shape and future of the church in America is increasingly uncertain."[142] In *How Change Comes to Your Church*, authors Patrick Kiefert and Wesley Granberg-Michaelson acknowledge, "Most congregations in the US recognize their need for change"[143] yet they do not know how to change. Furthermore, "congregations able to make changes are more likely to experience higher vitality." That is, if you survive the change, you may emerge stronger.[144]

These authors are dealing with the real issue. They encourage a discernment process that is engaged in the Scriptures and shared with the congregation. Their model is centered on transformation corporately and personally.

We need more than vision. We need to learn how to create cultures that are open to changes, and we need people who can reorganize and adapt. This approach, a

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[140] Carey Nieuwhof, "5 Things That Won't Make Your Church Grow (Despite What You May Think)," Careynieuwhof.com, May 19, 2014, https://careynieuwhof.com/wont-make-your-church-grow/.

[141] Nelson and Appel, *How to Change Your Church*.

[142] Dwight Zscheile, *The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2014) x.

[143] Patrick Keifert, and Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *How Change Comes to Your Church: A Guidebook for Church Innovations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), Introduction.

[144] Keifert and Granberg-Michaelson, *How Change Comes to Your Church*, Introduction.

corporately developed narrative vocation and its supporting structures, will be the subject of this dissertation.

Summary

Culture is changing and churches need to respond. The data show church attendance and giving are declining, and a growing percentage of nearly every age group are unaffiliated with faith. Meanwhile, culture is changing rapidly. In response, the church literature is peppered with suggestions for innovation, adaptation, re-birth, and renewal. Though ambitious, well-intentioned, and passionate, the Christian change-management narrative is often short-sighted and ungrounded in the academic literature. At its core, the narrative of changing churches is overly leader-centric, approaching change as a tactical rather than an adaptive challenge,[145] encouraging leaders to cast compelling visions they discovered in isolation. Unfortunately, the results are predictable and short-lived, and often contribute to the demise of hopeful change agents and their churches.

This dissertation will expound on best practices in change management so church leaders like Janice can lead through change effectively. Chapter Two will unpack the theological frameworks for thinking about change. As we will see, starting something new is different than changing from within. The forerunner of the new is Jesus himself, who fulfilled an old covenant and began a new movement. The adaptive change agents in the story of the church are the once-reluctant followers James and Paul, who helped turn

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[145] The difference between tactical and adaptive challenges are bedrock principles of adaptive leadership, which will be explored in detail in Chapter Three.

the ship of a pre-existing, highly established Jewish community. Likewise, Joshua took over an existing structure (Israel) and led it into a new season (the Promised Land).

Chapter Three explores best practices in change management across academic literature, examining a wide range of theories related to change, including competing and contrasting viewpoints. Chapter Four unpacks narrative leadership, and how identifying and telling a story can help create an attitude and culture ripe for change. Chapter Five describes how personal and corporate structures can create the long- and short-term wins and the environment needed to persevere in the exhaustion of turning the ship. Finally, Chapter Six applies a model for change in church leadership based on the principles discovered in the following four chapters.

As the Barna Group encourages in their manuscript on Leadership Transitions—never waste a problem.[146] Perhaps we are leaking attendees, perhaps the faith of the *nones* has exploded, and perhaps the church has gone cold. And perhaps, as Winston Churchill famously quipped, and Gene Kranz quoted in the movie adaptation of the Apollo 13 crisis, "this will be our finest hour."[147]

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[146] The Barna Group, "Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change—and Stay Healthy," (N.p.: The Barna Group, 2019).

[147] Ron Howard, *Apollo 13* (Universal City, CA: Universal, 2005).

CHAPTER TWO:

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT

"When they finished, James spoke up. 'Brothers,' he said, 'listen to me…It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.'"[1]

Introduction

Christians have a Christ-given mandate to make disciples.[2] Making disciples in a changing world requires adapting our ministry models. Chapter One uncovered how Christian change-advocating authors are often inattentive to or unaware of best practices in the academic literature surrounding how to make change. Specifically, their approaches are often overly leader-centric. Before diving into a review of the best-practice change literature and alternative views of change (Chapter Three), this chapter will examine the biblical and theological foundations for change.

What is the biblical basis for leading change? What examples are found in the Scriptures of people leading through the process of change? This dissertation specifically tackles the kinds of change that "turn a ship," that is, taking something moving in a particular direction and changing its course. There are, however, other types of biblically legitimate change. A leader can birth something new (creation), make changes to keep something on its current course (protection), or restart something that is dying or off-

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[1] The Acts of the Apostles 15: 13, 19. I will refer to this book as Acts.

[2] Matthew 28:18-19.

course (revitalization). These approaches to change have biblical precedent and contemporary examples. Each are explored below before introducing the fourth type of change (transformation[3]).

Visions of Change

Creation

Some changes are initiated with the creation of the new. In the beginning, God created—separating and filling the earth day by day.[4] God the Creator endowed mankind, made in his image, with the ability to create. God turned the work of creating over to men and women, saying, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."[5] The mandate to create came alongside a call to lead.[6]

Creation does not end in Genesis 1-2. God began a new family, Israel, through which he promised to bless the whole world.[7] He continued creating: by the middle of the Scriptures, he is still breathing stars.[8]

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[3] This paper will alternatively refer to this type of change as reformation and formation, the adaptation and changing of an established organization. Transformation is also explored as the biblical basis of the changing of a person.

[4] Genesis 1.

[5] Genesis 1:28.

[6] While this is a debated topic among various Christian traditions, it is the belief of this author that the call to rule and lead is given to men and women, both made in God's image as ruler and creator. For further reading, consider Alice Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God: Rethinking What We Were Taught about Men and Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017).

[7] Genesis 12:2.

[8] Psalm 33:6.

Today, this type of change is seen in the birth of new denominations[9] and church planting. Christopher Railey argues the key to reverse the downward trajectory of church membership in the United States is church multiplication.[10] However, little evidence exists that church planting results in significant new converts to Christianity. In a 2018 report, Stephen Pass demonstrates that new churches do not necessarily create overall church growth.[11] Still, change by creation is a biblically valid approach to change.

Protection

Some changes protect what was created. The Pentateuch chronicles the foundation of a nation through the establishment of *Torah* or *The Law*, designed not only to be a bilateral suzerainty covenant relationship with God, but as a protection-provision order for His people.[12] God is a founder, creating a nation *ex nihlo*,[13] and then protecting it from itself, invaders, disease, destruction, and demise. In Exodus, God protects, rescuing the children of Israel. Then God outlines a plan for them to be sustained through law. Moses is the forerunner in change management for protection. Israel had been chosen as

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[9] Presbyterians formed a new covenant association as they left the Presbyterian Church, USA denomination. "(1) Presbyterians Form New Denomination. (Gleanings: Important Developments in the Church and the World.)," *Christianity Today* 56, no. 3 (2012): 10.

[10] Christopher Railey, "A Healthy Church in Every Community: Creating a Culture of Multiplication in the Assemblies of God USA." (DMin diss., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2016).

[11] In their report they found it did yield growth, but that growth was volatile, as most church planting was also more unstable. Stefan Paas, "A Case Study of Church Growth by Church Planting in Germany: Are They Connected?" *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 42, no. 1 (2018): 40–54.

[12] Stanley, *Irresistible*, 32.

[13] *Ex nihlo* means "from nothing." Richard Neville, "Differentiation in Genesis 1: An Exegetical Creation Ex Nihilo," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 2 (2011): 209–226, https://doi.org/10.2307/41304197.

a nation centuries before,[14] but in Exodus, God uses Moses as a leader to solidify and codify the plan so it can continue.[15]

Today, churches make changes to their bylaws, structure, and approach to maintain that which is established. Notably, during the 2003 scandal involving the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope changed canon law to expedite dismissal of Priests.[16] These types of changes, to protect the church course and direction, are common in local churches and denominational life. Other examples include shifting training for pastoral leaders to support the ongoing work of local and church plant leadership.[17]

Revitalization

Like creation and protection, revitalization is a biblically valid approach to change management; changes regenerate, restore, and reenergize what has been established. Through the prophets, God continually calls people to return to him, to be reborn, renewed, and restored.[18] In Revelation, He is making all things new.[19]

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[14] Genesis 12-18.

[15] Genesis 20-21.

[16]John L. Allen, "Pope Secretly Approves Changes to Permit Quicker Trials, Dismissal of Priests. (Church in Crisis) (Canon Law)," *National Catholic Reporter* 39, no. 18 (2003): 5.

[17] In one specific example, Newton examines relational training models as a way to continue kingdom work through the next generation of ministers. To protect their vision, they had to establish trainings. Phillip Newton, "Local Church Leadership Development: Its Effects and Importance on Church Planting and Revitalization," (DMin diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013).

[18] The minor prophets pay witness to a repeating cycle of disobedience, disaster, repentance, and recovery. Mark J. Boda, *Return to Me: A Biblical Theology of Repentance*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 35.

[19] Revelation 21:5.

Church revitalization is an increasingly popular trend in academic literature. Milton Schmidt explores church revitalization through creating multi-site churches among dying congregations.[20] This creative approach, also discussed at length by Andrew Beery, gives new life to that which was dying.[21] In 2016, Andrew Shanks recommended training as a method to revitalize a Baptist church in Virginia.[22] Sean Lee explores training in prayer as a vehicle for church revitalization in his thesis.[23]

God restores what he creates. When His people depart from the Law, or when they fall into disgrace, He rescues them. He restores the family of Israel, notably through the Exodus narrative, but also in the Prophets and historical books. God reenergizes what He created, revitalizing it from decay, restoring it to its intended purpose. So, if God creates good things, protects them from harm, and restores them to their original condition when damaged—why would we ever change them?

Transformation

The fourth version of change, takes what is and moves it in a new direction.[24] Transformation, the adaptation of organizations, is the subject of this dissertation, the

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[20] Christopher Schmidt, "A Second Birth: Multi-Site Ministry as a Means of Church Revitalization in the United Methodist Church." (DMin diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 2017).

[21] Andrew Beery, "Multi-Site Churches as a Strategy for Church Revitalization within the Presbyterian Church USA." (DMin diss., Northeastern Seminary, 2018).

[22] Andrew Shanks, "Developing a Training Module for Church Revitalization Utilizing Church Planting Methodologies with a Select Group of Members of Fontaine Baptist Church in Martinsville, Virginia," (DMin diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

[23] Sean Lee, "Equipping a Select Group of Leaders of Holly Grove Baptist Church, Spring Hope, North Carolina, to Pray in Preparation for Church Revitalization," (DMin diss, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

[24] I have chosen to use the word transformation instead of reformation. As Chapter Three will describe, this type of change adapts the form of something into a new context. Furthermore, one can hardly

specific type of change this essay argues is needed for large, established churches. The next section examines two biblical characters who led through a transformational challenge to a large, established group in need of a new direction. Before exploring these two stories, it is helpful to examine how transformation is a biblical idea for good, even perfect, things.

Transformation adapts what exists into something new. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God says to Israel He will not only return them home, but will give them a new heart.[25] In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul encourages his audience to be transformed by renewing their mind.[26] While writing to the church at Corinth, Paul reminds the local church that they are being transformed more and more into the likeness of Jesus.[27]

In Romans 12:2, Paul uses the word *μεταμορφοῦσθε*, transliterated *metamorphousth,* meaning to transform or to transfigure.[28] "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be *transformed* by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

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hear the word *reformation* and not think of the Great Reformation and its most famous reformer, Martin Luther. Yet, for all his attempts at reformation, Luther ended up doing more creation than adaptation. Advocates of leader-centric change ought to study this reformer. Luther saw a change that was needed and attempted to reform from within. He failed. When the writing was on the wall, he demanded all Protestants unite around him. Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 64-74, 378-386; Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 370-371.

[25] Ezekiel 36:26.

[26] Romans 12:1-2.

[27] 2 Corinthians 3:18.

[28] Paul uses the same root word (*metamorphoumetha*) in 2 Corinthians 3:18.

The Greek word here is also used to describe the transfiguration of Jesus in Matthew 17 and Mark 9. Jesus was *changed*.[29] God, who is perfect, was transformed. God, who is unchanging, was changed. Transformation may be the most difficult form of biblical change. Leaders who want to lead change might be better off creating something new, making changes to protect what is, or breathing new energy into the life of something dying.

The present writing seeks to examine the plight and efforts of leaders of large non-profit churches, whose congregations have not died, who do not want to start something brand new, but who want to adapt their model through systemic change to be able to take their congregation, resources, and mission into the next chapter. This type of leadership is adaptive, which is "how leaders encourage people to adapt—to face and deal with problems, challenges, and changes."[30] Adaptive leaders "prepare and encourage people to deal with change."[31]

The following two sections examine Joshua and James and the transformational style of biblical change management, often underutilized in the realm of contemporary church leadership. The first is Joshua and the transition of leadership and adaptation of a nation from a wandering people to a conquering nation in the Promised Land. Then, we examine James and the adaptive change of the church as Gentiles turned to follow Jesus.

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[29] Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36.

[30] Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 257.

[31] Northouse, Leadership: Theory and Practice, 257.

Joshua: Nation Transformation

Introduction: Joshua Stayed in the Tent

When we first encounter Joshua in the biblical narrative, he is becoming acquainted with leadership. Joshua is Moses' young assistant and, though Moses goes about the camp serving as judge, Joshua "did not leave the tent."[32] Jewish author Elihu Schatz believes Joshua is nineteen at this time, supported by the Hebrew word *na'ar,* translated in Exodus 33:11 as "young man."[33]

In Numbers 11, Joshua protests against two men who were prophesying. Moses, recognizing his young assistant is attempting to preserve his authority as the leader, says, "Are you jealous for my sake?" God then exhorts Joshua, reminding him that God's Spirit is on center stage, not whoever happens to be in charge. Moses says, "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!"[34]

James MacGregor Burns explains how Moses' leadership is in contrast to the "power wielders" like Pharaoh.[35] Paul Herskovitz and Esther Klein write, "Moses would

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[32] Exodus 33:11. Joshua is being spiritually formed. Spiritual formation is, "the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself." Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs: Nav Press, 2002), 22. Willard recognizes other definitions of spiritual formation, notably those by Richard McBrier and Francis Schaeffer. Speaking of this kind of transformation, C. S. Lewis wrote, "He is beginning to turn you into the same kind of thing as Himself." C.S. Lewis*, Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillian, 1956), 148.

[33] Na'ar means boy, in the same verse Moses is referred to as a man (*'is*) Elihu A Schatz, "The Length of the Rule of Joshua and the Periods of Subjugation in the Book of Judges," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2013): 34.

[34] Leviticus 11:29. The transformation of a person mirrors that of an organization – it is driven by the Spirit, but must be "cooperated with." Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 25.

[35] James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 113.

prefer that everyone have his unique power of communication under the influence of divine guidance."[36]

Although Moses has a son,[37] Joshua is Moses' heir apparent. After Moses dies, the Israelites observe Joshua "is filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him."[38] Here the verb regarding Joshua's relationship to the Spirit indicates a filling, in contrast to a placement on those prophesying in Numbers 11.[39] The author then says the Israelites "listened to him and did what the Lord had commanded Moses."[40] On the next page of our Old Testament, Joshua begins the transition plan into the Promised Land.

A Transformational and Adaptive Change

Joshua's leadership began when he was either 83 or 59.[41] His mission was to lead Israel into taking their inheritance.[42] God opens His communication with Joshua abruptly:

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[36] Paul J. Herskovitz, "The Biblical Story of Moses: Lessons in Leadership for Business," *Journal of Leadership Studies* (1999): 87.

[37] Moses's son is Gershom (Exodus 2:22). Moses and Zipporah have another son, Eleazer, during their 40-year stay in Midian (Exodus 18:4).

[38] Deuteronomy 34:9. The Spirit is on center stage in both the story of Joshua and James. The work of transforming a community is tied to the Spirit's work. Eugene Peterson says, "Spiritual formation is primarily what the Spirit does, forming the resurrection life of Christ in us." Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 237.

[39] The Hebrew word in Deuteronomy 34 is *ma-le*, meaning "is filled," in Leviticus 11, the verb is *yit-ten*, meaning "would place." The filling may indicate a more permanent or deeper saturation of Spirit, by contrast a placement may be temporary or surface level.

[40] Deuteronomy 34:9.

[41] Schatz, "The Length of the Rule of Joshua and the Periods of Subjugation in the Book of Judges," 32-33. The traditional Jewish belief is he began leading at age 83, but the author here demonstrates he may have been substantially younger.

[42] The Hebrew verb *nahal* here is its hiphil form, "to inherit," as used in Deuteronomy 1:38, 3:28, 31:7. Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the*

"Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give them."[43] Moses was dead. It was Joshua's turn. Get ready.

Joshua is leading a significant change. Is this a creation, protection, revitalization, or another kind of change? It is not a creation change. Joshua is not leading a new group; it is the second generation of the Israelite nation rescued from Egypt in the Exodus.[44] He is not leading a new mission or a new promise; God had promised this land to Abraham and Moses.[45]

He is not leading a protection change; God had protected them through The Law in the previous generation. Although they are in a new territory with a new leader, they are living into the same narrative that God had given since Abraham, within the same covenant given to Abraham and the same Law given to Moses. They are entering a territory that is new to them, but not new to God. This land has been part of their espoused relational covenant with God.[46] The Promised Land belongs and has always

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New Testament: Abridged in One Volume (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 771. Upon close examination, Gene Tucker notes that this goal was not fully realized in Joshua. Gene M. Tucker, "Joshua, The Book Of," in *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 384–87 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 385.

[43] Joshua 1:2.

[44] Numbers 32:13. Throughout the scriptures, vocation is often connected to a specific location. Agents of transformation ought to attend to their setting.

[45] God promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1, and again in Genesis 13, 15, and 17. Joseph references the promised land in Genesis 50. God promises the land to the Israelites in Exodus 6, Leviticus 20:24, Numbers 14, and Deuteronomy 6 and 31.

[46] The Promised Land is the territory from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates (Exodus 23:31) and was promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21), Isaac (Genesis 26:3), and Jacob (Genesis 28:13).

belonged to God.[47]. Israel had been in battle before;[48] now they are entering a territory as a people ready to settle in.

God says to Joshua, "Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you…"[49] This is not a new command for the leaders of Israel. Their leaders, as described in Deuteronomy 17:14-20,[50] were to concern themselves with the private and public reading of the Law.[51]

This is not a renewal or revitalization. The momentum of Israel is moving forward, not towards decline. This is a major change in leadership, in setting, and in behavior to accomplish the same mission with the same people. It is a transformational change, an adaptive change.

Joshua's Approach

On perhaps his first day on the job, Joshua is preparing to lead a generation into a new season of change. He begins by giving Israelite leaders specific instructions and deadlines: "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get your provisions ready. Three

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[47] Leviticius 25:23 ("The land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers"). Although the land is a gift, it is one that requires human involvement, in this case by military action. The sovereignty of God is not antithetical to human activity and responsibility. In these stories, they are compatible and complementary. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2008), 94.

[48] See the Battle of Refidim, Exodus 17.

[49] Joshua 1:7.

[50] "When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel." Deuteronomy 17:18-20.

[51] Daniel I. Block, "'That They May Hear': Biblical Foundations for the Oral Reading of Scripture in Worship," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 5, no. 1 (2012): 5.

days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own.'"[52] Joshua gives further instruction to specific tribes. His instructions are not an impassioned speech to generate followers, but specific directions and timelines. Three days later, Joshua follows up with further instructions.

> After three days[53] the officers went throughout the camp, giving orders to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before."[54]

Forty thousand Israelites prepared for battle[55] follow the ark of the covenant into the Jordan River which, like the Red Sea during the Exodus, creates a traversable path.[56] After they cross, God instructs Joshua to create a symbolic moment of remembrance by taking a stone from the river for each tribe of Israel and placing them as a memorial.[57]

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[52] Joshua 1:10-11.

[53] Scholars have mixed conclusions regarding the chronology of Joshua 1-3. David Howard proposes these three-day periods overlap with the time spent spying on the land to create a seven-day period, mirroring the seven-day taking of Jericho. David Howard, "'Three Days' in Joshua 1-3: Resolving a Chronological Conundrum," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41, no. 4 (1998): 539.

[54] Joshua 3:2-4.

[55] Joshua 4:13. Archaeologists believe the population of Jericho was between 1,500-2,000. The translation of this word, also used in Exodus 12:37 and Numbers 2:2-32, translated "thousand" here can refer to a military division or troop. Using this estimation, there would be about 1,300 people crossing the Jordan River. John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 86, 215.

[56] Joshua 3:14-17 and Exodus 14:21-22. The Hebrew prepositions for dry ground *charabah* and *yabbashah* are both used in both the Joshua and Exodus story. Joshua remembers the Genesis 1 creation account and Exodus story in 4:22 when he explains the memorial. Tucker notes, "the life of Joshua is shown to parallel that of Moses; as Moses led the people through the sea, Joshua led them across the Jordan River, and both men led the people in the establishment and renewal of the covenant with their God." Gene Tucker, "Joshua, The Book Of," 387.

[57] Joshua 4:1-9.

Joshua's speeches are short on new vision. He leverages instructions, timelines, and memorials to lead an existing group into a new chapter of the same story with the same mission.

Principles for Biblical Leadership

For a nation that constantly complained to Moses,[58] Israel never complained to Joshua. Joshua is not more commanding or authoritative than Moses; in fact, he appears to be weaker than Moses. He had been timid in his response to the initial attempt to enter the Promised Land.[59] In the Talmud, the Jews imagined the elders asking Moses to only give Joshua part of his authority.[60] They later say, "Moses' face is like the sun and Joshua's like the moon."[61] That is, Moses' face shone like the sun when he returned from meeting God, and the Israelites would not approach him. Moses began to wear a veil to hide his face, not from God, but from the people he was leading.[62] Joshua, by contrast, is approachable. When the people complained, Moses was frustrated. When things seemed bleak, Joshua is the first one to cry out in desperation.[63]

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[58] They complain about leaving Egypt in Exodus 5:1-22, they want to be left alone in Exodus 14:11-12, they complain about water (Exodus 15:22, 17:1-4), food (Exodus 16:1-4, Numbers 11:33), leadership (Numbers 12:1-12), and the Promised Land (Numbers 14:1-10).

[59] Caleb speaks up first in Numbers 13:30, but Joshua doesn't speak up until 14:6-10, after the other spies have publicly grumbled and demoralized Israel.

[60] Bava Batra, 75a.

[61] Bava Batra, 75a.

[62] Exodus 34:33-35.

[63] Much to God's apparent dismay. Joshua 7:6-9.

Angel Hayyim suggests the moon-style leadership of Joshua may have allowed others to shine. Joshua immediately involves the officials in leadership.[64] On center stage in the Jordan crossing is not the leader but the delegates from the tribes, the priests, and the ark. The central character is not Joshua, but God. The same is true at the battle of Jericho. Hayyim writes, "It appears that this further element of Joshua's moon-style leadership empowered many among the people, so that they actively supported and joined in Joshua's efforts."[65]

Joshua's approach leads to great success. He empowers others, gives clear direction, and generally removes himself from the spotlight to continue a narrative given by him to his predecessor. It is another story of God working through human activity,[66] this time through a leader who involves the people around him. Joshua's leadership is rooted in the values, geography, and mission of the people he leads.[67]

Joshua's work is dependent on God's activity. He leads a nation into a new season with instructions, timelines, memorials, and collaboration. How does this style of leadership compare to a New Testament leader who leads a large group into a new season?

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[64] Joshua 1:10. Joshua even lets others decide who will be their representative from each tribe.

[65] Angel Hayyim, "Moonlit Leadership: A Midrashic Reading of Joshua's Success," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2009): 150. Chapters Four and Five of this essay recommend specific practices for involving others at the forefront of a change initiative.

[66] As J.B. Green writes, "...the Bible as a whole does not resolve the tension between human responsibility and divine sovereignty; the two co-exist at times in delicate balance..." Brian S. Rosner, T. Desmond Alexander, Graeme Goldsworthy, and D. A. Carson, eds., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity Diversity of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 525.

[67] Formation, whether of a group or an individual, is always done within a local context. Eugene Peterson says, "Theology divorced from geography gets us into nothing but trouble." Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, 77.

James: Changing the Rules

Introduction: James Changed His Mind

James did not follow or believe in his older brother. He was in good company: Jesus' own mother mocked him in an account in the Gospel of Mark[68] and, according to the Gospel of John, his brothers and sisters joined the critique.[69] James often has been neglected among Christian scholars,[70] perhaps due to the unverified authorship of the book carrying his name.[71]

Jesus paid a special visit to James after the resurrection.[72] Soon thereafter, James became a pillar of the church[73] and was perhaps the most prominent figure for the church in Jerusalem for the first generation of Christian converts.[74] Tradition holds that James'

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[68] Mark 3:21. After calling the disciples, Jesus returns home. There, "his own" family members attempt to take hold of him saying, "he is out of his own mind." Most scholars believe the author Mark is trying to depict Jesus' brothers and mother in a less than positive light. David Arthur DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 566.

[69] John 7.

[70] John Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition*, Studies on Personalities of the New Testament (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997). It's worth noting, in the five dictionaries cited in this dissertation, none of them have an article about James. Few had any mention of him.

[71] The authorship of James is debated, but "there is reason to believe that at least the material in the letter of James, if not the writing itself, stems from the brother of Jesus, and this material reveals an authoritative leader in a Palestinian context." Peter H. Davids, "James, Brother of Jesus," in *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 339.

[72] 1 Corinthians 15:7. One can only imagine what that reunion must have been like. As an older brother myself, I imagine it began with "I told you so."

[73] Paul references this in Galatians 2:9 and 1:19.

[74] Perhaps he is their leader because he is their forerunner. Nicholas Thomas Wright, *Acts for Everyone*, New Testament for Everyone (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 2008), 44.

knees became hardened like camels' from praying so often.[75] James changed his mind about Jesus because of something he had seen, and he helped usher in a change that echoed across the ancient Near East.[76]

The first-century disciples saw Jesus' resurrection to life not only as an earth-shattering event, but as the fulfillment of God's promises.[77] As N.T. Wright writes, "The hope of new creation had been fulfilled in a shockingly unexpected way."[78] When His disciples realized Jesus was alive, they realized that everything He said had been true. Jesus had introduced a new covenant with a new law.[79] And then He gave new marching orders: Go make disciples of all nations.[80] They did, and the movement grew. The small

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[75] William Barclay, *The Acts of the Apostles*, rev. ed. Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976). What happened that a man turned from mocking his brother to declaring him Lord of the whole world? What would turn a man from denying his brother to praying to him? Here's what happened: A dead man was raised. We don't know if he witnessed the crucifixion, but James witnessed the resurrection.

[76] Like Joshua, James was being spiritually formed. The catalysts are simipar: time with Jesus, led by the Spirit, spiritual practices, community, and mission. Greenman says, "Spiritual formation is our continuing response to the reality of God's grace shaping us into the likeness of Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the community of faith, for the sake of the world." Jeffrey Greenman, "Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspective: Classic Issues, Contemporary Challenges" in Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 2010), 24.

[77] Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus's Crucifixion* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2016), 145.

[78] Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*, 146.

[79] "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35. Jesus' new command to love was not actually new; John remembers this message is one they have had from the beginning. John's command includes not only love of one another, but also in believing "in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ." 1 John 3:23. This was not just of Jesus' ministry but of the "historic continuity" of the Hebrew faith. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 238.

[80] Matthew 28:18-19. Discipleship is a spiritual process, one where we are formed by Christ, fueled by Him, in pursuit of Him, to be more like Him. Dallas Willard says discipleship, "may be loosely described as staying as close to Jesus Christ as possible." Dallas Willard, "Spiritual Formation as a Natural Part of Salvation." in Jeffrey P. Greenman and George Kalantzis, *Life in the Spirit: Spiritual Formation in Theological Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 2010), 53.

gathering of those following The Way[81] would, within a few years, gather the attention of Emperor Claudius (41-54 CE).[82]

The invitation to be a blessing to the whole world was not new. The saving work of God among people was not new. But making disciples of all nations, and Jewish people in community with non-Jews, *was* new.

Changing Cast

Acts 15 opens with a nod toward the upcoming conflict: "Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: 'Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.'"[83]

Paul and Barnabas enter into a debate with the visitors from Antioch and are sent with a group of believers to Jerusalem. The conflict is understandable, the need for council even more so; the early church faced the question of how to take an ancient people tasked with self-preservation and purity and adapt them into becoming a missionally focused movement bent on multiplication. James would help welcome in a transformational change that carried his brother's followers through the "first major crisis of the early church."[84] With little experience working together and with no playbook, the

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[81] Followers of Jesus were called The Way. See Acts 9:2, 19:2, 19:23, etc.

[82] Claudius's historian notes the dispute between Jewish opponents and Jesus' followers, to whom he referred as the "Chrestus [sic]." Tony Allan, *Life, Myth, and Art in Ancient Rome* (Los Angeles: JPaul Getty Museum, 2005), 130.

[83] Acts 15:1. The events of Acts 15 likely took place between CE 48-50.

[84] Brian S. Rosner, T. Desmond Alexander, Graeme Goldsworthy, and D. A. Carson, eds. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity Diversity of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 31.

apostles would have to lead through the unknown.[85] They would be able to say what few leader-centric change agents can: The change they would initiate would outlast them.

Paul was specifically sent to preach the good news to the Gentiles.[86] As Paul and Barnabas travel to Jerusalem, they continue telling people how Gentiles have been converted. The Jewish Christians celebrated Gentile conversion,[87] but could not agree if they first needed to become Jewish. This was arduous, not only because the burden of a complex sacrificial system, but for Gentile men, becoming Jewish meant surgery.[88]

Though the idea of circumcision is uncomfortable at best, the ancient Near East was used to religious cults with an initiation requirement. The heart of Greek religion was the ritual sacrifice, most of which were satisfied in blood.[89] The entrails of the sacrificed bird, sheep, or oxen would be examined as a consultation for a military or political undertaking.[90]

Greeks were also used to secret customs and building-centric religious observance. In ancient Rome, for example, the cult of Mithras had an underground

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[85] Darin Land explores two types of leadership, the manager-leader and the innovator-leader. The manager-leader leads incrementally, as did the Jewish leaders in the first century. The early church demonstrates innovator-leader approach in response to the honor challenges faced by the earliest followers of The Way in the post-resurrection Roman world. This type of leadership shares authority and redefines previous norms. Darin H. Land, *The Diffusion of Ecclesiastical Authority: Sociological Dimensions of Leadership in the Book of Acts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

[86] Acts 9:15, Romans 15:14-33.

[87] "This news made all the believers very glad." Acts 15:3.

[88] Becoming Jewish meant adherence to a litany of moral and purity laws and customs, both those outlined in The Law and expounded upon through rabbinic midrash. Furthermore, converting to Judaism when becoming a follower of Jesus meant circumcision for the men.

[89] Schnabel, *Acts*, 120.

[90] Schnabel, *Acts*, 129.

meeting place and the beliefs were only revealed to those initiated (and only to men).[91] Cultures in the ancient Near East prided themselves on their religious buildings, as they were usually a sign of communal wealth.[92] It was more common for cults to have a particular place associated with their temple or statue. The gods might be worshiped in locations appropriate to their societal role.[93] The Jerusalem church does not adapt their content for the sake of cultural acceptance. Gentiles would have been used to temple-centric religion, with an expensive entrance fee, and secret rituals. They adapt because, through Christ, God had begun a new chapter of their story.

In the story of God, the Gentiles had been strangers to God's people. Luke, the author of Luke and Acts, wants to demonstrate to Theophilus how Gentiles can be sure they are part of God's plan.[94] Early followers of The Way walked through ongoing uncertainty about which parts of the traditional Jewish way of life and narrative would have to be embraced by new Gentile converts. This promise to include Gentiles was not new—it had been part of God's ordained plan from the original Abrahamic call[95]—but had not yet come to fruition.

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[91] Allan, Life, Myth, and Art in Ancient Rome, 122.

[92] Emma Stafford, *Life, Myth, and Art in Ancient Greece* (Los Angeles: JPaul Getty Museum, 2004), 118.

[93] For example, caves were often used as worship location for deities of the underworld, such as Furies at Athens, who had a cave near the Areopagos. Stafford, *Life, Myth, and Art in Ancient Greece,* 117.

[94] Luke is believed to be the author of Luke and Acts; both of these documents are addressed to someone named Theophilus, whose name means "friend of God." DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* 348.

[95] See Genesis 12:3: "and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

A singular ethnic community adapting to embrace all people was a massive change. At times, the narrative appears to have a universalist coloring.[96] The inclusion of the Gentiles is not an innovation,[97] but is historically grounded in Israel's faith. This tension builds to a climax in Acts 15, where Jesus' brother James and his peers conclude what full inclusion of the Gentiles really means, and what it requires.

The Jerusalem Council

The church in Jerusalem gathered for a council, called the *Apostolic* or *Jerusalem Council*, to decide how to respond to the Gentile converts. The placement of this debate in the center of Acts underscores its importance in the life of the early church.[98] The followers of The Way were eager to hear Paul's missionary exploits. Paul describes how Gentiles were turning to God and, as evidence of God's acceptance of them, they were being filled with the Holy Spirit.[99] Much discussion follows.[100] As further evidence of his standing in the leadership of the Jerusalem church, James speaks last.

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[96] This kind of radical inclusion may have felt like religious pluralism. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament,* 364.

[97] Paul's letters frequently reference Gentile inclusion. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 367.

[98] Robert Stoops, "Apostolic Council," in *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 42-43.

[99] Paul experienced the Holy Spirit working in communities and used this as evidence of their inclusion into the fold. The Holy Spirit's presence was understood by them as further evidence of the fulfillment of the Old Testament eschatological hope, but his understanding of the Holy Spirit was not limited there. The Holy Spirit was not controlled by believers, but is definitively present among his people. This is significant in that Paul witnessed the Gentiles being filled with the Holy Spirit. God was at work, and not just among Israel. He wasn't starting something new, he was including someone new. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1993), 405.

[100] Acts 15:7. One author argues that certainly this would have taken more than a few hours, perhaps more than a few days. Brian S. Rosner, T. Desmond Alexander, Graeme Goldsworthy, and D. A. Carson, eds., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*.

James's Approach

Peter leads with the core problem: we have never been able to keep this Law ourselves, and it has been a "yoke neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear."[101] The Law had served a purpose, but life under the suzerainty treaty had been difficult. Peter wraps up his portion of the message by reminding the followers of The Way of the new story they are living into: "We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."[102]

James speaks up. He reminds the audience (again) that this is not new; the story God is telling the world has not changed. Then, James provides clarity about how to move forward based on this new chapter in the story of their faith. He acknowledges what follows is his decision.[103] James says,

> It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.[104]

James takes hundreds of laws and distills them into four. The rationale of these four is critical for change managers and is outlined below. James leads with clarity not only in his decision, but the action the Council should take: we should write to them. James behavior is reminiscent of what Joshua had done, providing clear instructions

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[101] Acts 15:10.

[102] Acts 15:11. This stands in contrast to Peter's sermon in Acts 2, where, recalling the prophetic voice in Joel 2, he says, "all that call on the name of the Lord will be saved," but leaves out the sentence that follows in Joel: "for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said…"

[103] The little Greek word κρίνω (krino), translated judgment, literally means to pick out by separating. He is implying a choice, not a criticism.

[104] Acts 15:19-20.

about what to do next. Why? James says, "For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."[105]

This may seem an odd conclusion to his speech, but in light of what follows, it makes perfect sense. The Jerusalem Council seems to understand, as their next step is to appoint leaders to deliver this message. Like Joshua, although a senior leader decides, it is up to the group to implement it.[106] They write a letter to be read out loud to the Gentiles, who respond well.[107]

Why these four guidelines?[108] Most likely this was an issue of unity, or oneness. The principles in the letter from the Jerusalem Council were an application of the establishment of a community inclusive of Jews and Gentiles. Jesus' last prayer, after all, had been for unity—something the early church took seriously.[109] The early church leaders condemned "any separation of Jews from Gentiles in the Christian community, especially in its table fellowship, on the basis of Judaism's purity codes."[110]

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[105] Acts 15:21.

[106] Chapters Four and Five discuss the tension of maintaining authority while empowering participation.

[107] The letter would be read aloud in the congregation, as was regularly the practice in the New Testament (see also Luke 4:16, Acts 13:27, 2 Corinthians 1:13, 3:14-15, Colossians 4:16).

[108] There are at least six scholarly explanations for the reason these four particular commands are chosen. Some scholars point to the importance of maintenance of the Jewish law, or to particular laws that were so blatantly abusive to God they needed to be addressed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2012), 644-645.

[109] See John 17.

[110] Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement: Earliest Christianity to 1453* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 39. N.T. Wright does not agree wholeheartedly with this assessment. He says the intention of James is to get the Gentiles to agree to some of the law, without imposing all of it on them. Wright, *Acts for Everyone*, 45. However, the early New Testament believers understood that grace alone had saved them, that temple sacrifice was no longer necessary for atonement. The old covenant, in the words of the Hebrew author, had been made obsolete (Hebrews 8:13).

Wright believes the four laws referenced would have been those most offensive to their Jewish neighbors.[111] "And so James and the others worked out the double principle of no needful circumcision on one hand and no needless offense on the other."[112] They were for prescribed the sake of relational unity, not for the sake of ceremonial purity. This is not an issue of keeping a portion of the covenant, but keeping the peace. It is an act of applying "what does love require of me?" The four laws, therefore, are a continuation of Jesus' previously stated value: unity.

Principles for Biblical Leadership

Like Joshua, James takes something that has been established and brings it into a new season. James speaks to an audience who stands to lose part of their historical identity and addresses a common pain point: their inability to keep the Law. He then uses his own reasoning, gives specific instructions, and implements the change within the community. Throughout his decision and advocacy is an undercurrent of a dominant cultural value: unity. He speaks about something new through the established values of the people listening.

Transformational change is biblical. It requires the work of a leader empowering others to bring an existing community into a new season. Transformational work requires deep knowledge of a community and trust from its constituents. The reforming leader establishes appropriate reporting structures and provides clear instructions. Both James and Joshua pastor, facilitating responses to God's local activity. They lead, gathering

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[111] Wright, *Acts for Everyone*, 46.

[112] Wright, Acts for Everyone, 46.

attention towards the vision and values of their communities. In light of these Biblical examples, the following section examines a definition of pastoral formation and leadership in the context of transformational change.

Formation and Leadership

Defining Pastoral Formation

The pastor, the protagonist of change management for the purposes of this essay, orchestrates change through leadership and spiritual formation. For the hopeful change agent, I define formation as *the facilitation of personal response to God's local activity.*[113] Through the Holy Spirit, pastors pay attention to and invite participation into what God is doing.

Branson and Martinez say, "'paying attention' is important and difficult. Just as a competent painter, carpenter, or teacher learns over many years how to attend. They train their senses and responses to their environment and their work. Church leaders need to pay attention to cultural characteristics and the work of shaping intercultural life."[114] The

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[113] As cited above, Willard (p 35) , Peterson (p 36), Lewis (p 35) , and Greenman (43) have notable definitions of spiritual formation. This definition above emphasizes the role of the leader as Spirit-led facilitator in a local context, encouraging personal response. Eugene Peterson says, "We are not spectators of creation but participants in it." *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places,* 54. While God is the author of this story, and the primary plot is the mission of a local community, each individual has a form of participation within it. For example, in the African church the value of Creation plays a central role in a community's story, while in many Asian and Latin churches the move towards cities has created significant ministry shifts. Graham Hill, *Global Church: Reshaping Our Converastions, Renewing Our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), 394-398.

[114] Mark Branson and Juan F. Martinez, Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 12-13.

pastor is a local spiritual artist, discovering a community's unique response to Jesus' new-covenant command to love others as he loved us.[115]

Pastors guide people toward the behaviors that lead them to discover how God's unique working-out of love, as Pohl shows, happens in a community.[116] The *Examen,*[117] reading poetry, a Rule of Life, and extended retreats are tools for learning to pay attention.

James Hunter demonstrates how a leader's long-term influence is earned through specifically faithful presence.[118] Pastors guide people as they experience the inevitable contradictions, challenges, and choices that come with movement toward a vision.[119] When people chase a vision together, they can more truly discover their voice and their values. The transforming pastor uses challenges as an opportunity to develop people, seeing how it impacts, forms, strengthens, and challenges them.

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[115] Christine Pohl, *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011).

[116] Pohl, Living into Community.

[117] Kevin O'Brien, *The Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in Daily Life*, 1st ed. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2011).

[118] Faithful presence is a broad term for the specific, even elite, expertise brought to a particular area or professional field lived through Kingdom values. By enacting change through the values of a community is less disruptive than trying a dozen ideas and hoping one works. Continuity of values creates stability. Hunter, *To Change the World*.

[119] The idea that challenge and contradiction are essentials tools in the journey of self-development come from Keith M. Eigel and Karl W. Kuhnert, *The Map: Your Path to Effectiveness in Leadership, Life, and Legacy* (Friendswood, TX: Baxter Press, 2016).

Defining Leadership

To lead is to *gather local attention toward vision through values*.[120] I will explore this concept, particularly vision and values, through the lens of narrative leadership in Chapter Four. Part of the way leaders give attention is by how they support the facilitation of the right tasks and celebrate the right behavioral decisions, a topic that will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Leaders provide clarity around why, they create unity around what, and then they give permission around how. They state what is most important and then release teams to tackle the application of vision.

Leaders gather attention piece by piece. Language matters, clarity is imperative, and presence ripples. Perry shows how even children will sabotage vision ungrounded in felt needs, grounded in language they misunderstand, or led by a leader they distrust.[121] Like James, leaders discover local values. As Heifetz demonstrates, leaders unearth the vision embedded in people, rather than manufacturing it.[122] Then, leaders gather people, energy, and ideas and focus them toward the vision they discovered together. Like Joshua, they must communicate a narrative arc and a personal role, providing a clear structure of corporate accountability and personal agency through what Grenny et al. call

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[120] There are dozens of models and definitions of leadership, several of which are described in Chapter Three.

[121] Bruce D. Perry and Maia Szalavitz, *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog: And Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook—What Traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Loss, Love, and Healing*, 3rd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

[122] Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

vital behaviors.[123] This clarity, repeated far more often than the leader feels necessary, is essential to set trajectory, communicate values, and restore life. Like James and Joshua, leaders must give the work back to the people.[124] They take communities to a place of shared ownership by saying, "you decide," and equipping people for works of ministry.

Summary

This chapter explores the biblical precedent of multiple types of changes. While three types of change are commonplace in the Scriptures (creation, protection, and revitalization) and the change literature, a fourth (transformation) requires theological explanation: Why would something God created need changing?

The transfiguration of Jesus and the ongoing work of personal transformation through the Scripture establishes a theological precedent for adaptive formational change. Joshua took an existing mission into a new territory. James took an existing mission to new people. In each instance, leaders leverage the narrative of the people they are leading, provide decisive direction through instructions, and empower others.

Moving forward, Chapter Four will explore how leaders leverage the narrative of groups and the role of individuals. Chapter Five will examine the structural support of adaptive change through focused measurement and appropriate accountability structures. But first, Chapter Three will compare theories of change in the academic literature.

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[123] Joseph Grenny et al., *Influencer*.

[124] Peterson and Robinson articulated the need for local leadership. Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008). David Robinson, *Ancient Paths: Discover Christian Formation the Benedictine Way* (Cape Cod, MA: Paraclete Press, 2010).

CHAPTER THREE:

BEST PRACTICES IN CHANGE MANAGEMENT

"The common cold of leadership is poor listening."[1]

What does the academic literature say about navigating, executing, and sustaining change? This chapter sets a foundation for change within large churches by describing the research of two primary voices and several additional scholars in the change management literature. John Kotter's seminal research underscores the elements and order needed for implementing broad-based change.[2] Ronald Heifetz's theory of adaptive leadership casts an ethos and guiding philosophy for pastors aspiring to increase the adaptability and responsiveness to changes in their environments.[3] Alternate views are also discussed, including Quinn and Cameron's ideas about changing organizational culture, and the change theories of Peter Senge, Debra Meyerson, Michael Beer, and others.[4] Together, the primary models of leading change and creating adaptive

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[1] Daniel Goleman, *Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence*, Reprint ed. (New York: Harper Paperbacks, 2015), 226.

[2] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012).

[3] Ronald A. Heifetz and Ronald Abadian, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2009).

[4] As this essay endeavors to explore change management at large churches in a Western context, most of the theories of leadership and change management come from Western sources. Bligh (et al) demonstrated that transformational leadership was consistently impactful across Europe, China, and the United States. Bligh, Michelle C Bligh, Jeffrey C Kohles., and Qing Yan, "Leading and Learning to Change: The Role of Leadership Style and the Mindset in Error Learning and Organizational Change" Journal of Change Management 18, no 2 (2018): 116-141. However, the author recommends further research on the diverse and multi-cultural theories of change management and leadership and their relevance to Western churches. For example, Mary Boyce and Carol Franklin discuss organizational change toward racial justice. Mary E. Boyce and Carol Ann Franklin, "From Integration to Racial Justice," *Journal of Organizatiojnal Change Management* 9, no. 5 (2006): 91-101. Branson and Martinez, briefly discussed on page 74, discuss change from a Latino perspective. In *Global Church* (briefly highlighted on pages 51 and 91), Hill discusses a leadership perspective from the worldwide church. Graham Hill, *Global Church.*

environments set the stage for an approach to change for large church leaders centered around discovering a narrative vocation (Chapter Four) and implementing supporting structures (Chapter Five).

Leadership and Change Management

This section explores in detail the work of two giants in the field of change management:[5] Ronald Heifetz and John Kotter. After an analysis of each approach, the section concludes with a comparison of their theories. Both approaches have been validated in the academic literature as they relate to the study of change management within churches.[6]

Ronald Heifetz: Adaptive Leadership

After years of interaction with political and business leaders as the director of the Leadership Education Project at Harvard University, Ronald Heifetz and his colleagues began crystalizing a theory of adaptive leadership. Adaptive leadership is "the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive."[7] Heifetz's theory is based in the reality of the ever-changing nature of organizational, political, and cultural life—and the

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[5] Peter Senge, another giant in the field of change, dislikes the term change management, as it implies a desire to control. Rather, he suggests the change leader is focused on "how you create conditions for certain sorts of changes to occur more likely than they would otherwise." Peter Senge and Falko von Ameln, "We Are Not in Control—Embrace Uncertainty and Trust in What Emerges," *Gruppe. Interaktion. Organisation. Zeitschrift Für Angewandte Organisationspsychologie* 50, no. 2 (2019): 123–27.

[6] David Brice, "A Study of Adaptive Leadership in the Multi-Worshiping Church." (DMin diss., Texas Christian University, 2010). Roger Haskin, "Guiding the Church through Change," (PhD Diss., Union Institute and University, 2010). Both authors reference churches within their work, and use pastors as examples of organizational leaders navigating change.

[7] Heifetz and Abadian, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership,* 14.

necessity of leaders to help people adapt to those changes.[8] Many cannot. "The roads to evolution," he writes, "are strewn with the bones of creatures that could not thrive in the next environment."[9] The strengths of an organization in one context can be the fuel for their demise in the next; Heifetz writes to equip leaders with the tools and mindsets needed to help people lead within changing environments.

Adaptive leadership recognizes three situational challenges: technical, adaptive, and challenges that are both technical and adaptive. Technical challenges have clearly defined solutions, often solvable through current systems. In a technical challenge, people look to leaders as problem solvers. Although during periods of change people look for problem solving leaders, Heifetz attests they need a different kind of leadership.[10] Adaptive challenges require leaders who see changes and challenges as more than problems to solve. Here, the leader is positioned not as the singular hero making decisions and solving problems, but as the one who helps people to face their own problems.[11]

Adaptive challenges are those for which easy answers do not exist or are not the best response. In this context, leadership means "influencing the community to face its

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[8] Heifetz and Abadian, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership,* 14.

[9] Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 28.

[10] Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 2. While people are looking for leaders to make their problems go away, they need someone who can help them face their problems.

[11] Friedman describes the self-differentiated leader as one who can sever their follower's dependence on them. "In any stuck relationship between an overadequate member and an underadequate other (person or organization), the overfunctioner must change before the underfunctioner can change." Edwin Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Church Publishing, 2007), 214.

problems."[12] Rather than removing the problem, leaders help organizations adapt themselves. As Chapter Two describes, the change needed among large churches demands an adaptive approach; helping worshiping communities move into a new setting or season. Five behaviors frame the approach of effective adaptive leaders.[13]

1. Get on the Balcony. Heifetz, no stranger to metaphors, uses this phrase to describe how leaders zoom in and zoom out, operating both in and above the fray.[14] Getting on the balcony is "to get perspective in the midst of action."[15] Leaders do this to discover a big picture, remain open to new possibilities, listen, and maintain a frontline perspective. Adaptive leaders study their environment to determine which challenges are technical and which are adaptive. They identify if there are gaps between values and behaviors, competing commitments, *sacred cows*,[16] or an avoidance of difficult work or discomfort. Adaptive leaders serve communities as they "give clarity and articulation to a community's guiding values."[17] The goal in identifying an adaptive challenge is not to remove obstacles, but to help a community grow in their ability to meet their challenges.

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[12] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve,* 14. The third type of challenge (technical and adaptive) requires both technical and adaptive responses.

[13] Heifetz sometimes adapted his list of adaptive practices, for example: Operate in and above the fray, Court the uncommitted, Identify the adaptive challenge, Cook the conflict, Manage yourself, Anchor yourself: Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, "A Survival Guide for Leaders," 99–118. This list is taken from Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2002).

[14] "In and above the fray" and "getting on the balcony" are two of Heifetz's favorites, in particular in *Leadership Without Easy Answers.*

[15] Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 51.

[16] This expression refers to an idea or practice that is considered to be above criticism.

[17] Heifetz, Leadership Without Easy Answers, 23.

2. Think Politically. Leaders begin and maintain relationships, especially with the opposition, to whom Heifetz and Linsky allocate greater attention.[18] Political leaders acknowledge their own responsibility for the difficulty change creates, and acknowledge the losses of those they lead—losses the leader may have initiated. Leaders accept that casualties come with change. They model the behavior, standards, and values they are purporting.[19]

3. Orchestrate the Conflict. As adaptive leaders initiate change, stress is inevitable. People often fail to adapt "because of the distress provoked by the problem and the change it demands."[20] Leaders become a holding environment for the stress of the community as they learn to face challenges and identify systemic issues. A holding environment is "a space formed by a network of relationships that bond people together and enable them to tackle tough, sometimes divisive questions without flying apart."[21] They provide direction, protection, and appropriate pressure to keep the focus on the adaptive challenge, raising and lowering the stress as needed to maintain a "productive range of stress."[22] As a musician, Heifetz understood the importance of space and silence

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[18] Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 89.

[19] This paper has criticized the over-emphasis on Transformational Leadership, but in this instance the Transformational principle of "Model the Way" stands the test of time as a core behavior for the change agent. James K. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2017).

[20] Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line*, 37.

[21] Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line,* 102.

[22] Ronald Heifetz and Donald C. Laurie, "Mobilizing Adaptive Work: Beyond Visionary Leadership," In *The Leader's Change Handbook: An Essential Guide to Setting Direction and Taking Action* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998). Stress, Heifetz believes, is not all bad. It can create personal and organizational motivation and focus to face and solve problems. Chapter Five will discuss the way we create physical and relational environments.

in leading others and focusing attention.[23] By being a holding environment, leaders help people stay engaged with the issue at hand.

4. Hold Steady. Identifying and embracing change is difficult work that requires tremendous focus. Leaders are attentive to those who avoid change; they keep their environments free of distractions. "Attention is the currency of leadership."[24] By keeping attention on relevant issues, they maintain a sense of urgency and give enough space and time for solutions to develop.[25] Creativity often needs time and room to breathe, letting issues ripen.[26] Adaptive leaders focus attention on the problem at hand while regulating distress and providing an environment to discover creativity.

5. Give the Work Back. Leaders may be tempted to solve problems; after all, followers love for problems to go away. However, an adaptive leader desires to help people face and solve their own challenges, giving the work back to the people. Adaptive leaders are quick to return problems to the people most impacted by them; they are cautious to avoid an overly directive style of management. Adaptive leaders are aware that the resilience of a system impacts the time frame for enabling and expecting work.

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[23] "Music... teaches us to distinguish the varieties of silence." Ronald Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers,* 6. In music, space creates a breath or pause, causing the listener to pay attention. Silence is not absence or "pleading the fifth." Jesus was critical of this kind of silence (notice the Pharisees doubly mentioned silence to the man with dropsy in Luke 14). Silence is listening. Peter Senge credits Robert Fritz, musician and expert on the creative process, for his insights on personal mastery through the creative process. Eisler Riane, "A Conversation with Peter Senge: Transforming Organizational Cultures," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* 2 no. 1 (2015): 3.

[24] Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers,* 112. Chapter Fours and Five more describe how to develop environments for creativity.

[25] Surprisingly, Heifetz insists adaptive leaders are willing to maintain attention on themselves, to thereby redirect it elsewhere. Drawing attention is risky, but it puts you in control.

[26] Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line,* 146.

Adaptive leaders protect voices from below by paying attention to those on the fringes of an organization or society, giving them a voice and providing equal footing. In decision-making, adaptive leaders listen and learn, even though they do not give away their authority or ultimate decision-making power.[27] By listening, leaders are able to observe, interpret, and intervene, even in areas where they have limited authority or expertise.[28]

John Kotter: Leading Change

Kotter is the Konosuke Matsushita Professor Emeritus of Leadership at Harvard Business School. He also leads an international change management consulting firm. The author of eighteen books, Kotter is the consummate giant in the world of managing change. Kotter's change model is more rigid than Heifetz's, his style more executive than legislative, and yet his eight-step approach holds insights for organizational church leaders attempting to make significant shifts to their approach. Kotter's eight steps are listed below.[29]

1. Establish a Sense of Urgency. Tradition wins; people cling to status quo. The most common error for failing to start or maintain change is failing to deal with complacency. Leaders commonly underestimate the enormity of the task of change. Past

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[27] Heifetz quoted William Ruckelshaus in an adaptive challenge in Tacoma, Washington. "The people of Tacoma are not being asked to make the decision; they are being asked for their informed opinion. They know that the right to be heard is not the same thing as the right to be heeded. The final decision is mine." Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers,* 123.

[28] Ronald Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow, "Making Decisions Outside Your Repertoire," *Business Week Online*, June 18, 2009, 8.

[29] Unlike Heifetz, Kotter's list remains relatively steady. Also unlike Heifetz, his work is sequential.

success can blind church leaders from the urgency to change.[30] According to Kotter, leaders who skip this step will encounter resistance in later steps.[31] Change is emotional and exhausting; without sufficient emotional buy-in early on and often (e.g., "without change the organization is doomed"), it will fail.

2. Create a Guiding Coalition. Leaders cannot enact change on their own. "In the behind the scenes struggle between a single executive or a weak committee and tradition…the latter almost always wins."[32] Change from a single leader fails because there are more gaps and more opportunities for resistors to undermine the change effort.[33] Leaders should modestly assist the agenda within their own sphere.[34] The guiding coalition in this model ought to be made up of people with positional power, expertise, credibility, and leadership.[35]

3. Develop a Vision and Strategy. There is no substitute for a clear vision. Too often, leaders try to enact change quietly or behind the scenes, or create a program as a substitute for a vision; these efforts often fail. A change effort, Kotter says, must be

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[30] Kotter adds to this that a lack of a visible crisis, low performance standards, and insufficient feedback loops all add to the sense that problems are not that bad. In any change effort, people prefer their known pain to the unknown pain of the future. John P. Kotter, "What Leaders Really Do," in *HBRs 10 Must Reads on Leadership* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2011), 4.

[31] Kotter, Leading Change, 25.

[32] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 6.

[33] As I'll explore in Chapter Four, part of the reason to garner input from others is to close the gap between the vision caster and the vision carriers; as people name the tension, they're more likely to own the solution.

[34] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 33. This stands as another towering critique of the leader-centric change approaches cited in Chapter One. The centrality of the leader is not in their solo voice, but in their ability to gather the perspectives and influence of many. Through significant local impact, leaders may become national or worldwide leaders, but Kotter encourages leaders to resist building a personal brand or relying on charisma to lead change.

[35] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 59

understood in under five minutes.[36] A vision should simplify hundreds of decisions and details. The characteristics of an effective vision are that it is imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible, and communicable.[37] A vision has to be significant. Says Kotter, "A vision that requires only a 3 percent improvement per year will never force the fundamental rethinking and change that are so often needed in rapidly changing environments."[38]

4. Communicate the Change Vision. Leaders must overcommunicate the vision, or it gets lost in the weeds and chaos of the everyday. The key elements to effective communication are simplicity, metaphor, analogy and examples, multiple forums, repetition, leadership by example, explanation of seeming inconsistencies, and give-and-take.[39] This communication is more than information transfer. It should "show people something that addresses their anxieties."[40]

5. Empower Employees for Broad-based Action. Even if the vision is clear, followers may not know how to get there. There are four barriers to employee empowerment: formal structures, discouragement from bosses, lack of skills, or personnel and information systems.[41] Leaders must remove obstacles in the way of the

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[36] Kotter, "Leading Change," 9. Marketing expert Donald Miller says you need to communicate vision in 24 words or less. Donald Miller and Jonathan Peterson, *Marketing Made Simple: A Step-by-Step StoryBrand Guide for Any Business* (New York: Harper Collins Leadership, 2000).

[37] Kotter, Leading Change, 74.

[38] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 77.

[39] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 92. I will unpack communication and repetition of a vision in Chapter Four. This is another area where Kotter's model is heavily reliant on senior leadership for communication, rather than disseminating the responsibility of the communication across the organization.

[40] Kotter, The Heart of Change, 84.

[41] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 106.

change effort. One of Kotter's strengths is his inclusion and recognition of how a team of leaders orchestrate change.[42] A leadership team puts systems in place, and then empowers frontline leaders to enact the change.[43]

6. Generate Short-term Wins. While acknowledging that large change takes a long time, leaders must help people achieve measurable and momentum-building wins. Short-term wins must be visible and unambiguous.[44] These wins validate individual and team sacrifices, reward change agents, fine-tune vision, undermine critics, keep bosses on board, and build momentum.[45]

7. Consolidate Gains and Produce More Change. Leaders, hungry for good news and proof their change efforts were successful, are often too quick to declare victory (thus, killing urgency). Though Kotter says leaders must continue to empower teams to enact change, he does not encourage the senior leader or leadership team to continue to listen to the teams enacting change. For Kotter, the focus is still the top leader as they orchestrate wins generate urgency.

8. Anchor New Approaches in the Culture. Change sticks when it becomes "the way we do things around here."[46] Much of the work in the final stage is ensuring the next

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[42] "Management is a set of processes that can keep a complicated system of people and technology running smoothly…Leadership is a set of processes that creates organizations…or adapts them…" Kotter, "Leading Change," 28. Kotter unpacks this idea further without belittling management. See also, Kotter, "What Leaders Really Do," 37-55.

[43] The systems supporting change are the subject of Chapter Five.

[44] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 125.

[45] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 127. At this point, I find Kotter's model cumbersome and repetitive. He transitions from the prescription of a successful change initiative to the long-lasting execution of a new strategy. In this regard, I find Heifetz more realistic and appealing: creating an organization that is more adaptive to change will have longer-term success than cementing an organization in a model that will soon be outdated.

[46] Kotter, "What Leaders Really Do," 15.

generation of managers personifies the change. The change must be present in hiring and feedback protocol.

Comparing and Critiquing Kotter and Heifetz

Kotter's strength is the thoroughness of his commitment to change; he has a long-range view of executive leaders enacting change for their organization. However, his model does not speak to adaptation within the change process, nor to learning as the change process unfolds. Though Kotter illuminates how the corporate world requires change,[47] his model did not foresee the need for leaders in constant transition. In Kotter's model, the point leader often initiates change for their followers.[48] In Heifetz's model, a legislative leader comes alongside a group for which influence, not title, is the preserving leverage. While Kotter's model is thorough, its comprehensive approach borders on rigidity and relies on authority. Heifetz underscores an ethos of flexibility while dancing toward a target; Kotter's tone rings of a systemic, executable system. Both acknowledge that change takes years.

Both Kotter and Heifetz also acknowledge that change is emotive. Kotter writes, "People change what they do less because they are given analysis that shifts their thinking than because they are shown a truth that influences their feelings."[49] While the driving force in Heifetz's model is understanding values, for Kotter it is managing

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[47] John P. Kotter, *The New Rules: How to Succeed in Today's Post-Corporate World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).

[48] Kotter explicitly states that without sufficient authority, change efforts by middle and lower managers is doomed until someone at the top provides strong leadership. Kotter, "Leading Change," 49.

[49] Kotter, *The Heart of Change,* 1. For both Kotter and Heifetz, this is an emotive process. Kotter explains that that people are already seeing and feeling and the leader's role is to shift what they see and feel to prompt change.

behavior.[50] Both Kotter and Heifetz are attune to the group's capacity for change; Heifetz calls this the pressure cooker, while Kotter cautions against leaders who try to do too much.[51]

Kotter's model assumes a leader with a central aim to make a change they envision; for this reason, the model starts with increasing a sense of urgency.[52] In Heifetz, the urgency has presented itself and is typically manifest in hidden competing values. The work of the leader is not to increase urgency, but to regulate the stress of a group. For Heifetz, the leader should discover the group's values and help them move forward. For Kotter, the role of the change agent is to help people see and feel the need for change, to "awaken feelings that facilitate useful change."[53] Kotter believes the critic gets in the way. Heifetz believes change is hindered by a desire for easy answers and an inability to manage stress.[54] What Kotter describes as generating small wins, Heifetz calls giving the work back to the people; Kotter aims to generate momentum, while Heifetz desires to assign ownership.

For leaders of large churches attempting to lead change, Kotter and Heifetz demand attention. Both authors teach at Harvard and manage consulting firms, and the scope and aim risks being limited to a Western capitalistic perspective. The principles of

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[50] Kotter, *The Heart of Change,* 2. As we will see in Chapter Four, the way we influence behavior is not with new thinking, but with storytelling that invites participation.

[51] For Heifetz, the leader and the community are all forms of the holding environment for the stress held during the change process. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers,* 128-129. Kotter cautions against doing too much.

[52] This is also the subject of his 2008 book, *A Sense of Urgency*.

[53] Kotter, Leading Change, 10.

[54] Kotter says there are four behaviors that stop change: complacency (driven by false pride or arrogance), immobilization (driven by self-protection or fear), deviance (driven by anger), and hesitation (driven by pessimism).

adaptation they have delineated echo the transformative theology presented in Chapter Two, providing further grounding and context for a leader adapting an organization to a new setting. Pastors ought to get on the balcony, attending to how change impacts differing groups of stakeholders (volunteers, members, staff, etc.). The relational strong-ties between a staff team may serve as a better holding environment than a team of attendees, and an elder or advisory team are likely valuable political assets in a change process. Kotter provides tactical checklist strategies for the aspiring change agent. Without attentiveness to these best practices, leaders may blame external or internal factors[55] rather than their team's inability or unwillingness to lead change.[56] Both models insist on a long-term vision, change done within community, and an others-focused perspective of a leader.

People crave simplicity, yet in large, complex churches, the process of change is interconnected among several departments, organizational charts, and models of execution. This change is nuanced, and requires more than the ability to be decisive and winsome. Kotter's model is helpful for long-term finite change, his insight about communication is essential. However, churches more likely need an adaptive and learning posture as they engage change. Leaders must be able to operate within shifting environments while leveraging the principles of change management.

People follow authority. In times of uncertainty, followers want a leader to decrease their anxiety by providing clarity and direction. Yet, neither Kotter or Heifetz

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[55] For example, a leader may over-spiritualize a climate unwilling to change. They may also admit defeat too quickly, assuming change in the context of God's economy is easy or trial-free.

[56] How leaders manage the tension of their own responsibility with a team-centered approach is part of the subject of Chapter Four.

ascribe to the strong-man theory of change debunked in Chapter One. Heifetz demonstrates that the better task of a leader is not to solve problems, but to help people be able to solve problems themselves. Says Kotter, "the idea of one hero who figures it all out himself is increasingly a myth."[57] Heifetz's work is littered with a spirit of giving the work back to the people. Still, the leader is still the central role and voice so they can direct the energy and attention of the people. Unless the leader is the lightning rod, they cannot reflect attention where they need.[58]

Other Theories of Change Management

The theories of change management presented by Heifetz and Kotter contain significant learning for church leaders initiating or inheriting a change process. Several other approaches to leadership and change management are described below. With regards to leadership, the trait approach, transformational leadership, and servant leadership are described below. Then, this section briefly explores several additional approaches to change management in the academic literature.

Alternative Approaches to Leading

Trait Approach. For many years, the study of leadership aimed to discover common traits among great leaders such as Gandhi, Catherine the Great, Abraham Lincoln, and Joan of Arc. This was first identified by Thomas Carlyle in his 1841 book

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[57] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 26.

[58] In one noteworthy story, Heifetz comments, "Being the focal point of attention gave him the power to direct attention to the issue he framed…" Heifetz and Laurie, "Mobilizing Adaptive Work," 114-115.

On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History.[59] Adherents to this theory often discuss the traits of intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability.[60] However, this approach is limited; it does not provide a compass or framework for leaders who are entering the danger of managing change.[61] The trait approach most often celebrates the leadership positioning and personality of the leader, usually assumed to be born with these characteristics, and often male.[62] Yet, the study of great leaders contains merit for any change agent. Pulitzer Prize–winning author Doris Kearns Goodwin describes the leadership story, lessons, and styles of four U.S Presidents in *Leadership in Turbulent Times.*[63] In this example, it is the behavior, decisions, and values of the four great leaders that deserve emulation, not an inherited quality or particular masculinity.

Transformational Leadership. This style of leadership was popularized by Kouses and Posner[64] and gives attention to the affective and inspirational elements of

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[59] As cited in Heifetz, Leadership Without Easy Answers, 16.

[60] Northouse, *Leadership*, 22-26.

[61] It also tends to favor the majority culture and dominant traits, setting both the leader and followers up for disappointment or disaster. "For those who consider themselves "born leaders," free of an orienting philosophy and strategy of leadership, their grandiosity is a setup for a rude awakening and for blindly doing damage." Heifetz and Laurie, "Mobilizing Adaptive Work," 20.

[62] One of the six characteristics identified by Mann (1959) is masculinity. Northouse, *Leadership*, 21. This is hardly helpful for the growing proliferation of strong women leading churches through major changes.

[63] Goodwin describes transformational leadership and Abraham Lincoln, Crisis Management and Teddy Roosevelt, Turnaround Leadership and FDR, and Visionary Leadership and Lyndon Johnson. Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Leadership: In Turbulent Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

[64] Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge.* I hesitated to call this type of change transformational change, at the risk of being directly compared to this leadership theory. However, as mentioned in Chapter Two, the Biblical concept of transformation merited the use of this word.

leadership.[65] However, by itself, this model is limited in its application to change management. Herod and Fedor found after interviewing 340 people regarding thirty different types of changes across a variety of organizations,

> Being viewed as a transformational leader, in general, was not automatically related to being viewed as doing a good job on any one particular change. That is, good leaders do not necessarily exhibit more appropriate, change-specific behaviors, nor are leaders who perform well vis-a-vis the particular change perceived as being more transformational.[66]

The transformational style leadership may be important, but it is not correlated to more effective management of change. People report higher commitment to change not when they identify their leader as transformational, but when they positively identify in their leader specific behaviors related to change.[67] Still, attending to the motivations of others is a vital skill, one discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

Servant Leadership. This style of leadership, popularized in 1964 in an essay by Robert Greenleaf,[68] positioned the leader as a servant. Servant leaders model characteristics of listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community.[69]

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[65] Transformational leadership is a set of approaches to changing people and reaching goals by tapping into their motivations. Northouse, *Leadership*, 180.

[66] David M. Herold and Donald B. Fedor, *Change the Way You Lead Change: Leadership Strategies That Really Work* (Stanford: Stanford Business Books, 2003), 52. People report higher commitment to change not when they identify their leader as transformational, but when they positively identify specific behaviors related to change. Employees, however, were more forgiving to their leaders when they exhibited transformational leadership during change. Transformational change build credibility, and behaviors that lack integrity or that are not mutually beneficial will "drain the credibility bucket."

[67] Herold and Fedor, Change the Way You Lead Change, 52.

[68] Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader*, rev. ed. (South Orange, NJ: The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 2015). Greenleaf wrote his model "begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first." (quoted in Northouse, *Leadership,* 226).

[69] Northouse, *Leadership,* 227-228.

Servant leaders focus on others' growth and success, putting followers first, and behaving ethically. Healthier communities and increased performance are purported results. Servant leadership's strength is the posture of a leader as others-centric, an altruistic approach beyond an organizational bottom line. This mindset has taken off in recent years.[70] Yet research shows servant leadership is not always the most desired or most effective form of leadership. A change process often needs a more authoritative style of governance.[71]

Alternative Approaches to Managing Change

There are many theories and models of change management. Several approaches are summarized below both for their value for later chapters and to highlight their distinction from the approach of Heifetz and his colleagues.

Peter Senge. Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* paved the way for understanding that learning organizations maintain a competitive advantage in changing culture. The learning organization rarely overhauls; instead they pursue agility and learning so they can take small but rapid steps toward change.[72] His five disciplines are vision, mental models, team learning, personal mastery, and system thinking.[73] Like Heifetz, for Senge,

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[70] Organizational health expert Patrick Lencioni wants to remove the term servant leadership from popular jargon, insisting there is no other form of legitimate leadership. Patrick Lencioni, *The Motive: Why So Many Leaders Abdicate Their Most Important Responsibilities* (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2020).

[71] Daniel Goleman demonstrated that the most consistently successful form of leadership, as measured by results, is authoritative leadership. Daniel Goleman, "Leadership That Gets Results," in *HBRs 10 Must Reads on Managing People* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2011), 1-27.

[72] Senge likens this to walking into a dark room. "If you're in a room with no lights, you take very small steps." Senge and von Ameln, "We Are Not in Control."

[73] Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 2006). Though Senge's model is rich, insightful, and valuable, it is also difficult to digest and apply.

change is more adaptive than static, and requires leaders' attentiveness to their team's efficacy, emotional reactions, and systems. Senge's great value is the insistence on vigilant listening and learning.

Michael Beer. In an attempt to simplify the change process, Michael Beer describes two approaches to change that must be held in balance. Theory E emphasizes economic value, measured by the measurable returns on profit. Theory O encourages a softer approach, focused on the development of culture. Overemphasis on one or the other leads to failed change efforts, says Beer.[74] He encourages an embrace of the paradox between the two, setting direction from the top and encouraging people from below, building processes and planning for changes, and using incentives as a reinforcement rather than a driver.[75]

One of the tensions Beer acknowledges is how organizations are shifting to be more legislative than executive. Beer believes managers of a particular change have more to do with its survival than the vision of a leader. The solution Beer et al. propose is a collaborative vision with a joint diagnosis of the problem, a shared vision, consensus, and shared ownership.[76] Beer's insights are valuable for church leaders who want to break leader-centric approaches to change, and must manage the tension of healthy culture and high production.

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[74] Michael Beer and Nitin Nohria, "Cracking the Code of Change," in *On Change Management* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2011), 139.

[75] Michael Beer, "How to Develop an Organization Capable of Sustained High Performance: Embrace the Drive for Results-Capability Development Paradox," *Organizational Dynamics* 29 no. 4 (2001): 233–247.

[76] Michael Beer, Russell A. Eisenstat, and Bert Spector, "Why Change Programs Don't Produce Change," in *On Change Management* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2011), 177-98.

Branson and Martinez. Fuller Professors Branson and Martinez outline a Latin perspective of change management that prioritizes conversations, emphasizes location, and leverages stories and strengths.[77] The strengths of this model are his attentiveness to setting and story, concepts that be further discussed in Chapter Four.

Debra Meyerson. Stanford Professor Debra Meyerson proposes radical change without rocking the boat. She suggests leaders become a "tempered radical—an informal leader who quietly challenges prevailing wisdom and provokes cultural transformation."[78] This theory is in contrast to Kotter's work in that she promotes what Kotter discourages: internal, secretive work, rather than explicit casting of vision with clear direction. Meyerson's model leverages tools such as disruptive self-expression, verbal jujitsu, variable-term opportunism, and strategic alliance building.[79] For pastoral leaders with less executive authority, her tools may be useful for promoting change.

Kurt Lewin. Social psychologist Kurt Lewin developed a theory of change management where subjects unfreeze, change, and then refreeze.[80] This linear model encourages disruption before resolution and relies heavily on creating urgency and breaking down previously held patterns.[81] However, its rigidity fails to acknowledge the

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[77] Branson, *Churches, Cultures, and Leadership*, 210-231. Branson and Martinez write specifically about multicultural churches, and highlight an approach to changing churches to become more multicultural.

[78] Debra E. Meyerson, "Radical Change, the Quiet Way," in *On Change Management* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2011), 59-78.

[79] Meyerson, "Radical Change," 62-63.

[80] Jacob S. Kounin, "Field Theory in Psychology: Kurt Lewin," in *Concepts of Personality* (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine Publishing Co, 1963), 142-61.

[81] Scott Cormode this freeze-unfreeze is the traditional model of church, one that no longer works in a rapidly changing culture. Scott Cormode, "Calibrated for a World That No Longer Exists," Depree.org, September 2, 2020.

fluid nature of change and how complex organizations may be unable to fully deconstruct their underlying values and beliefs before moving forward. By contrast, Robert Marshak suggests that constant change is not only inevitable, but necessary. He calls this morphing the "simultaneous and continuous changes to an organization's strategies, structure, processes, culture..."[82] This ongoing and adaptive nature of change is more relevant to large church environments.

Dottie Escobedo-Frank. Pastor and scholar Dottie Escobedo-Frank encourages a revolution of change from the edge. She writes, "The change needed for the church to live into its present future will not come from the current center of power."[83] Because the church is no longer in a position of influence, the only place to change is from the outside. Phyllis Tickle writes, "the small, outer percentage is the Great Emergence's ballast; and its function is as necessary and central to the success of this upheaval as is any other part of it."[84] Alan Roxbourgh agrees; change often comes from the fringes, but requires a different approach than top-down executive-style leadership.[85]

Cameron and Quinn. Management consultants Cameron and Quinn developed a tool for changing organizational culture based on the competing values framework.[86] Built across two spectra, this framework helps leaders discover their organizational

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[82] Robert J. Marshak, "Morphing," 10.

[83] Escobedo-Frank, "The Church Revolution from the Edge," 66.

[84] Phyllis Tickle, The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why (New York: Baker Books: 2012), 138.

[85] Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making,* 43.

[86] According to the authors, it is the dominant framework for evaluating organizational culture, the values, behaviors, and biases of an organization. K. S. Cameron et al., *Competing Values Leadership: Creating Value in Organizations* (N.p.: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2006), https://doi.org/10.4337/9781847201560.

culture.[87] Cameron and Quinn's model for change uses nine steps to discover and then change organizational culture. The first two steps are to place the current culture and preferred future within the competing values framework.[88] They encourage building a leadership team to navigate the change.[89] In steps three and four, leaders further clarify what these changes mean and identify stories that underscore the preferred future.[90] Steps five and six are about making plans and creating small wins.[91] Steps seven, eight, and nine are about structural support for the change, including leadership implications, metrics, and communication.[92]

Cameron and Quinn's model is insightful for the pastoral change leader. Leaders should listen and discover the culture they are operating within and the requisite competencies and values needed within that context. Their steps are methodical and complete, guiding leaders toward cultural changes within their organization.[93] Like

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[87] The first spectrum is across flexibility and discretion to stability and control. The second spectrum is from internal focus and integration to external focus and differentiation. Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture, Third Edition: Based on the Competing Values Framework* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 51.

[88] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, 102-105.

[89] Their leadership team is similar to Kotter's guiding coalition. One of the values of Cameron and Quinn's work is their recognition that change happens as a result of the work of teams. In particular for a mature organization, they recommend engaging managers at every level. Cameron and Quinn, *Competing Values Leadership*, 68.

[90] Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, 105-110.

[91] These also Kotter's third and sixth steps, creating a plan and generating short-term wins. Cameron and Quinn's action agenda asks three questions within each quadrant of the framework: "What should we do more of? What should we start? What should we stop?" Cameron and Quinn, *Competing Values Leadership*, 111.

[92] Cameron and Quinn, Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture, 114-120.

[93] While their work can apply to any change, it is specifically written to help leaders change their culture.

Kotter, their model is linear and expects to take several years.[94] Also like Kotter, at times the model feels rigid and unable to adapt to changing environments. The reliance on assessment tools and quantitative data can feel cumbersome. However, they also include helpful questions for reflection and discussion in nearly every stage of the change process.

Principles of Change Management

Though much of the research above is related to business or academia, specific application must be made to the setting of large churches seeking to make changes. In his opening to the monograph for social sectors accompanying *Good to Great*, Jim Collins writes, "We must reject the idea—well-intentioned, but dead wrong—that the primary path to greatness in the social sectors is to become 'more like a business.'"[95]

The solution for churches is not to become more like a business. After all, most businesses are mediocre. Collins says, "We need to reject the naive imposition of the 'language of business' on the social sectors, and instead jointly embrace a *language of greatness*."[96]

The intention of this chapter, and the following two, is not to copy the language of corporate change management to churches. Instead, it is to identify and uncover the

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[94] They also say to plan to return to each step in the process multiple times. Cameron and Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture*, 163.

[95] Jim Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: Why Business Thinking Is Not the Answer* (Boulder, CO: HarperCollins, 2005), 1.

[96] Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors,* 2. Emphasis mine.

practical application of greatness, in particular to how change happens, to the world of church.

Hopeful change advocates ought to attend to the postures and practices described in these theories of change. Mid-level leaders, for example, would do well to recognize Beer's Theory E, as economic changes likely expand or constrict senior leaders' ongoing acceptance of change.[97] Recognizing and placing their church within Cameron's model across flexibility and control, and evaluating the proposed changes within that framework, will give leaders the right frame of reference for the style of leadership to adopt. The work of Escobedo-Frank encourages leaders at all levels of a church structure to lean into change, rather than waiting on senior management (especially in established organizations) to instigate or initiate large-scale change. The model proposed in Chapters Four and Five borrows from the adaptability of Heifetz, the scope from Kotter, and the learning of Senge. It leverages the fringes from Escobedo-Frank and the tensions of culture and growth from Beer. The story driven approach of Branson and Martinez punctuates the model proposed at every turn.

The postures of leadership proposed by Trait, Transformational, and Servant Leadership contain insights for the hopeful change agent. The confidence of a leader is contagious, and while this dissertation rejects the notion of masculinity as a core value of change, posture and presence matter.[98] Although this dissertation also disagrees with

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[97] In the world of large churches, this economic impact may be related directly to budgets and tithes. But economic impact in churches may be broader, including numerical values such as attendance, group engagement, volunteerism, etc.

[98] Clinical psychologist Jordan Peterson gave the advice "stand up straight with your shoulders back," as our neurobiology has bias toward such confidence, and our own internal chemistry works against us when our physical posture communicates weakness. Jordan B. Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2018), 28.

overly vision-centric approaches to change, it acknowledges that the visionary leadership purported in transformational leadership certainly aids in the ability to think politically and build a guiding coalition. Finally, the ethos and others-centered mindset of servant leadership keeps the leader attending to voices below and imbeds the change in all levels of an organization.

Summary

This chapter has unpacked two major theories of leading through change, followed by several alternative approaches. Ronald Heifetz's theory of adaptive leadership provides pastoral leaders with an academic and hands-on approach for transforming existing environments. Managing the stress of an environment, maintaining relationships, and getting perspective (among his other recommendations) are essential skills for the leaders of large, established churches hoping to make changes. John Kotter provides a formulaic, step-by-step approach to lasting change, grounded in theory and validated in practice across multiple disciplines.

A variety of other theories provide additional context, postures, and questions for a leader. The application of these theorists helps a leader pause to examine their institutional setting and the values of the organization they operate within, and then leverage the most appropriate tools for initiating change.

Still, the pathway of the pastoral change agent is unclear. How can hopeful change agents include the voices of many, and yet give clarity to a new direction? The following two chapters will describe how to enact change using a team-centered, rather than a leader-centered, approach to drive toward vision and the adaptation of existing ministry models. Chapter Four will explore how narrative can be uncovered through

listening, clarified by the leadership team, and then communicated repeatedly to create buy-in, momentum, and synergy. Chapter Five will recommend clarity within a narrative through the establishment of focused measurement and accountability.

CHAPTER FOUR:

NARRATIVE LEADERSHIP

"The Holy Spirit's literary genre of choice is story."[1]

Introduction

Adaptive leaders stare reality in the face and then commit to telling a better story. This chapter demonstrates how storytelling is tied to adaptation and how leaders discover local narratives to empower others.

Leading change at large, established churches requires engagement with both organizational and personal narratives. Leaders, as shown in Chapter One, ought not assume singular responsibility for changing large churches. Instead, they can leverage the power of story to unify people toward an ideal future. By adapting their organization to a new setting with the same people and purpose, they will respond to a changing culture and a world that, more than ever, needs an invitation to participate in the story God is telling.

The following two chapters introduce a four-fold paradigm for change management.

1. Story: Discover a vocational narrative.
2. Roles: Distribute ownership across constituents.
3. Organize: Support the direction with structure and accountability.
4. Measure: Identify and evaluate against key measurables.

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[1] Eugene H. Peterson, *Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 3.

According to David Scafide, "church leaders can enact healthier church-wide transformation when changes are processed on the narrative level of culture."[2] This chapter highlights best practices and research about storytelling, narrative discovery, and role clarification from storytellers, business leaders, and nonprofits.

The first section explores how leaders discover stories, unearthing them through the values of the people they lead, and directing them toward a particular dissatisfaction they have with their world. The three elements of narrative leadership described in this chapter are:

1. Discover the Narrative.
2. Define the Tension.
3. Clarify Roles.

The first section will draw insights from a variety of disciples about why story matters.[3] A leader clarifies and communicates the organizational direction using narrative tools. They involve others by giving them a role, a significant part in the resolution of a compelling story.

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[2] Scafide, "Toward a Corporeal, Biblical Narrative," xi.

[3] Cross-functional learning about change is not unique to this dissertation. Barbara Czarniawska demonstrated how organizations often function like individuals. Barbara Czarniawska, *Narrating the Organization: Dramas of Institutional Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Ronald Richardson showed how churches function like families. Ronald Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009).

Why Story?

Human history is filled with stories and storytelling. As Pulitzer prizes and Academy Awards show us every year, we are "helpless story junkies."[4] As "managers of meaning," leaders can use stories to portray the big picture, clarity what matters, and create road maps for success.[5] Stories transport us; they have the power to engage the listener to become a participant.[6] This is true for stories as wide-ranging as a cartoon or a commercial for a luxury brand.[7] Stories help us find our own identity and the identity of our community.[8] Jean Paul Sarte says, "A man is always a teller of stories, he lives surrounded by his own stories and those of other people, he sees everything that happens to him in terms of those stories and he tries to live his life as if he were recounting it."[9] Our intuitive connection with stories is grounded in biology: our brains respond differently to story than any other form of input.[10]

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[4] Michele Weldon, "Your Brain on Story: Why Narratives Win Our Hearts and Minds," *Pacific Standard*, June 14, 2017, https://psmag.com/social-justice/pulitzer-prizes-journalism-reporting-your-brain-on-story-why-narratives-win-our-hearts-and-minds-79824.

[5] Nick Forster, Martin Cebis, Sol Majteles, Anurag Mathur, Roy Morgan, Janet Preuss, Vinod Tiwari, and Des Wilkinson, "The Role of Story-Telling in Organizational Leadership," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 20, no. 1 (1999): 13.

[6] W. R. Fisher, "Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument," *Communication Monographs* 51, no. 1 (1984): 1–22.

[7] S. Lloyd Kim and M Cervellon, "Narrative-Transportation Storylines in Luxury Brand Advertising: Motivating Consumer Engagement," *Journal of Business Research* 69, no. 1 (2015): 304–13.

[8] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 119-120.

[9] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Words* (New York: Braziller, 1964). As cited in Jerome Bruner, "Life as Narrative," *Social Research* 71, no. 3 (2004): 697. Though Sarte's pronoun choice is masculine, I believe his statement is gender neutral.

[10] Weldon, "Why Narratives Win Our Hearts and Minds."

Change disorients and unsettles team members; however, stories can create context and stability as people enter the unknown.[11] The indigenous traditions show how stories have a healing effect, and have even shown to lower blood pressure.[12] Likewise, the stories of professional storytellers, from movie-makers to marketers, provide helpful lessons in the endeavor to study change management at large churches.[13]

Hero stories often follow a common pattern: An imperfect character faces an insurmountable obstacle, they then meet a guide who helps them discover themselves and solve a problem.[14] According to Patron, the core elements of any story are characters within a setting moving through a plot across time.[15] Story, says marketing guru Donald Miller, can help organizations create a brand-script and elevator pitch to sell a product.[16] Peterson, Miller's colleague, attests in his doctoral dissertation that without meaning, stories do not go anywhere.[17] Narrative is an invitation to address a problem, to

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[11] M. G. Will and I. Pies, "Sensemaking and Sensegiving: A Concept for Successful Change Management That Brings Together Moral Foundations Theory and the Ordonomic Approach," *Journal of Accounting and Organizational Change* 14, no. 3 (2018): 291–313.

[12] Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 137. If we will listen, we can learn from Native Americans that words are not just commodoties, but can create dignity, restoration, and connection.

[13] Large churches have in common with Disney that they create content and environments, often for families. Pixar in particular has a lot to teach us about storytelling, not just as it creates films but in the story of their own creation, merger, and adaptation to changing ownership, technology, and organizational size.

[14] Donald Miller, *Building a StoryBrand: Clarify Your Message So Customers Will Listen* (New York: HarperCollins Leadership, 2017), 29-50.

[15] Sylvie Patron, "On the Epistemology of Narrative Theory: Narratology and Other Theories of Fictional Narrative," in *The Traveling Concept of Narrative*, ed. Anu Korhonen and Juri Mykkänen Matti Hyvärinen (N.p.: COLLeGIUM. Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences, 2006).

[16] Donald Miller, *Building a StoryBrand.*

[17] Jonathan Peterson, "StoryBrand Narrative Marketing: An Examination of the Influence of Narrative Marketing on Organizations" (PhD diss., Regent University, 2019), 17. Peterson and Miller later co-authored a book together; their views on story are congruent. Victor Frankle's *logotherapy* uses the

participate in a worthwhile story.[18] A narrative is also more responsive than rigid, adapting to the inevitability of unexpected change.[19]

The Unchanged Story

Jesus envisioned a new Kingdom governed by love and enacted through disciple making. For generations, churches have embraced a particular way of manifesting that vision. As the rapid increase of church closures has demonstrated, though, our cultural setting has shifted.[20] The way churches encourage and invite participation into God's Kingdom must change. The way we discover how to adapt in our new setting is to return to our original Christ-given mandate: make disciples. Perhaps counterintuitively, adaptation begins with deeper understanding of vocation, not by drifting from it.

David Scafide believes the work of changing churches begins with focusing on "a corporeal, biblical narrative."[21] He explores narrative strategies for church transformation, moving a current model to a new setting.[22] As seen in Chapter Two, the adaptive work

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power of story to overcome adversity. Frankle's book *Man's Search for Meaning* explores his observations (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

[18] Abraham Lincoln mastered the art of leading through narrative. "While (his rival) simply asserted his points as self-evident, Lincoln embedded his argument in a narrative history, transporting his listeners to their roots as a people…a story that still retained its power to arouse strong emotion and thoughtful attention." Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 165.

[19] Catmull and Wallace describe the need for creative teams to embrace unexpected variables. This is one more reason to empower local teams to solve problems so that the point leader does not become a bottleneck to decision making. Ed Catmull and Amy Wallace, *Creativity Inc.* (New York: Random House, 2014), 155.

[20] See the subsection "Needed Change" in Chapter One.

[21] Scafide, "Toward a Corporeal, Biblical Narrative," 7. As the author attests, few churches would say their narrative is not biblical. Branson sees the change agent as one who weaves together the Biblical story with those of the local community. Branson, *Churches, Culture, and Leadership,* 214.

[22] Scafide, "Toward a Corporeal, Biblical Narrative," 16-22, 32-33. Unfortunately, churches often become more stagnant as they get older. John Flowers and Karen Vannoy, *Adapt to Thrive* (Nashville, TN:

needed to change large, established churches requires different leadership skills and theological foundations than revitalization or creation; transformational leaders seek to discover how their local community participates in a global Biblically grounded vision.[23] For any organizational leader, if the vision they proport feels forced or imported, little will transfer to followers.[24]

Discover the Narrative

I define narrative leadership as the ongoing telling of a compelling story which leads people to participate in a necessary adaptive change. In top-down or vision-centric versions of change a leader is the star and their idea is the story. By contrast, in narrative leadership a common tension drives the story while the community plays a starring role. Leaders who lead with coercion or control tell their followers what to do. By contrast, through narrative leadership a leader listens to discover a common tension or problem. The story discovered and told provides direction and leadership in transition and disruption. This section will describe how the leader can identify and clarify the organization's story.

Which Story?

Leading change begins with identifying a compelling story, not having a great idea. Inviting people into a compelling story does not have to include having the right

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Abingdon Press, 2011), viii.

[23] N.T. Wright describes scripture as five act play, for which the fifth act has been set and we, as characters in the story, are invited to finish the play. N.T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 121-127.

[24] Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1999), 9.

idea. In fact, "Waiting for 'the great idea' might be a bad idea."[25] Entrepreneurs do not need a great idea to start a company, nor do adaptive leaders need a great idea to pivot an existing company into a new future. Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart, did not have a great idea; neither did the founders of Hewlett Packard.[26] Say Collins and Porras, "Few of the visionary companies...can trace their roots to a great idea or a fabulous initial product."[27] In fact, contrary to the oft-quoted habit of highly effective leaders, the best stories rarely begin with the end in mind.[28] Narrative leadership takes dedicated teamwork through a discovery process, not the solo ideation of a creative genius.[29] The process more closely resembles the discovery of personal vocation, listening in community, guided by the Spirit, attentive to gifting and history.[30]

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[25] Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, 27.

[26] Jim Collins and Jerry I. Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 26. The authors point out that successful leaders do not always need to have a novel idea, nor do they need to have the right idea at first. Greatness is the result of disciplined execution to the right core behaviors. For example, this paper suggests one of those core behaviors is listening.

[27] Collins and Porras, *Built to Last*, 26.

[28] One of Stephen Covey's seven habits is to begin with the end in mind. Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*, anniversary ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

[29] This is a hallmark of design thinking, discussed below, a process done within teams where they take several rounds of prototyping before landing on a viable product. Tim Brown, "Design Thinking," *Harvard Business Review* 86, no. 6 (2008): 88. Jeanne Liedka's research verified design thinking in the social sectors. Jeanne Liedtka, "Why Design Thinking Works," *Harvard Business Review* 96, no. 5 (October 9, 2018): 74.

[30] Sojourner Truth discovered her personal vocation by listening to the Spirit, discerning what broke her heart, and evaluating her skills and strengths. Diane Chandler, *Christian Spiritual Formation: An Integrated Approach for Personal and Relational Wholeness* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2014), 151-152.

Vision is more closely akin to vocation than ideation.[31] Vision, essential to the task of change, is the combination of a core ideology and an envisioned future.[32] An organization's visionary vocation is not to create a product or an environment, or even to grow: it is their "reason for being."[33] Vision, in particular for non-profits, is something that breaks its constituents' hearts. It is "the inability to accept things the way they are."[34] Organizational vision begins a problem to solve. A vision preserves a church's core identity while stimulating the future with a relentless dissatisfaction with the status quo, not for the sake of change, but for the mission.

Great organizations, non-profit and for-profit, decide their vocation for themselves. It is independent of current competition and trends[35] and it requires radical self-honesty about what is truly core to the organization. The core ideology of an organization does not change. Collins and Porras say an organization's core purpose should last at least 100 years.[36]

The narrative of the organization should live at the intersection of what Jim Collins calls the Hedgehog concept, a term developed in his seminal book *Good to Great*. Leaders do not dictate this; they discover it. They uncover:

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[31] Parker Palmer writes about the discovery of personal vocation in *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999). Vision is not only imagining the future, it is also grounded in the past.

[32] Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 220.

[33] Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 220. For a discussion of church vocation, in particular as it relates to mission within diverse communities, see Lois Y. Barrett, *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004).

[34] Andy Stanley, *Visioneering: Your Guide for Discovering and Maintaining Personal Vision* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2005), 17.

[35] Stanley, *Visioneering*, 222.

[36] Collins and Porras, *Built to Last*, 224.

> 1) What you are deeply passionate about, 2) what you can be the best in the world at, and 3) what best drives your economic engine. In the world of social sectors, that economic engine is not about making money but asking, "How can we develop a sustainable resource engine to deliver superior performance relative to our mission?"[37]

Narratives live at the intersection of who you are and what you exist to solve.[38] The following subsections explore how leaders uncover and discover the narrative of their organizations.

Listen to Discover

Organizational vision ought not be privately crafted by a senior leader on a whiteboard, but discovered and discerned in community. Leaders discover local values; they do not prescribe them. Goleman emphasizes, "Leaders who inspire can articulate shared values that resonate with and motivate the group. These are the leaders people love to work with, who surface the vision that moves everyone."[39] Leaders who cast vision through values misaligned to the needs and dreams of their people may see short-term gain but long-term frustration. Church leaders, unlike many business leaders, "simply do not have the concentrated decision power of a business CEO."[40] Therefore, these leaders cannot rely solely on executive decision-making. They have to be

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[37] Collins, *Good to Great in the Social Sector,* 17-18.

[38] The Gospel narrative is one such example: Who we are (created and chosen), the problem (sin), and the solution (Jesus).

[39] Goleman, *Focus,* 225.

[40] Collins, *Good to Great in the Social Sector*, 10. This varies across denominations, where churches with high power distance (often called "honor culture") may have more executive power. Church leaders who planted or founded their churches may also have more executive power. For the vast majority of leaders in churches, however, Collins' point holds true.

collaboratively executive and legislative, with greater ambition for the mission than for themselves.[41]

Johns emphasizes the need for a thoughtful investigation into the current cultural conditions of an organization before making changes.[42] The way team members interact with one another gives clues about the underlying tone of the work environment. Understanding the environmental context before pursuing change will help the leader discern the receptivity to the change and how to justify the change, and therefore how to talk about the change.

Narrative discovery includes noticing organizational artifacts such as language, websites, rhythms and patterns, and even decoration.[43] *Appreciative inquiry* leverages a listening process to discover the strengths, values, and possibilities within people and the organizations they form.[44] Leaders also ought to notice what stories are repeatedly told by staff and congregants, as these stories provide clues about the organizational values, mission, and narrative.[45] These stories are already deeply entrenched, and stories are often

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[41] Collins, *Good to Great in the Social Sector*, 11. Perhaps the error of Christian books, referenced in Chapter One, is an executive assumption that pastors lead with CEO-level dictatorial authority. This essay assumes what Collins calls legislative leadership, that which requires buy-in from a team of players with vested interest in the purpose and implementation of an organizations mission.

[42] Gary Johns, "In Praise of Context," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 22, no. 1 (2011): 31–42.

[43] Anat Rafaeli and Michael G Pratt, eds., *Artifacts and Organizations* (Mahawh, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 2. As cited in Scafide "Toward a Corporeal, Biblical Narrative: A Study in Church Transformation."

[44] Jon Townsin, "Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry," *The Appreciative Inquiry Commons* (blog), accessed August 2, 2020, https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/learn/appreciative-inquiry-introduction/.

[45] Mary Boyce, "Organizational Story and Storytelling: A Critical Review," *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 9, no. 5 (1996): 5–26. A list of potential questions for discovery is in Appendix A.

powerful and difficult to move.[46] As the title of Gabriel Yiannis's 1991 article suggests, "It is easier to slay a dragon than to kill a myth."[47]

The central task for the leader is vision-discovery, not vision-creation. This type of listening is uncommon.[48] In vision-discovery, leaders unearth what was shared by the group. They are the chief listener, in order to be best positioned to provide maximum clarity. Yet, learning and listening are best done as a team.[49] Empathy maximizes the unity and direction of the team; without it, vision eventually stalls. Warren Bennis uses the phrase "first-class noticers" for those people who are infectiously fascinated with learning from every situation.[50] As they listen, leaders learn the core identity of their organization and the tension that will unify them.

This listening and learning is non-stop. At a recent presentation to church staff, Cheryl Bachelder, former CEO of Popeyes and Pier 1, said the primary task of church

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[46] Phyllis Tickle believes spirituality and morality are metaphorically encassed within our shared history and common imagination. Any disruption to that history or imagination is potentially damaging to the morality and spirituality within. Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence, 34-39.*

[47] Yiannis Gabriel, "On Organisational Stories and Myths: Why It Is Easier to Slay a Dragon Than to Kill a Myth," *International Sociology* 6, no. 4 (1991): 427-442. The beliefs within an organization are not impossible to change, this is part of how Quinn and Cameron defined culture in Chapter Three. Organizational beliefs in a church context may have to do with staff decision making ("Jill makes all the decisions"), how they view cultural relevance ("we do not talk about social issues"), the history of choices ("we tried that before and it did not work"), etc.

[48] Daniel Goleman describes how a leader's pace often keeps them from truly listening. While he demonstrates how listening pays dividends for being able to digest and reflect others values, "poor listening has become an epidemic." Goleman, *Focus*, 227.

[49] Peter Senge says, "individual learning by itself is ultimately irrelevant in an organizational context unless there is some larger unit learning." Senge and von Ameln, "We Are Not in Control," 123–27.

[50] Goleman, *Focus*, 240. This reflects Heifetz's prescription of *zooming in* and *zooming out*, moving from the balcony to the dance floor. To do this well, pastoral leaders must stay personally engaged with frontline staff and volunteers.

leadership during change is to listen to their constituents.[51] Leaders of large churches have complex networks of constituents, and listening is required at all levels. Hastings encourages leaders to ask open-ended questions to lead to discovery of their organization. These powerful questions are "directly connected to deep listening."[52] These church leaders, Hastings suggests, should think of themselves like an archaeologist—unearthing the core values and questions, rather than as an instructor trying to get students to guess at the right answers.

An Adapting Story

Leaders who are unearthing the vision, narrative, and path forward within that narrative are not indecisive or immoveable. They lead with clarity *and* adaptability. They leverage analysis *and* discovery, and they certainly value empiricism over brashness.[53] Church leaders should listen to their congregants and evaluate internal metrics. They should be curious about the values of their insiders and attentive to trends and research about culture. Through listening they form and reform how they would articulate the organizations identity. They should patiently expect discovery to take time, knowing it is a process.

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[51] Cheryl Bachelder, "Leading in Uncertainty" (Buckhead Church, Zoom Video Call, April 16, 2020).

[52] J. Val Hastings, *Change Your Questions, Change Your Church* (N.p.: Amazon Services, LLC: 2012), Section Two: What Are Powerful Questions. Mark Lau Branson encourages asking questions that "elicit the most life-giving narratives and traits of the church." Branson, *Churches, Culture, and Leaership, 217.* In Chapter Six, I recommend specific questions for church leaders to ask different constituent groups.

[53] Jim Collins and Morten T. Hansen, *Great by Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos, and Luck—Why Some Thrive Despite Them All* (New York: Harper Collins, 2011).

Although our vocation, once discovered, largely remains unchanged[54], the application of that calling into our particular setting adapts over time. Therefore, forming an organizational story is organic and adaptive. It is like riding a bicycle, where movement creates wobble, but there is no progress without it. In churches filled with people engrained with complex emotions and beliefs, wobble is inevitable and adaptability essential. Leading within a church is not a controlled laboratory; it is a dynamic combination of interconnected organic moving parts.

Getting the story right is essential, but even the professional storytellers never get the story right on the first pass.[55] To say a story is created is disingenuous to the process: a story is adapted in community as it is being discovered.[56] True creativity comes through exploration and discovery. "And, by definition, 'discovery' means you don't know the answer when you start."[57] Peter Senge agrees:

> It's just not possible any longer to figure out from the top, and have everyone else following the orders of the "grand strategist." The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization.[58]

For large, established churches, their values, narratives, and assumptions have been gathered and cemented over time and will be "deeply embedded" and very difficult to

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[54] Chandler, Christian Spiritual Formation, 163.

[55] Catmull and Wallace, *Creativity Inc.,* 114.

[56] Western leaders have often been taught a value of indepdence and self-sufficiency. This is notably absent in the growing global church movement, where community is essential to discipleship. Graham Hill, *Global Church,* 367-282.

[57] Catmull and Wallace, *Creativity Inc.,* 151. According to Catmull and Wallace, over-planners are the most likely to be crushed when their plan (inevitably) needs adapting, or fails.

[58] Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 4.

change.[59] To help constituents release their grip on the past and reimagine the future, create a sense of urgency, and clarity a unifying problem to solve.

Define the Tension

Urgency and Optimism

The most important part of a story is the narrative tension. Bruner writes, "trouble drives the narrative."[60] Stories hang on tension.[61] The buy-in of the team depends on how captivating they find the narrative void their organization seeks to fill. One of the hallmarks of *design thinking*[62] is intentional listening, which leads to the identification of a specific problem.[63] Movies without obstacles lose audiences, sermons without tension lose congregations, and visions without a problem to solve lose followers. Urgency is helps people see if they "are unwilling to change, it leads to death."[64]

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[59] Paige Hull Teegarden, Denice Rothman Hinden, and Paul Sturm, *The Nonprofit Organizational Culture Guide: Revealing the Hidden Truths That Impact Performance* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 12.

[60] Bruner, "Life as Narrative," 697.

[61] Branson encourages leaders to pay attention to the discomfort in themselves and in others, including what behaviors and habits are creating tensions. Branson, *Churches, Culture, and Leadership*, 220.

[62] Find out more about this unique problem-solving process at Stanford's D. School: https://dschool.stanford.edu/. Often credited to Edison's unique approach to learning through innovation, design thinking uses a team approach that "is powered by a thorough understanding, through direct observation, of what people want and need." Brown, "Design Thinking," 86.

[63] The five hallmarks of a design thinker are empathy, integrative thinking, optimism, experimentalism, and collaboration. Brown, "Design Thinking," 87. Notice how this distant this process is from leader-centric or idea-centric visions of change.

[64] Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 64.

Leaders who want churches to think differently should start with an exceptionally hard problem.[65] In 1995, Bill Gates wrote a letter to all Microsoft staff entitled "The Internet Tidal Wave," in which he explored the problem of the internet for his staff. Gates did not hide how much work the change would require. "It requires us to do even more in these areas than we planned to. There will be a lot of uncertainty as we first embrace the Internet and then extend it. Since the Internet is changing so rapidly we will have to revise our strategies from time to time and have better inter-group communication than ever before."[66] Three months later, Microsoft launched MSN.

Urgency can come from waking up to your own limitation or weakness. Jim Collins writes,

> Every institution is vulnerable, no matter how great. No matter how much you've achieved, no matter how far you've gone, no matter how much power you've garnered, you're vulnerable to decline. There is no law of nature that the most powerful will inevitably remain at the top. Anyone can fall and most eventually do.[67]

Urgency, of course, is not enough. "Clearly, urgency is often a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for ensuring successful organizational change."[68] Leaders need to identify urgency, but must communicate it as one inside of and affected by the problem. "Given that the situation is not dire, creating a sense of 'crisis' or 'urgency' might not seem genuine or credible when coming from an outsider."[69]

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[65] Bolsinger, Canoeing the Mountains, 218.

[66] Bill Gates, "The Internet Tidal Wave," May 26, 1995, http://www.lettersofnote.com/2011/07/internet-tidal-wave.html.

[67] Jim Collins, *How the Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In* (San Francisco: JimCollins, 2009), 8.

[68] Herold and Fedor, *Change the Way You Lead Change,* 2.

[69] Herold and Fedor, *Change the Way You Lead Change*, 22.

Leaders who create a narrative have to be willing to "confront the brutal facts."[70] The facts confronting the impetus for change for large churches were outlined in Chapter One: decreased attendance and engagement, and rapid internal and external cultural change. Pastors cannot motivate for change without acknowledging the reality of the current situation. They can begin weaving in what they have heard into staff meetings and sermons, methodically revealing the necessity of a coming change.

While facts create urgency, optimism creates buy-in.[71] Urgency must be paired with credibility and a plan. Organizations need enough urgency to create motivation, and enough of a plan to assuage fear. Too much certainty will not create an alert response to what must change, and too much pain will create unnecessary disruption.[72]

Admiral Jim Stockdale addresses this paradox. Reflecting on his time and leadership as a prisoner of war during WWII he says, "This is a very important lesson. You must never confuse the faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."[73] For church leaders, the brutal fact is their approach to

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[70] Jim Collins, *Turning the Flywheel: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great* (New York: Harper Business, 2019), 33.

[71] Collins, *Turning the Flywheel, 33.*

[72] This is another depiction of the holding environment Heifetz described (see Chapter Three), where the work of a leader is to create the right balance of stress to keep motivations high and keep the potential for success within someone's locus of control. Leaders must have a compassionate perspective, empathizing with the stress created by change. Agility and stress are antithetical to one another. Peter Senge said it this way, "So, here is the question that I think more people in the agile world should be asking: 'How can you have an agile organization with high levels of stress?' I think the answer is: You can't." Senge and von Ameln, "We Are Not in Control," 123–27.

[73] James C. Collins and James Charles, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't*, 1st ed. (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001), 85.

ministry may outdated. They must clearly communicate this urgency while maintaining optimism about the future.

Pastoral leaders discover the organization's values and passions through listening, communicate a sense of urgency and optimism, and then reinforce this narrative to a wide variety of constituents.[74] This is the marker of the beginning of a good story: a clear problem, with an unclear solution. "Although the need to change is often quite clear, what needs changing is often less clear and how to create meaningful and lasting change is a totally different and more difficult matter."[75] This leads to the next ingredient of adaptive and sustainable change: clarity.

Clarity and Commitment

As church leaders listen to the tensions and dreams of the people they lead, their responsibility is to transform a wide range of potential challenges into one overarching narrative. To do this, as Heifetz and Collins illuminate, is to create time for reflection and distance for perspective.[76] Collins refers to this as zooming in and zooming out.[77] Christian leaders are no exception. MaryKate Morse refers to getting into our "spiritual closets to clear our heads of the constant buzz of life."[78] Leaders need distance from the

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[74] Specific recommendations for how church leaders can listen are discussed in Chapter Six.

[75] Herold and Fedor, *Change the Way You Lead Change*, 2.

[76] Heifetz refers to getting distance for perspective as "getting on the balcony." While it may be physical distance, more often it is time for reflection and to pull out of complication of the micro to see the macro. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers,* 272.

[77] Collins and Hansen, *Great by Choice*, 103.

[78] MaryKate Morse, *Making Room for Leadership: Power, Space and Influence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 158.

congregation to be able to see and articulate the vision clearly.[79] In the same way, they need distance from their day-to-day role equivalent as "chief firefighter," roaming from one crisis to the next. They must remove themselves from the (often emotional) environment to reflect wholeheartedly about the future of the mission—not one they came up with on their own, but one that emerged from the unearthing in the discovery process.[80]

The trouble with unearthing felt needs and opportunities is, invariably, a myriad of visions emerge, limiting the potential for consensus. Clarity, not consensus, is the leader's goal. Lencioni writes, "When leadership teams wait for consensus before taking action, they usually end up with decisions that are made too late and are mildly disagreeable to everyone."[81] Friedman says, "A perpetual concern for consensus leverages power to the extremists."[82] Part of the work of establishing a narrative is intervening when counter-narratives and subplots develop. These alternative stories, distractions, and criticisms have the ability to alter the course set. The best guardrail against alternative stories is a compelling narrative that drives people back to the ideal future.[83]

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[79] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve, Revised Edition*, 96.

[80] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve, Revised Edition*, 96. The paradox of leadership is committing to listen for a vocation from within the congregation, and then having the courage to clarify and articulate that vision in a way that will inevitably exclude.

[81] Patrick Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 48.

[82] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 3. Les McKeown disagrees; he believes effective communication actually increases the potential consensus, as if they are in a symbiotic relationship. McKeown, *The Synergist,* 227.

[83] David Buchanan and Patrick Dawson, "Discourse and Audience: Organizational Change as Multi-Story Process," *Journal of Management Studies* 44, no. 5 (2007): 669–686.

The two great limits to commitment are "the desire for consensus and the need for certainty."[84] Team leaders must be willing to live within the consensus tension: that you seek consensus, but understand complete agreement is impossible. Leaders need the ability to create palpable buy-in, to help teams "disagree and commit."[85] Encouraging disagreement can foster increased listening and team vulnerability. Then, the leader should ask for commitment. A leader must listen to everyone's ideas, and then move forward with clarity, knowing it excludes.[86] Leaders without the capacity to be decisive will often capitulate to data or consensus, only moving forward when they can stand behind the support of metrics or a crowd. Vision is about clarity; it is about the will to stand your ground.[87] Says Friedman,

> Vision is basically an emotional rather than a cerebral phenomenon, depending more on a leader's capacity to deal with anxiety than his or her professional training or degree. A leader needs the capacity not only to accept the solitariness that comes with the territory, but also to come to love it.[88]

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[84] Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 207.

[85] Larry Johnson, *Absolute Honesty: Building a Corporate Culture That Values Straight Talk and Rewards Integrity* (New York: American Management Association, 2003), 111. This principle helps curb what the authors playfully call *lipotage*, giving lip service to an idea and sabotaging it later. They encourage creating environments of safety, asking questions that lead to candor, and listening attentively.

[86] The word "decide" comes from the Latin root *de*, meaning off, and *caedere*, meaning to cut. Literally, to decide is to cut off. Dictionary.com, s.v. "decide," accessed June 12, 2020. https://www.dictionary.com/browse/decide?s=t.

[87] It is worth saying again: the ground the leader is standing on is one they discovered by listening to people. They have clarified a direction within their church's vocation, its organizational values and mission, and toward Christ's imperative to make disciples.

[88] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 20. This is a paradox of leadership. A leader is willing to set aside their own aspiration and agenda to listen to the values and passions of others. Then, they are willing to take up the responsibility for going first with clarity, absorbing the inevitable questioning and discomfort of a team as the receive the clarity of what's next.

Later, Friedman writes about how leadership is not easy, and it comes necessarily with the pain of isolation, loneliness, personal attacks, and losing friends. In fact, "that's what leadership is all about."[89]

Furthermore, although the leader will state the narrative direction of the organization (what problem they exist to address), they will rarely have assurance about whether or not they are right! Certainty is not possible, but clarity is, and this is the function of a leader—to be a non-anxious presence committed to people and a cause in the midst of an uncertain future.

The clarification of the narrative must be driven by more than data, mission statements, or a desire to create harmony. Friedman calls those leaders who fail to differentiate due to discomfort in the face of sabotage and critique as "peace-mongers."[90] Information alone does not change behavior;[91] neither are people "inspired by reason alone."[92] A mission statement does not a narrative make. "Most mission statements have neither inspired people to change the world nor provided them with an accurate description of what an organization actually does."[93]

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[89] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 247. These quotes may be disheartening for the leader who believes increased leadership correlates to increased rights, freedoms, and privileges. Richard Fagerlin believes as leaders authority increases their rights decrease. Richard Fagerlin, *Trustology: The Art and Science of Leading High-Trust Teams* (Fort Collins, CO: Wise Guys Publishing, 2013), 65-69.

[90] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 19.

[91] Lev S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[92] Gary Adamson, Joe Pine, and Jodi Kroup, "How Storytelling Can Drive Strategic Change," *Strategy & Leadership* 34, no. 1 (2006): 37.

[93] Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 75.

Finally, the organizational narrative should be "completely idealistic."[94] The story has to do more than inform: it must inspire.[95] Constituents need to buy in to the necessity of church's existence, mission, and adaptation to a world that needs them. As pastoral leaders discover clarity, they can begin sharing it with their peers, leadership teams, and broader staff teams. They should be ready to tell stories, and document the new directly as succinctly and clearly as possible.

Successful narratives are wildly ambitious. Then, they are over-communicated. Most people will not believe the message until they have heard it seven times.[96] Repetition is difficult and humbling, especially for church leaders who habitually create new content every seven days. Many leaders fail to repeat the values, vocation, and vision of the people they lead, forgetting the value of persistent communication from the top.[97] Narrative repetition does more than increase validity or memory; it creates stability.[98] Remarkably, as the narrative of the organization is told over and over, the story itself begins to function as a leader. Stories can guide behavior and create meaning.[99] Pastoral leaders can ask their teams to share stories and insights about the new direction, creating milestone moments of shared ownership in the new direction.

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[94] Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 82. For example, making disciples of all nations, eradicating homelessness, etc.

[95] Adamson, Pine, and Kroupa, "How Storytelling Can Drive Strategic Change," 37.

[96] Adamson, Pine, and Kroupa, "How Storytelling Can Drive Strategic Change," 141.

[97] Lencioni, *The Motive,* 159.

[98] Stephanie Dailey and Larry Browning, "Retelling Stories in Organizations: Understanding the Functions of Narrative Repetition," *The Academy of Management Review* 39, no. 1 (2014): 32.

[99] Ken W. Parry and Hans Hansen, "The Organizational Story as Leadership," *Leadership* 3, no. 3 (2007): 281–300. Notice how often in the Old and New Testament the prophetic voices return to the familiar stories of God's activity through Israel; these stories are functioning as more than anecdotes or metaphors, they are helping to lead and guide the activity of the people of God.

Stories are influential for motivation, particularly when they are communicated using familiar language.[100] Stories ought to highlight the impact of specifically identified behaviors of team members.[101] Change leaders must encourage authentic storytelling, not only the positive stories, or the story given will not engender trust.[102] Narratives also solidify new and meaningful metaphors[103] and defining moments.

Creating defining moments can aid in the process of creating a positive narrative around a change initiative.[104] Defining moments often produce symbols, metaphors, and common memories to rally around.[105] Creating new and significant moments can create what Clausen and Kragh call defining stories.[106] Sometimes a small moment can have a significant impact. People tell stories of shared moments that help to replace old stories and make sense of the new normal, creating anchors in periods of change.[107] Patrick

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[100] By listening intently to people, Abraham Lincoln was fluent in their vocabulary, often translating complex words into anecdotes they would remember for decades. Lincoln understood, "a man…must be understood by those who would lead him." Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 168.

[101] Grenny et al., *Influencer*, 101.

[102] Grenny et al., *Influencer*, 211.

[103] A metaphor might be as simple as a rally cry for those orchestrating the change (for example: "we are preparing for harvest ") or relate to the prescribed change (for example: "we are moving from the stage to the living room") or could take local or cultural language to paint a picture of the direction (for example in an urban church "closer in church than in traffic").

[104] C. Driscoll and M. McKee, "Re-Storying a Culture of Ethical and Spiritual Values: A Role for Leader Storytelling," *Journal of Business Ethics* 73 (2007): 205.

[105] Jeffrey Ford, Laurie Ford, and Randall Mcnamara, "Resistance and the Background Conversations of Change," *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 15, no. 2 (2002): 105–121.

[106] Birgitte Clausen and Hanne Kragh, "Why Don't They Just Keep on Doing It? Understanding the Challenges of the Sustainability of Change," *Journal of Change Management* 19, no. 4 (2019): 221–45.

[107] David Fleming, "Narrative Leadership: Using the Power of Stories," *Strategy & Leadership* 29, no. 4 (2001): 36. In one example, a church attempting a building renovation created an Instagram account for the outdated church carpet. https://www.instagram.com/bcccarpet/

Lencioni gives examples of leaders who created simple defining moments by burning old training manuals and hosting a wedding ceremony between two merging departments.[108]

For the leader of a large church, the work of uncovering the vocational narrative is grueling, complex, and emotional. And yet, the work has just begun. Clarifying what has been discovered is the lifelong task of the pastoral leader. These leaders keep the urgency of the future in front of their constituents constantly, with their clarified (and likely, excluding) depiction of their locally enacted global vocation at the forefront. They refuse to capitulate to coercion or control. They know "True leadership only exists if people follow when they have the freedom not to."[109]

Pastoral leaders who want to lead through significant changes must identify the role they are playing within a story. Says Robert Quinn, leaders often want to change their environment or circumstances without changing themselves. The work of a leader is often to start with "deep change" in their own life.[110] Belasen and Frank address how particular personality traits inform and predict the role a leader will choose.[111] For leaders, this is a cautionary tale; our preferred style may not be what best serves the vision before us for the people behind us.

The pastoral leader's role, therefore, is to listen, provide clarity amidst uncertainty, and stand up against counter-narratives. Using the lessons of organizational

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[108] Patrick Lencioni, "Now Burn Your Ships," At the Table with Patrick Lencioni (podcast), July 15, 2020, https://podcasts.apple.com/si/podcast/now-burn-your-ships/id1474171732?i=1000485104057.

[109] Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, 13.

[110] Robert Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within (The Jossey-Bass Business & Management Series*) (New York: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 6.

[111] Alan Belasen and Nancy Frank, "Competing Values Leadership: Quadrant Roles and Personality Traits," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 29, no. 2 (2008): 127–143, https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730810852489.

change illuminated in Chapter Three, the leader discovers the value system of their congregation.[112] Then they identify and communicate the roles of their teammates, members, and attendees.

Clarify Roles

Invite Participation

People want to make a meaningful contribution to a significant problem. When church staff are engaged through narrative in a change effort, their attitude changes. They "become absorbed into narratives" and change their attitude to "reflect the story that is told."[113] Stories do more than inspire; they invite us into participation.[114] This is true, in particular, as a story moves toward becoming autobiographical.[115] Ford demonstrates how people's acceptance of change is impacted by the meaning made by its members.[116] People take on new ownership in their behavior, decisions, and disciplines when they see they are playing a significant role in a meaningful story. A compelling story takes a disparate group of characters and unites them in a common direction, giving each of them a particular assignment. "I can only answer the question, 'What am I to do?'" says

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[112] Cameron et al., *Competing Values Leadership*.

[113] Peterson, "StoryBrand Narrative Marketing," 20.

[114] Bruner, "Life as Narrative," 694.

[115] Bruner, "Life as Narrative," 695-696.

[116] Jeffrey Ford, Laurie Ford, and Randall Mcnamara, "Resistance and the Background Conversations of Change."

Alasdair MacIntyre, "if I can answer the prior question, 'Of what story do I find myself a part?'"[117]

The story a leader tells must involve other people, and quickly. In the same way that narrative that does not start with discovery will lead to lack of buy-in, a role that does not start with connection will lead to a lack of trust. Change agents must give and earn trust,[118] collaboratively moving through a process of empowerment toward execution.

No matter how obvious, roles must be clarified, expectations stated. In their work with hospitals managing change processes, Clausen and Kragh disappointingly observe that "clear roles are absent in most change initiatives."[119] The responsibility for making the change is often left unclear. The authority for enacting the change may unfortunately be "so distributed that nobody feels in charge."[120] Pastoral leaders must clarify for their teams what they are responsible to do. This may be begin with rewriting job descriptions, or meeting with teams to cast vision of their role in the change effort.

Empower Creativity and Ownership

A role, however, is not permission to live and operate within a silo. Each person has a role, but each is implementing the vision of the group.[121] Friedman says, "life

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[117] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 216.

[118] The paradox of trust for a leader is they give trust before its earned, and commit to being a leader worthy of earning trust before its given. Fagerlin, *Trustology*, 38.

[119] Birgitte Clausen and Hanne Kragh, "Why Don't They Just Keep on Doing It?" 236. This seems counterintuitive; certainly at a hospital setting, the role of a nurse is clearly defined, as is a bath aid, pharmacist, and mortician. Yet, even with a job that seems explicitly clear, people rarely intuitively understand how their role relates to the change.

[120] Clausen and Kragh, "Why Don't They Just Keep on Doing It?" 236.

[121] Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 67.

evolves in the direction of its strengths by preserving a balance between togetherness and individuality."[122] Team members have to be able to take the narrative of the organization personally, and then commit to their unique part in the story. Their role serves the overarching narrative. Therefore, they cannot usurp the narrative, but it must primarily be executed by them within a particular context. The leader's responsibility is to clarify each role, specifying exactly what is lost if team members do not embrace and fulfill it. Communicate their ownership of the narrative tension using their values and language. Avoid jargon. In the same way a narrative energizes an organization, the tension or problem being solved by a team member captivates and activates them toward the realization of new limits and adaptive processes.

Pastoral leaders cannot make changes without the people beside them. Yet, the new work required of them will be difficult and costly. It will require new learning, and may impact familiar behaviors and relationships.[123] Tell stories to highlight the impact of their work. Allow for staff and volunteer teams to have choices where possible. Make their work into a game.[124] When a team member is having a difficult time with their role, leaders can provide immediate feedback, training to help develop new skills, and supervision that emphasizes the importance of the identified standard.[125]

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[122] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 74.

[123] The psychological effects of change on constituents is explored by Ingeman Arbnor and Bjorn Bjerke, *Methodology for Creating Business Knowledge* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009).

[124] Grenny et al., *Influence*, 81, 91, 101.

[125] This will be discussed further in Chapter Five. The role given to a team member always includes a specifically measured outcome, and usually includes the need for a new skill. As stated in Chapter Three, Grenny et al. propose a six-source paradigm for changing behavior. If the role assigned to an individual on a team is painful and needs additional motivation, help them love what they hate. Grenny et al., *Influencer*, 78.

Identifying a role for a teammate gives them a specific tension to resolve, contribution to make, or audience to address in the ongoing narrative.[126] Each constituent should be given clarity about the reason for the change, the scope of the responsibility expected, and permission to create within that scope.[127] The people on your team are far more valuable than any one idea.[128] Says Pixar founder Ed Catmull, no stranger to good ideas, "if you give a good idea to a mediocre team, they will screw it up. If you give a mediocre idea to a brilliant team, they will either fix it or throw it away and come up with something better."[129] Who you have on board at the time of opportunity is a greater indicator of future success than any chance event.[130] Help them know they can succeed, give permission for self-development, and clarify expectations.

Giving people a specific role, a particular lane to run in, actually decreases their anxiety in change. The more specific their ownership in the solution, the less anxiety they feel.[131] When given constraints within which to be creative, the best leaders are empirical in their creativity, testing methodically against their core focus.[132]

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[126] Role identification is more nuanced than managerial delegation: a role delegates a tension, a plan delegates a to-do list. Role clarity starts with a common narrative vision, and moves immediately to individual ownership and permission.

[127] In the changing landscape of American church, we need creativity more than ever before. Justin Bowers, "The Creativity Behind Creation: The Trinity in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and Group Creativity," *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 10, no. 2 (2016): 24.

[128] Catmull and Wallace, *Creativity Inc.,* 75.

[129] Catmull and Wallace, *Creativity Inc*., 74.

[130] Collins and Hansen, *Great by Choice*, 161.

[131] Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church,* 43.

[132] Creativity is always done within constraints. The Mona Lisa was painted on a canvas, the Sistine Chapel on a ceiling. Leaders who have ideas outside the scope of their "canvas" should be encouraged to collaborate. Often in a change processes, organizations discover their organizational structure needs to be adapted. This is often best tested first with cross-functional teams. This will be

Throughout the Scriptures, the ownership of the vision of the people of God was distributed amongst leaders and followers. Joshua distributes deadlines and instructions to the people before crossing the Jordan, establishing clear roles for every person under his authority.[133] James gave clear roles to a communication team and the new Gentile believers.[134]

Pastoral leaders discover and clarify the narrative vocation for their community. Then, they empower people through specific and actionable roles. Given the complexity of large churches, these roles will be varied and widespread, from elder and volunteer teams to attendees. Teams can collaboratively develop champion statements and rally cries. Leaders can work to refocus job descriptions.[135] Roles ought to suit the capacity, skill, and position of the empowered demographic. Staff members at these large churches, in particular, need clearly identified roles and permission to be creative within them. The particulars of how these roles become actionable is the subject of Chapter Five.

Summary

The first work of the pastoral leader is to discover the narrative vocation of their worshiping community. Through listening, leaders identify a common problem and invite others to help solve it. The vision and direction of the organization is not created in

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discussed at length in Chapter Five.

[133] See Chapter Two for more details on the leadership of Joshua and James.

[134] In Acts 15:22-23, the church chooses messengers to send a letter to the believers in Antioch. The Gentile believers are admonished to maintain four purity laws, examined in Chapter Two.

[135] More specific recommendations of how to clarify roles at large churches will be explored in Chapter Six.

isolation, but unearthed through a process of listening, discernment, and values identification. As that story is discovered, the work of the leader is to refine and clarify the narrative tension within the context of the organization's history, through the lens of its constituents' values, rooted in God's redemptive story. This clarification unites and directs, pointing toward an ideal future motivated by a developed sense of urgency.[136]

As the narrative of the church is clarified and communicated, the leader also distributes the ownership of the direction by identifying roles for each constituent group.[137] Attendees may be invited to carry the vision in a different way than volunteers and elders, who have a different role than particular staff teams. By giving people a significant role in a meaningful story, leaders help their entire community own their particular narrative vocation.

Yet, for their necessity and merit, both the role and the narrative are more emotional and big-picture than specifically actionable. Though clarifying and full of permission, these stories can lean toward high inspiration and low (or unfocused) activity. Chapter Five explores how this vision is put into action through clear and marked measurables and supporting structures. The work of the leader is far from over; the people and vision they steward require a maintained supporting structure and specific clarity of how to enact the role given.

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[136] This side of eternity, the urgency of a church's mission will not change. The urgency to adapt the churches approach to the mission will change. As discussed in this chapter and Chapter Three, leaders chronically underestimate how long the adaptation will take and are likely to declare victory too soon.

[137] At this point, the leader has yet to dictate specific ideas for implementation. The impetus of this change model is the empowerment of people through a unified direction.

CHAPTER FIVE:

SUPPORTING CHANGE

"The secret to mediocrity is not an unwillingness to change; the signature of mediocrity is chronic inconsistency."[1]

Introduction

A compelling vision is not enough; stating a narrative, even repeatedly, will not sustain long-term adaptive change. The organizational narrative, and its accompanying change, is actualized through the daily behaviors and decisions of the people most affected by it. In a church setting, this includes staff, elders, members, and attendees. For each stakeholder, significant change requires correlating support. Leaders must initiate new structures and direct focus to realize desired outcomes, reforming previously assumed teams, ministries, and budgets. Leaders often fail to acknowledge the deeply rooted structures that keep organizations from changing. People exist in cultures (how they think), climates (what they sense), and deep infrastructure (incentivizing motivation and behavior).[2] These deep ruts are easy to slide back into and difficult to escape; perhaps this is even more difficult for institutions established on unchanging truths, repeating centuries-old creeds, and meeting in historic buildings. Without structural change, any initiative will remain two-dimensional; it may be present in sermons and on websites, but not show up in the day-to-day decisions of the people enacting the change.

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[1] Collins and Hansen, *Great by Choice,* 138.

[2] Birgitte Clausen and Hanne Kragh, "Why Don't They Just Keep on Doing It?" 221–45.

Chapter Four explored how stories must be orchestrated organizationally and personally, through narrative clarity and personal roles. The elements described in this chapter to support change are:

1. Create Supporting Structure.
2. Provide Focus.

This chapter begins with exploration of the cost of making changes without corollary support.

Change Without Support

Change creates personal and organizational disruption. In *The Founder's Mentality,* authors Zook and Allen say the collapse of large organizations "accelerates when the component parts on the inside begin to behave in ways that are increasingly uncoordinated and at odds."[3] It is the role of the leader to create structures that favor communication, collaboration, and cohesion.

Leaders often underestimate the emotional nostalgia and stability found in established behavioral and communication patterns. Self, Armenakis, and Schraeder underscore the interaction of content, process, and context in organizational change.[4] If leaders fail to recognize the structural context of their organization, it could undermine the change effort.[5] Internal order is created by how we communicate with and organize

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[3] Zook and Allen, *The Founder's Mentality*, 106.

[4] Dennis R. Self, Achilles A. Armenakis, and Mike Schraeder, "Organizational Change Content, Process, and Context: A Simultaneous Analysis of Employee Reactions," *Journal of Change Management* 7, no. 2 (2007): 229. https://doi.org/10.1080/14697010701461129.

[5] Self, Armenakis, and Schraeder, "Organizational Change Content, Process, and Context," 211–229.

people.[6] Organizational charts, guidelines, mission statements, and values contribute to an ordered predictability. Yet, deeper structures are interwoven into the networks and connections among stakeholders. They have well-worn paths of communication, behavior, and decision-making. For churches, bylaws and statements of faith create a baseline of order, but the patterns and habits of the organization are woven through the interplay and decision-making of its constituents.[7] Without corollary support, disruptive change threatens personal and organizational stability.

Employees believe, whether consciously or unconsciously, that their employers owe them fairness, benefits, and security. Throughout a change initiative, employees believe their bosses are obligated to continue to provide a consistent, psychologically safe environment.[8] Non-staff church stakeholders have often invested their time and resources into a particular structure that a change may be disrupting.

Change disrupts relationships, often distancing people from established connections and forcing engagement with new ones. With so much disruption, how do leaders create psychological safety during change? How can they continue to engender buy-in from staff, volunteers, donors, and community members while leading through a change process? For pastors of large churches, the staff team are the first constituent

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[6] Self, Armenakis, and Schraeder, "Organizational Change Content, Process, and Context," 211–229.

[7] Church governance, its role in the operation of the church, and the necessity of the pastoral leader to understand it are discussed in Kevin E. Lawson, *Supervising and Supporting Ministry Staff: A Guide to Thriving Together* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).

[8] Lawson, *Supervising and Supporting Ministry Staff*. This may be particularly true in church contexts, where church staff are also (likely) members of the church, and a pastor has the dual role of shepherd and supervisor. Gilbert Rendle explores the concept of covenant among large church staffs in his book. Gilbert R. Rendle, *When Moses Meets Aaron: Staffing and Supervision in Large Congregations* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2007).

group to lead through change. Without addressing these questions, pastors risk the possibility for the closest stakeholders to reject any change narrative, not because the vision is dull, but because of the high level of friction required to work against a system with which they are familiar. Structure creates safety, and without safety staff team members may sabotage a vision.

Carr explores how the emotions of employees during change can inhibit or even prohibit cognitive buy-in.[9] Staff may react emotionally rather than logically to a change, especially if they perceive their psychological safety is in jeopardy. While leaders often believe rational thinking, efficiency, and logic are the main tools in the change process, emotion and reactivity largely influence receptivity. Neglecting how people respond to decisions, in particular to ambiguity and risk, will have disastrous consequences. Increased emotion may lead to conflict, gossip, trust loss, suspicion, and decreased loyalty and satisfaction.[10] In organizations attempting to maintain a narrative in a particular direction, gossip threatens to create a sideways narrative.[11] Employees with a low ability to manage or hold stress, especially through ambiguity and surrounded by emotion, have the potential to paralyze a change effort in its tracks.[12] Volunteers and

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[9] Adrian Carr, "Understanding Emotion and Emotionality in a Process of Change," *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 14, no. 5 (2001): 421–434, https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000005873.

[10] Carr, "Understanding Emotion and Emotionality in a Process of Change."

[11] Bordia showed how gossip can be a payback tool that employees use to get even with managers when experiencing disruptive change. Gossip can also be a form of worst-case-scenario preparation. It is critical that in change efforts communication channels are wide open. Prashant Bordia et al., "Management Are Aliens! Rumors and Stress During Organizational Change," *Group & Organization Management* 31, no. 5 (2006): 601–621.

[12] This is not to say there will ever be an absence of stress, nor should there be. As explored in Chapter Two, Heifetz advocates for the right amount of stress that creates disruption without so much that it causes paralysis.

financial supporters of churches must also be considered. They may feel they are owed additional consideration because of their financial and time contributions.[13]

As discussed in Chapter Four, leaders must discover the values and tension of the people they lead. In addition, pastoral leaders must be attentive to their context and setting. Organizations have preferences for particular types of change.[14] Studying the current structures and successful previous change efforts helps the transforming leader better understand how they can be successful in the present challenge.[15]

Change begins with narrative identification and is maintained through radically clear structures, including pathways for communication, expectations, and leadership. The solution to the disequilibrium created by change is clarifying the systems, leadership channels, and measurements that provide the setting and pathway for enacting change. The next two sections propose specific tools for creating supporting structure and focus.

Create Supporting Structure

Internal structures create long-term support for new change efforts. The right structures have the potential to increase creativity, collaboration, and clarity. By contrast, ineffective or competing structures create dissonance, frustration, and lost energy; they

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[13] Andy Segedin explores the topic of giving and consumerism in his article. Andy Segedin, "Giving Religiously: Church Membership Becoming A Consumer Choice (FUNDRAISING)," *The Non-Profit Times* 31, no. 13 (2017): 10.

[14] This theory was unpacked in Chapter Three. Cameron and Quinn, *Competing Values Leadership*. The values of a particular organization not only impact how you talk about change, but the systems used for implementing change. These values influence not only where you are going and how you talk about it, but how you will get there. The way an organization has historically enacted change will help a leader discover the most appropriate way to communicate about and structure around change.

[15] Leaders in large churches that are tied to denominations or to networks of churches are also likely limited in the scope of what change efforts will be approved by a governing board.

create conditions ripe for sabotage.[16] In the process of adapting, some temporary structures may be built while long-term solutions are put in place. In larger instances of change, pastoral leaders may need to make significant shifts to staff, ministries, and budgets. This section explores how to reorganize, create environments, and clarify new roles.

Reorganize Around Priorities

The particular structure needed for an organization in change depends on type of change needed, the particular wiring or leadership style of the leadership team, and the values of the organization. This may require a reorganization of church staff, volunteers, and systems. This section discusses adding or removing layers, involving managers, and appointing leaders. Previous ways of organizing may unintentionally be hindering a change process. Hogg, van Knippenberg, and Rast show how inter-group relations and relational structures can be a deep rut for organizational change.[17] Established habits and relationships can make it difficult to form new accountability and reporting structures, and new ways of organizing as a team. Reorganizing people can, however, have the inverse effect, creating new models and patterns for communication and connection.

How should church leaders reorganize their staff? Rather than starting by examining the interests or previous titles of team members, begin with what roles are

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[16] Sabotage may be intentional or unintentional. Everybody has a limit to their capacity for frustration. Change is, by nature, frustrating as it requires learning new behaviors and values. The wrong structures will create additional frustration and more quickly bump into team members willingness to continue in the change.

[17] Michael A. Hogg, Daan Van Knippenberg, and David E. Rast, "Intergroup Leadership in Organizations: Leading Across Group and Organizational Boundaries," *The Academy of Management Review* 37, no. 2 (2012): 232–255.

needed in the current change. The difficult work, in particular in non-profit work, is to separate "the positions from the people, and concentrate on the positions."[18] Then, identify who makes most sense to lead each area and help them fill the gap with competency training and development as needed.[19] This change may require the addition or removal of layers of management.

New teams and new layers of management may help to increase communication, collaboration, and creativity. In an organization experiencing the dysfunction of miscommunication or lost information, leaders may need to create additional layers of structure during a change.[20] Periods of change can be opportunities to increase collaboration between different teams by charging two teams with a shared responsibility for a new problem or opportunity. While long-term changes may eventually require significant reorganization, leaders can create temporary structures with cross-functional teams. These groups of staff, elders, and volunteers may generate creative implementation strategies and increase the stickiness of a vision. Like any person or team in the change process, the cross-functional team needs a clear understanding of how they contribute to organizational narrative.

Periods of change may also be an opportunity to remove layers of management, in particular if the organization is stuck or stagnant. Jody Glenn Ray encourages large,

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[18] McKeown, *The Synergist,* 137. Kindness, a worthy value for any Christian organization, is often substituted with an underlying value of niceness, where no issue or lingering incompetence is addressed.

[19] Leaders should still listen to the interests and passions of their team members. However, interests and passions often overlap. Beginning by identifying clear lanes helps each leader to be able to thrive in a role that was built with long-term organizational health in mind.

[20] McKeown, *Predictable Success,* 162-165.

historical structures to flatten, as is seen in emerging church models,[21] giving ministry opportunities like preaching and administering sacraments back to the laity.[22] Zook and Allen agree with organizational flattening, saying, "Kill at least one nonessential layer, process, or reporting requirement every month for a year,"[23] with the express purpose of increased transparency, access to leaders, and anti-bureaucracy. By removing non-essential layers, church leaders may add more direct engagement with frontline volunteers and attendees. Whether adding or removing layers, the buy-in of managers is essential.

Structures at large churches are often supported by staff members in managerial roles, whose primary work is leading staff and volunteer teams.[24] Management is often positioned as weak, but investment and clarity of these mid-level leaders is critical.[25] Their buy-in or lack thereof will either expedite or stopgap any change effort. Leaders must involve their directors early, and appoint new leadership if necessary. Research in the field of corporate training found lack of compliance with change efforts usually started with disengaged managers.[26] For the large church, in particular when in transition, the managerial work of leading the staff is vital.

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[21] Ray, "The United Methodist Church and the Willingness to Embrace Change," 40.

[22] Ray, "The United Methodist Church and the Willingness to Embrace Change," 41.

[23] Zook and Allen, *The Founder's Mentality*, 123.

[24] Gilbert Rendle discusses supervision, management, delegation, and performance review as tools for leading staff at large churches. Gilbert Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual & Organizational Tools for Leaders* (Edinburgh: Alban Books, 2007).

[25] To manage is "to create human systems that can implement plans as precisely and efficiently as possible." Kotter, "What Leaders Really Do," 47.

[26] M. L. Broad and J. W. Newstrom, *Transfer of Training: Action-Packed Strategies to Ensure High Payoff from Training Investments* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1992), 53, as cited in Calhoun

Church leadership teams can increase communication with mid-level managers by adding individual meetings with them, creating temporary seats on the leadership team, or inviting them to lead cross-functional teams. The pastoral leader must take their responsibility as manager and supervisor seriously; Lawson shows how orchestrating coaching meetings, staff meetings, and regular feedback loops are crucial, yet often overlooked, components of pastoral ministry.[27] Ultimately, the buy-in of leadership at all levels is paramount to a successful change.

Who should leaders bring into the inner circle of leadership as they seek to become an adaptive organization? The most effective leaders complain the least, blame the least, and have "the greatest capacity to take responsibility for his or her own emotional being and destiny."[28] Leaders should also pay attention to the leadership style of their managers. Only four of the six types of leadership have a positive effect on staff culture and results, with the most positive effects coming from the authoritative style of leadership.[29] As pastors think about forming permanent or temporary teams, avoid using them as a way to develop under-performers. Put the best people on the most important problems, and surround them with trustworthy and confidential teammates.

W. Wick, *The Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning: How to Turn Training and Development into Business Results* (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2006).

[27] Lawson, *Supervising and Supporting Ministry Staff*.

[28] Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 21. Venturing into the unknown of Mt. Everest, a legendary mountaineer has a checklist for preparation. Item #7 reads, "In selecting teammates, choose people to get stranded with." Collins and Hansen, *Great by Choice*, 161.

[29] Says Goleman, "The authoritative leader is a visionary, he motivates people by making clear to them how their work fits into a larger vision for the organization." The six styles of leadership in order of effectiveness are: authoritative, affiliative, democratic, coaching, pacesetting, and coercive. Goleman, "Leadership That Gets Results," 11. Do not confuse the authoritative with the pursuit for more authority. Edwin Friedman noted of a WWII general, "neither his authority nor his power were enough to ensure a 'command presence.'" Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 11.

New pathways for management may need to be created; old systems may need to be retired. This reorganization is not to increase control, but to provide people with the clearest sense of meaning, achievement, and belonging on teams[30] dedicated to similar segments of the identified vision. Through change, the self-differentiation of a leader is paramount. In a new system of operating, leaders must be able to provide clarity while remaining non-anxious. No policy can replace the presence of a stable leader. Every team member needs the clarity of who they are following and who they are working with as they learn a new system of communication, behavior, and decisions. People will create solutions and identify opportunities when leaders maintain stability and trust by making promises and creating environments.

Clear Roles and Creative Environments

Change creates unpredictability.[31] Leaders take the responsibility to create environments that support feelings of safety and support, beginning by making promises. This section explores how clear roles and stable environments unleash creativity. Writing about the practices that sustain Christian community, Christine Pohl says making promises helps to create "islands of predictability" among change, aiding in their stability and focus.[32] It is one demonstrable way churches can be different than most for-profit groups: we make and maintain commitments to one another as brothers and sisters in

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[30] Goleman, "Leadership That Gets Results," 49.

[31] Different personalities, often described through typology theories like Myers-Briggs or the Enneagram, respond to change in different ways. Leaders should be familiar with their teams to know how they are predisposed to embrace, reject, or be cautious about change.

[32] Pohl, *Living into Community*, 65.

Christ.[33] Leaders should be more invested in their people than their plan.[34] Pohl believes even though we may break promises, we should continue making them.[35] If the change breaks a pre-existing promise, acknowledge it quickly to rebuild trust. These promises are the foundation of the environments that foster creativity within a change process.

As teams reorganize around key priorities, the leader should create environments that foster trust and creativity. Begin by putting people with the right teams led by the right leaders.[36] True creativity begins with trust, with an environment that "does not punish vulnerability."[37] Constituents must have the confidence that bad ideas will not become inseparable from their reputation.[38] Allow teams to have time to generate ideas. Give them physical spaces to gather where they can connect relationally and linger with important questions.

Environments for change must be replete with potential for creativity, mistakes, and curiosity. Einstein's own explanation for his remarkable life, accomplishments, and

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[33] Pohl, Living into Community, 67.

[34] Buy-in to a particular plan may change, but our compassion and belief in the people beside us must not. The vision-centric leader may be tempted to see people as a means to their end; the leader who first listens to their constituents sees them as an essential part of discovery and implementation of a vocational narrative for a community.

[35] Pohl, *Living into Community,* 70. This is counterintuitive, as leaders fear making promises they must change or cannot keep, as constant change to a promise can be interpreted as a lack of integrity. When we break a promise, we should acknowledge it quickly.

[36] As explored in Chapter Six, the right teams are re-organized around the new direction. Teams should be either be on the front lines of the change or supporting roles, led by the leaders best equipped to manage the emotion caused by disruption.

[37] Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, 201.

[38] Both Joshua and James, explored in Chapter Two, had enormous trust with their constituent groups. Both were immersed in the culture they were seeking to change, were familiar with cultural trends, and were closely associated with previous leaders. These trusting environments create safety and freedom to create within constraints.

discoveries was not to his intellect or talent; it was his curiosity.[39] The environments pastoral leaders create should be ripe with potential for problem solving, not problem avoiding. One role of the leader is to create an environment where team members have the permission and space to be able to innovate without questioning from senior leadership.[40] Pixar's founder Ed Catmull says, "Part of our job is to *protect the new* from people who don't understand that in order for greatness to emerge, there must be phases of not-so-greatness."[41] Creativity is risky, and requires environments that support taking risk.

Our physical environments influence daily behavior and often limit creativity and willingness to take risks.[42] Kurt Lewin first described the importance of environment in shaping behavior,[43] research that has now been popularized through books like *Atomic*

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[39] "I have no special talents, I am only passionately curious." Isaacson, *Einstein: His Life and Universe*, 548. In an interview, Einstein once said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge: Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world." George Sylvester Viereck, "What Life Means to Einstein," *Saturday Evening Post*, October 26, 1929.

[40] Narrative discovery, explored in Chapter Four, is a creative and organic process. And yet, the practice of listening does not stop once a narrative is defined. In fact, frontline experimentation within a vision creates ripple effects; team leaders continue to listen to what resonates, takes hold, and why. This stands in stark contrast to the leader-centric visions where a (hopefully) benevolent dictator prescribes step-by-step adherence of their vision.

[41] Catmull and Wallace, *Creativity Inc.,* 132. Emphasis mine. While a leader is hungry for immediate results, the reorganization of teams requires rebuilding trust and team norms. Allow teams to go offsite and stay out of their way. Give them dedicated space to work. Avoid asking them to report back on results too quickly. Give their creativity and curiosity about problems room to breathe.

[42] Loizos Heracleous and Michael Barrett, "Organizational Change as Discourse: Communicative Actions and Deep Structures in the Context of Information Technology Implementation," *The Academy of Management Journal* 44, no. 4 (2001): 755–778.

[43] Lewin's theory B= f(PxE) states that behavior is a function of a person within an environment. Kounin, "Field Theory in Psychology: Kurt Lewin."

Habits.[44] Changing someone's space has the power to help change their behavior.[45] Decisions as seemingly arcane as office space, lighting, meeting hours, and signage create micro and macro reminders of the ultimate vision and the setting most effective to enact it. In the same way new teams and leaders can impact change, a new workspace can aid in the flow of the right decisions, resources, and information.

As leaders create the right structures to activate, execute, and move through the change, they can create the most appropriately motivating spaces for people to focus. In a world of distraction, this is immensely difficult. After all, churches already have full schedules; people already have deeply rooted habits. "Talent," Goleman says, "lies in the ability to shift attention to the right place at the right time, sensing trends and emerging realities and seizing opportunities."[46] Physical environments can help shift attention, but they must be buffeted with clear roles and responsibilities.

Communicate Repeatedly

During change, pastoral leaders clarify new responsibilities for their constituents. Beginning with their staff, pastoral leaders must explain what behavioral and procedural changes are expected. Open communication creates an environment of stability and trust. Leaders often underestimate the emotional connection and buy-in people had to their

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[44] The author recommends simple practices for adapting your environment to yield behavioral changes. Kounin, "Field Theory in Psychology: Kurt Lewin." Practical ideas are also suggested in Chapter Six.

[45] Grenny et al., *Influencer,* 247.

[46] Goleman, *Focus*, 226.

well-worn paths of "how we used to do it around here." Ongoing consistency and clarity are pertinent. In fact, "the only way to change people's minds is through consistency."[47]

Reinforcing clarity is exhausting, even humbling. However, for the leader, it is critical. "Leaders must not abdicate or delegate responsibility for communication and reinforcement of clarity."[48] Clarity is not the same thing as certainty, and it is not synonymous with data.[49] Clarity includes not only where the organization is going, but how they will get there and who is accountable. Every team member should be able to identify who does what and to whom they are accountable.

Communication and clarity require regular follow-up. Senior leadership may find a communication gap or experience gap between what they say and what frontline employees and volunteers do. Though clarity comes from the top, implementation often comes from the front lines. Frontline employees may feel like the senior leadership team is disengaged or disconnected from day-to-day operations.[50] Constituents need consistent reminders that they are seen and their work is contributing to something worthwhile. Even where consensus and clarity exist, it will be derailed by poor communication. The church staffing firm Vanderbloemen attests communication is one of four pillars of a

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[47] Jack Welch, as quoted in McKeown, *Predictable Success*, 131.

[48] Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 191.

[49] The man whose name is synonymous with genius once said playfully about his lack of information on the subject of physics, "Unfortunately, I am not in a position to acquaint myself about everything that has been published on this subject because the library is closed in my free time." Isaacson, *Einstein,* 144.

[50] One of the challenges of change is that people may wait to take action until they can guarantee it will be successful. Yet, change requires risk. Leaders need to be connected to frontline volunteers and staff to get real-time feedback about what is working, and to ensure their teams the change is here to stay.

healthy staff culture.[51] Of course, if these frontline team members do not enact the change, it will not stick. The next section explores how to put even greater specificity and structure to a change effort by providing focus.

Provide Focus

The great difficulty is not a new technology or program, nor is it the idea. It is changing behavior. The steps to behavior change are creating focus, establishing measurements, and discovering vital behaviors.[52] All behavior should stem from a clearly identified goal. The problem is: most goals are fuzzy, uncompelling, infrequent, or measuring the wrong thing.[53] It is the role of a leader, together with the team, to discover input and output measurements to drive success toward the narrative win. The leader helps to set the boundaries of creativity within which constituent groups operate. Boundaries may feel constricting, but as Jerry Seinfeld once said, "The most important word in art is 'proportion.'"[54]

My definition of leadership is to *gather local attention toward vision through values*. Goleman writes, "Directing attention toward where it needs to go is a primal task of leadership."[55] For anyone tempted to believe this focus is the responsibility of the

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[51] Vanderbloemen, "20 Proven Ways to Improve Your Church Staff Culture," November 19, 2018, https://www.vanderbloemen.com/blog/improve-staff-culture#communication. They recommend more encouragement than correction, but when correction is needed to use spoken words and not writing.

[52] Grenny et al., *Influencer*, 13. Branson also speaks to the importance of focus in a change effort, but combines focus with the need for deep conversations. Branson, *Churches, Culture, and Leadership*, 224

[53] Grenny et al., *Influencer*, 13.

[54] Dan Amira, "Jerry Seinfeld Says Jokes Are Not Real Life," *The New York Times*, August 15, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/15/magazine/jerry-seinfeld-says-jokes-are-not-real-life.html.

[55] Goleman, *Focus*, 209.

senior leader, Goleman re-iterates, "It's not just the focus of a single strategic decision-maker...it's the entire array of attention bandwidth and dexterity among everyone."[56]

As supporting environments provide the setting for implementing change, establishing focus creates the agency, permission, and scope for individuals to enact change. Focus provides the lane of where to run and where not to.[57] The solution is not to experiment widely, pursuing "bright, shiny objects,"[58] trying one hundred ideas and hoping one works. Leaders must create supports that renew commitment to a singular problem or opportunity. In fact, "deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do."[59]

Then, implement. This, Lencioni says, "doesn't require great intelligence or sophistication, just uncommon levels of discipline, courage, persistence, and common sense."[60] This section will explore principles for narrowing focus and implementing change. Leaders define success, create space to solve problems, equip and evaluate, and increase accountability.

Define Success

Just as leaders clarify the narrative of the organization and assign roles to their team members, they must define success within that role. People with a desire to achieve

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[56] Goleman, *Focus*, 209.

[57] Zook and Allen, *The Founder's Mentality*, 107.

[58] Zook and Allen, *The Founder's Mentality*, 110.

[59] Goleman, *Focus*, 212. There may be many failed experiments about how to solve the problem, but the focus of the team should be on iterating around one central challenge or opportunity.

[60] Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 3.

or feel significant will subconsciously dedicate their time to "activities that yield the most tangible accomplishments."[61] In any change effort, "There will always be more good ideas than there is capacity to execute."[62] But, the most meaningful work in the pursuit of change is not always the most tangible; that which can be checked off a list is not necessarily that which is most essential. Therefore, direction must be direct, clear, and specific. Providing (or reminding) the scope or direction of work is always the role of a leader, especially during change. However, many leaders avoid the repetition and discipline of management, and so avoid providing the needed clarity.[63]

One difficulty in large church environments is discovering how to quantify success. For communities of faith, not everything that is valuable is quantifiable. Mike Bonem wrestles with this issue and suggests several effective metrics around heart transformation.[64] This same investigation must be done with each new change effort, diligently discovering how to define movement.[65] Collins suggests,

> It doesn't really matter whether you can quantify your results. What matters is that you rigorously assemble evidence—quantitative or qualitative—to track your progress. If the evidence is primarily qualitative, think like a trial lawyer assembling the combined body of evidence.[66]

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[61] Clayton M. Christensen, "How Will You Measure Your Life?" in *HBR's 10 Must Read's on Managing Yourself* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2010), 7.

[62] Chris McChesney, Sean Covey, and Jim Huling, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution: Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals* (New York: Free Press, 2016), 29.

[63] Patrick Lencioni, *The Motive,* 145-146.

[64] Mike Bonem, "Measuring What Matters," *CT Pastors*, 2012, https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2012/spring/measuringmatters.html.

[65] The measurement of success is further defined and explored below.

[66] Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, 7.

A clear role with defined objectives must then be pursued with fanatic discipline, supported by accountability, and measured with a quantifiable goal.

One of the troubles with execution in the social sectors, says Collins, is that non-profits are often perceived as time-tellers instead of clock-builders. That is, they budget and plan around specific needs to be met immediately (to borrow from the metaphor, "what time is it?") rather than creating strong, self-sustaining organizations ("how do we build a great clock?"). Put another way, it is easier to create a compelling fundraiser around giving a man a fish than around teaching him to fish.[67] Leaders must fight the urge to ask only about what is urgent, or what can be compelling in a newsletter, sermon, or social media post.[68] They must create resourcing strategies for their teams to "get out of their way and let them build a clock!"[69]

Create Space to Solve Problems

As key objectives are identified, create space for team members to meet themin creative ways. Leaders must allow team members to creatively solve problems within constraints. Pastoral leaders ought to create unity around why the change exists, provide clarity around what it means for their constituents, and then empower permission around how to enact it. Venturing into the unknown is risky, and yet, "it is not the manager's job

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[67] Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors,* 24-25.

[68] The discussion of urgency and importance is timelessly explored in *First Things First.* Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, and Rebecca R. Merrill, *First Things First*, Reprint ed. (New York: Free Press, 1996).

[69] Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors,* 25.

to prevent risks. It is the manager's job to make it safe to take them."[70] Creating creativity within constraints means giving as much clarity as possible to what is most important right now, and giving explicit permission (perhaps even direction) for what they will no longer be expected to do. One way to engage this creativity is by asking if everything else remained the same, what key variable, if changed, would have the greatest impact.[71]

Leaders who want to help organizations pivot into the future "accept that mistakes will be made."[72] Says Goleman, "Creative insights flowed best when people had clear goals but also freedom in how they reached them. And, most crucial, they had protected time—enough to really think freely. A creative cocoon."[73] The structural support given to teams is not only to give them permission to try new things, but confidence that the boss will not intervene with a new*er* thing and disrupt their learning. Part of organizational support is staying out of daily decisions and letting frontline leaders learn and create the best decisions on their own. Hire the right people, clarify a unifying direction, then, quit interrupting them.

Team members who are given focus are able to put their best energy into what they *can* do.[74] These creative leaders recognize that execution is more important than creation; they have a bias toward what is effective, not just what is novel. When the target is clear, people abandon ineffective ideas more quickly. Novel might not be better, in

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[70] Catmull and Wallace, *Creativity Inc.,* 317. The leader is not distant from this process, but engages as a part of the creative brainstorming, creating, and learning.

[71] McChesney, Covey, and Huling, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, 32.

[72] McChesney, Covey, and Huling, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution,* 32.

[73] Goleman, *Focus*, 46.

[74] McChesney, Covey, and Huling, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution,* 56.

fact: "The next big thing might be the thing you already have."[75] Yet, they are constantly exploring ways to innovate around the core problem. This creativity happens over the long haul, slowly experimenting and implementing a vision within a defined scope. Daniel Goleman says, "Good days for insights had nothing to do with stunning breakthroughs of grand victories."[76] Change happens incrementally, making one good decision after another. This stands in contrast to motivational authors, like Michael Hyatt, who encourage getting away for two days for the singular and solo identification of a grand vision.[77] Goleman continues, "The key turned out to be having small wins—minor innovations and troubling problems solved—on concrete steps toward a larger goal."[78] Breakthrough vision is not a stop on the way to a fresh organizational narrative; breakthrough vision is finding small steps that get you to the pre-established vision. Consistently doing the next right thing leads to real innovative breakthrough. "Vigorous action," say Collins and Porras, "creates variation."[79]

Pastoral leaders shaping a vocational narrative are asking layers of stakeholders to adapt their expectations and investment in a new direction. The leadership discipline of listening does not stop after a unifying vision is established; leaders continue to listen as

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[75] McChesney, Covey, and Huling, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution,* 64.

[76] Goleman, *Focus*, 46.

[77] Hyatt, *The Vision Driven Leader: 10 Questions to Focus Your Efforts, Energize Your Team, and Scale Your Business*, Chapter 1: Are You a Leader or a Manager. You can find Hyatt's vision scripting tool at: https://assessments.michaelhyatt.com/vision/

[78] Goleman, *Focus*, 46. Throughout, leader continues listening and learning, they see small wins as opportunities to cast vision towards the organizational narrative.

[79] Collins and Porras, *Built to Last*, 163. Variation is not the goal. But, for creatively minded people who love exploring new ideas, the constraints of focus can feel like the death of creativity. Collins and Porras say otherwise. Leaders who change the measurable will see less creativity as it takes several attempts to explore opportunities and identify the real problem. Here the leader helps people stay with the right problems longer.

elders, staff, volunteers, and community members reflect and enact the vision within their own spheres of influence. Pastoral leaders continue to define and amplify their why, letting local ministry take shape through the talent, presence, and influence of others.

Equip and Evaluate

Finding the tension in an organization, explained in depth in Chapter Four, must be accompanied with purposefully equipping team members to engage in a new task or skill. Bordonaro says a good strategy "seeks out the most important points of failure in an organization; it then *replaces risk with competence* and support so that people on those points find ways to succeed where they might otherwise fail."[80] Leadership guru Marcus Buckingham says the one quality setting great managers apart is their ability to discover the true uniqueness of each person and develop them toward that gift.[81] Giving them a role is the first step; equipping them to be able to take action toward that role is the necessary second step.

Within creative constraints, leaders identify performance markers. These are self-imposed disciplines or constraints aimed at maintaining steady process.[82] For decades, perhaps centuries, the defined objective of churches was attendance.[83] Today, we

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[80] F. Bordonaro, "What to Do," in *Corporate Learning: Proven and Practical Guides for Building a Sustainable Learning Strategy* (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2005), 142, cited in Wick, *The Six Disciplines of Breakthrough Learning*, 3. Emphasis mine.

[81] Marcus Buckingham, "What Great Managers Do," in *HBRs 10 Must Reads on Managing People* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2011), 91.

[82] Collins and Hansen, *Great by Choice*, 48.

[83] In the process of researching for this chapter, the swarth of literature on church attendance is staggering, perhaps in part because it is easy to measure and clearly in decline. More than 58,000 peer-reviewed articles were available on the George Fox University library for the search terms "church attendance." Attendance is emotive, visual, and competitive. Yet, it may not be the critical or most impactful metric for an adapting church. In fact, Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken predict declining

understand that "what you measure eventually becomes your mission."[84] Managing teams must include more than measurement. "Management purely by numbers," says author and entrepreneur Ben Horowitz, "is sort of like painting by numbers, it's strictly for amateurs."[85] You cannot paint a full picture with data. That is why you need leaders, not just accountants. It is why you identify narratives, not just mission statements.

Wickman shows how when everybody has a target, it creates accountability, appreciation, clarity, and commitment. Not only that, it also helps create a sense of teamwork, better results, and faster problem solving.[86] The trouble is, "measurement seems unspiritual."[87] Jesus' messages and parables, however, were often filled with measurement.[88] If ministries have goals, they are "typically not urgent and usually not clearly defined."[89] When churches do have scorecards, they often incentivize outdated numbers that inhibit innovation and organizational reformation.[90]

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attendance for churches adapting toward spiritual formation. Kent Carlson and Mike Lueken, "Renovation of the Church: What Happens When a Seeker Church Discovers Spiritual Formation," *Leadership* 32, no. 3 (2011): 62.

[84] Gus Hernandez, "Lead Measures: What You Measure Ultimately Becomes Your Mission," *Replicate Ministries* (blog), August 20, 2018, https://replicate.org/lead-measures-what-you-measure-ultimately-becomes-your-mission/.

[85] Ben Horowitz, *The Hard Thing About Hard Things: Building a Business When There Are No Easy Answers* (New York: Harper Business, 2014), 82.

[86] Gino Wickman, *Traction: Get a Grip on Your Business* (Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, 2012), 124-125.

[87] Bonem, "Measuring What Matters."

[88] Bonem, "Measuring What Matters." Bonem says, "Jesus was counting a lot… the mustard seed, the sower, the great banquet, the talents—have quantitative, measurable, or growth-oriented messages."

[89] Tim Price, "How 'Lead Measures' Can Help Every Pastor," Tim Price, accessed April 28, 2020, http://www.timpriceblog.com/how-lead-measures-can-help-every-pastor/.

[90] Mike Bonem writes, "The old church scorecard keeps us from participating in the missional renaissance." Bonem, "Measuring What Matters."

How should churches decide what to measure? Hastings describes seven churches that changed their trajectory by asking new questions. She asks, "How would our churches change if we were to change our questions?"[91] The right questions have the power to get us unstuck.[92] Questions can help us discover what measurements and metrics would reveal if our direction is in line with our intention, if our behaviors are representative of our hopeful outcomes.

In a ministry setting, measuring the right thing is not primarily a tool to evaluate frontline staff, but to empower them. In this way, great measurement actually serves to encourage people closest to the front lines.[93] However, pastoral leaders may have to discover new measurements aligned to their desired change. Churches often measure attendance, giving, small group participation, baptisms, and membership. However, by the time these numbers are reported, it is, in essence, too late.[94] Though pastors should watch these trends,[95] the difficult work is identifying what actionable items create movement in the desired direction. Leadership teams should reflect on what indicators

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[91] Hastings, *Change Your Questions, Change Your Church*, Section Two: What Are Powerful Questions? Specific questions for different constituent groups are discussed in Chapter Six as a tool for the aspiring change agent.

[92] One interesting example of this comes from Pushpay, who encourages churches to measure the tangible impact on a community through its crime rate, divorce rate, and graduation rate. Pushpay, "The Crucial Church Metric You're (Probably) Not Measuring—But Should!," Vanderbloemen, accessed April 28, 2020, https://www.vanderbloemen.com/blog/church-metric-not-measuring.

[93] Daniel Sinclair, "The Case for Counting," CT Pastors, August 2014, https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2014/august/metric-that-matters.html.

[94] This is the difference between what authors call lead and lag measures. A lead measure is something you have direct control over (for example, minutes spent on a treadmill). A lag measure is the indicator the lead measure is working (for example, weight lost as a result of exercise).

[95] Thom Rainer, "Six Important Church Metrics We Often Ignore," Thom Rainer, June 27, 2018, https://thomrainer.com/2018/06/six-important-church-metrics-often-ignore/.

would demonstrate the desired change is taking shape.[96] Then, invite teams to discover what actions would yield positive results in the desired direction. Clarify what matters and then give permission for people discover how to get there.

In large, multi-site churches, one of the hindrances to change is the bureaucratic notion that every team has to have the same standards.[97] Instead, leaders should empower teams with permission to differentiate and govern themselves, who can "operate according to their own rules, so long as those rules work."[98] Then, find out what they are measuring and how and ask them to report about it as often as possible.

Some management books describe measurement as static, unchanging,[99] but the process of discovering what to measure is adaptive and responsive. What needs to be measured changes as leaders discover what matters most under shifting conditions. As organizations move down the narrative journey, leaders empower teams to adapt, giving them ownership within a particular frame of the narrative. Imposed constraints ought not be on the upper end of what is possible.[100] That is not to say accountability is absent; in fact, it is essential for the long-lasting effect of change.

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[96] These measurements might be qualitative and story-driven. For example, leadership teams could look for stories of life change, interactions with volunteers, or inclusion of diverse perspectives. The important thing is not that

[97] This is done either in the name of fairness, in response to complaining, or because managing to sameness is easier than managing innovation.

[98] Catmull and Wallace, *Creativity Inc.,* 267.

[99] For example, Wickman, *Traction*. This is the tension of leadership within large church settings: leaders must identify key measurables, but not be limited to them. They must provide a clear target, knowing the target will move. They must tell team members what it means to win, and give them permission to discover how to win.

[100] Expecting the equivalent of a four-minute mile will not yield organizational health, or creativity. The best practice here is to name what measurement is most important, and allow teams to set adaptive targets. For example, identify volunteer interactions as a key measurable during change, and then allow teams to set a goal for how many interactions they will attempt to make.

Increase Accountability

The parallel track of support is accountability, which sounds less positive but is just as necessary. Accountability is the willingness of team members to move through interpersonal discomfort for the sake of the team. Does this type of leadership fit in a church environment? Says Rich Stearns, President Emeritus of World Vision, "I think a lot of churches are very poorly managed because they don't feel that excellence and accountability fit well in a Christian environment."[101] Groups often lack accountability because there is more comfort in the long-term tolerance of poor behavior than the immediacy of a difficult conversation.[102] In the world of non-profits, where kindness is either a stated or assumed employment value, team members often overlook chronic under-performers rather than addressing the issue.[103]

Productivity is more likely to increase when accountability is held by teams than within individuals. McChesney believes the fear of disappointing a teammate is far more motivating than the fear of the retribution or scolding of a boss.[104] He suggests that the most effective measures of accountability are not broad or long-term, but simple weekly commitments.[105] The more public these accountability measures can be, the better. These

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[101] Stearns also said that accountability feels unchristian and that the understated belief is, "We're good people doing good things, and that ought to be good enough." The good enough mindset, he says, "is an excuse for mediocrity." As quoted in Bonem, "Measuring What Matters."

[102] Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*.

[103] Accountability structures and metrics are not revitalization techniques for underperforming employees. Metrics cannot serve as a replacement for getting the right people in the right seat. For staff overlooking or covering for underperformers, Friedman says they have to change themselves first. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve*, 214.

[104] McChesney, Covey, and Huling, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution,* 95.

[105] McChesney, Covey, and Huling, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, 93.

teams will own the performance toward a goal as a unit. In this way, "teams and good performance are inseparable."[106] Says Collins, "Lack of resources is no excuse for a lack of rigor—it makes selectivity all the more vital."[107] And, "consistency distinguishes the truly great."[108]

In terms of organizational effectiveness, an organization is only as strong as the lowest point on the execution plan.[109] Each component is dependent on the strength of the others. Simple and easily shared documentation of the accountability structure helps to aid in the dissemination of who is accountable to what. Giving people a significant role in a meaningful story imbeds them with ownership in the organizational narrative.

People feel motivated to contribute when their identity is at stake and their community is counting on them. The more follow-up can come from peers, the better; top-down accountability is the least effective form.[110] But, for manager and peer alike, "To hold someone accountable is to care about them enough to risk having them blame you for pointing out their deficiencies."[111] When accountability needs to happen, it's best done publicly so that nobody is left wondering if the person in question is being held accountable.[112] Taken another step, "The fastest way to get people to change…is to laugh

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[106] Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith, "The Discipline of Teams," in *HBRs 10 Must Reads on Managing People* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation, 2011), 176.

[107] Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, 12.

[108] Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, 26.

[109] Collins, *Turning the Flywheel*.

[110] Collins, *Turning the Flywheel*, 54.

[111] Collins, *Turning the Flywheel*, 57.

[112] Collins, *Turning the Flywheel*, 63.

at them."[113] However, accountability does not have to be negative, and leaders may prefer to approach feedback from a more positive perspective.[114]

For church leaders, even talking about accountability may be new for a church staff. For volunteers, they may believe their role is more permanent than staff roles.[115] Elders may have been part of church leadership longer than the pastoral leader. Long-term investment in a change narrative must be supported with accountability from all parties. The authority of accountability in an adaptive change process is not the solo leader; it is the mutually discovered vocational narrative to which all parties must ascribe and buy in.[116]

Yet, change invariably comes with rebellion. People rarely intend to sabotage an idea when they leave a meeting, but they have learned that by not raising their hand in disagreement, they can playact agreement and then "do as little as possible to support that idea."[117] The solution? Come up with as specific agreements as possible. Focus creates for your team what Collins and Hansen call a SMaC plan, a guideline unique to your team

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[113] Grenny et al., *Influencer*, 178. I do not recommend laughing at teammates, but the visual is dynamic and the principle stands: accountability from peers is more valuable than from supervisors; the fear of embarrassment is more motivating than the fear of a bad report.

[114] For example, they may encourage imagination about potential. They may celebrate small wins as they happen. They may encourage the team to go discover stories where the proposed change is already happening.

[115] Volunteer culture and the challenge of accountability with unpaid staff is examined in Timothy E. Schenck, "Can You Fire a Volunteer? When They Mean Well, but Don't Fit Well (Leading Volunteers)," *Leadership* 27, no. 3 (2006): 93.

[116] Notice how the antithesis to a top-down leader-centric vision creates waves of shared ownership. Instead of waiting for influence and authority to hold others accountable, the listening leader can cast a vision and point all constituents back to the corporately affirmed and communally discovered vocation.

[117] Lencioni, *The Advantage*, 49.

that is specific, methodical, and consistent.[118] This plan creates a greater ability to hold people accountable.[119] Pastoral leaders can help their teams in every ministry, group, mission, and programming environment capture a specific plan for enacting change.

Long-term change occurs not within wholesale overhauls of systems, but through disciplined engagement with long-term goals.[120] Supporting structures ought to create clear articulation of the expected speed and scope of a team. Leaders who run at a sustainable pace "reduce the chances of getting crippled by a big, unexpected shock."[121] While accountability is important, the research shows that "the only legitimate form of discipline is self-discipline."[122] The most effective innovative change comes not from being more disruptive but from being more disciplined. Leaders can disrupt the world around them by sticking to the core behaviors and strategies they have set forth for themselves.[123]

Creating a culture of learning and team discovery might feel slow or behind for pioneering leaders who like to be on the forefront of innovation. But surprisingly, it is often the leaders who are not first to market who are best able to bring new ideas to full fruition. One CEO puts it this way: "be one fad behind."[124] The biggest winners in large

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[118] Collins and Hansen, *Great by Choice*, 128. SMaC stands for Specific, Methodical, and Consistent.

[119] Zook and Allen, *The Founders Mentality,* 114.

[120] Collins, *Turning the Flywheel*, 20-24.

[121] Collins, *Turning the Flywheel*, 58. This was on display in the spring of 2020 as large churches were forced to pivot significantly during the novel coronavirus pandemic. Organizations with margin are more likely to be able to adapt to new strategies.

[122] Collins, *Turning the Flywheel*, 21.

[123] Collins, *Turning the Flywheel*, 8.

[124] Collins and Hansen, *Great by Choice,* 73.

organizations do surpass their peers in terms of innovation, but "what set the big winners apart was their ability to turn initial success into a sustained flywheel, even if they started out behind the pioneers."[125]

Summary

For church leaders facing imminent or necessary change, a discovered vocational narrative must be supported by clear channels of leadership and environments that create maximum opportunities for focus. These four elements work in tandem, and are cyclical.[126] The best way to promote creativity is to create the structural and supportive environments where frontline teams have the ability to be creative within constraints. Leaders create the potential for adaptive changes when the organizational, communication, and leadership structures support decision-making as close to the frontline ministry of the church as possible. The maintenance and orchestration of a broad-based adaptive change cannot stay solely with a senior leader; the leader must develop the supporting staff and organizational structures that create the right permissions and constraints for a team. This often means rethinking hierarchy, reexamining the role of a board or volunteer team, reallocating funds, or repurposing environments.

For leaders, defining the scope and speed of how to operate and the scoreboard of how to measure success will enable constituents across their church to become the owners of organizational vision. Then, leaders can create cadence and cultures of

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[125] Collins and Hansen, *Great by Choice,* 12.

[126] The discovery of a narrative informs roles and structures, but as teams and objectives are set the narrative will adapt. Narrative discovery and role clarity never stop.

accountability and discipline by focusing on key measurables and putting the right leaders in place who are willing to hold team members accountable.

Together, Chapters Four and Five form a four-part framework for leading adaptive change:

1. Discover a vocational narrative.
2. Distribute ownership across constituents.
3. Support the direction with structure.
4. Hold teams accountable to key measurables.

These four factors span organizational and individual impact, with the facilitation of story and support. Another way to visualize the four-part framework is below:

Table 1—Leading Reformative Change

	Organizational	**Individual**
Story	Discover a narrative vocation (Story)	Distribute ownership across constituents (Role)
Support	Support the direction with structure and accountability (Organize)	Identify and evaluate against key measurables (Measure)

Chapter Six will practically apply these concepts to the large church setting by imagining how leaders may enact an adaptive change through a current crisis.

CHAPTER SIX:

ADAPTING CHURCH IN A CHANGING WORLD

"You don't have to ask permission to take responsibility"[1]

This dissertation begins by describing Janice, a pastoral leader who sees the need to make changes but is unsure how to lead through them. Janice is not alone. It is difficult for leaders at large churches to make changes to their ministry models. As Chapter One describes, studies around the country point to rapid growth of the *nones* and declining attendance across all denominations. Change is needed. Leading change, however, is complex, and many hopeful change agents fail. Pastoral leaders looking for guidance will find that much of the Christian literature promotes a leader-centric version of change that over-relies on the top-down vision and charisma of a singular leader. By contrast, the secular change literature, described in Chapter Three, encourages a methodical team-centric approach that listens and empowers.

This dissertation applies the principles of adaptive change to the context of large churches using narrative leadership and supporting structures. Because large, seeker-friendly churches often desire to be culturally relevant, they must be able to adapt as quickly as the culture around them. Moreover, during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, *every* church faces the need to adapt their models of ministry. Specific applications for managing change in *any* season are suggested below, along with practical examples of how one church adapted before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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[1] Catmull and Wallace, *Creativity, Inc.,* 51.

In March 2020, cases of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus began increasing exponentially across the United States. The subsequent state-by-state shelter-in-place orders created an immediate need for adaptation in nearly every large worshiping community. How would churches continue to execute their models of ministry when they were not allowed to gather in person?

Luckily for these pastoral change agents, they were not the first to lead in uncharted territory. Joshua took an established community with an everlasting covenant into an unfamiliar, but God-promised, terrain. Thirty-eight books later, James took a closed-off community and led them through their own discomfort into a season of exponential growth. Both James and Joshua led as insiders, attune to the values and vocation of their worshiping communities. James and Joshua led not by crafting a new vision or identity from scratch, but by applying a God-named identity in a new context. They adapted; James and Joshua transformed communities through local means, adhering to core values, instigating decisive action, and empowering others to execute the change.

Similarly, the American church has demonstrated unparalleled creativity during the COVID-19 crisis as many adaptive leaders have empowered frontline teams to come up with creative solutions.[2] Leadership teams have scrambled to purchase FM radio transmitters, rent drive-in movie theaters, and host services on live social media

[2] For a fantastic description of resilience and creativity in a new terrain, the non-professional soldiers' adaptation to an uncharted terrain on the days after D-Day were remarkable. The Army's strategy was to trust leaders on the ground to figure out never-before-seen or expected obstacles, albeit with a clear goal and operating objectives. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers: The U. S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).

channels.[3] They created digital groups, held Good Friday gatherings on Zoom, and started podcasts.[4] Initially, the adaptation seemed to be successful, as online church attendance grew.[5] However, as the research about change demonstrates, the need for adaptation is constant.

This essay has demonstrated the potential for large churches to move in new directions while proving that leader-centric models of change are limited in viability. Instead, this essay has argued that the leader is responsible for facilitating the process of discovery, clarity, organization, and implementation. This concluding chapter outlines a practical application of the four-phase change framework discussed in Chapters Four and Five: narrative discovery, role clarity, organizational structures, and vital measurables. Essential tasks and suggested practical applications thereof are included for each quadrant of the framework.[6]

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[3] Only 7% of churches reported not streaming their services online. David Kinnaman, "U.S. Churches Close to the Public: Staff & Congregants Take New Approaches to Work & Community," Barna Group, May 31, 2020, https://www.barna.com/research/new-approach/.

[4] Meagan Clark, "Closing Doors Is Boosting Church Attendance, but Can Online Activity Stem Christianity's Decline?" *Newsweek*, April 10, 2020, https://www.newsweek.com/closing-doors-boosting-church-attendance-can-online-activity-stem-christianitys-decline-1497286. In these months, you could hardly open a web browser or newspaper without reading the words unprecedented or pivot.

[5] David Kinnaman, "Five Things We've Learned During the COVID-19 Crisis," Barna Group, May 13, 2020, https://www.barna.com/research/things-we-learned/.

[6] During this writing, the author helped steer several adaptive change processes at North Point Ministries, a large, established church in the Atlanta area. Personal observations and our application of the principles are addressed in the footnotes.

Table 2—Applying the Framework

	Essential Tasks	**Practical Application**
Narrative Discovery	Engender Trust	Presence and Voice
	Listen	Surveys and Focus Groups
	Clarify	Clear and Consistent Vision
Role Clarity	Engender Trust	Lead with Empathy
	Listen	Listening Tour
	Clarify	Job Descriptions
Organizational Structures	Reorganize	New Teams
	Leadership and Communication	Promote Leaders
Vital Measurables	Identify the measurement	Lead and Lag Measures
	Public scoreboard	Weekly and Quarterly Reporting

Narrative Discovery

The theological basis for adaptive change comes from an understanding of how God leads communities to adapt to new seasons, as demonstrated in the team-centric leadership of James and Joshua. Here, the work of the leader and leadership teams is to discover a narrative vocation and continue to move toward that calling.

The essential task of the leadership team during the process of narrative discovery is to engender trust, listen, and clarify.[7] Trust often refers to the observance of consistency or integrity; trust is also formed in the relational connection and commitment

[7] Clarification is important in every stage in the change process. We saw this on display in the leadership of Joshua and James in Chapter Two, and in the research of Kotter and Heifetz in Chapter Three.

exhibited by a leader to a group. Change leaders' presence is critical during transition, aiding in a sense of stability and garnering trust. For large, established churches, a sense of stability may have come from the organization's size rather than the connection individuals feel to a leader. In times of change, the voice and presence of leaders is crucial. While leaders may worry their presence is a reminder of the change or coming instability, in this phase of change, their presence matters more than their clarity.[8]

There are many ways to increase presence during narrative discovery. Leaders ought to get out of their offices and go to where their people spend their time. Eat with staff groups rather than alone. Show up to volunteer gatherings, parties, and trainings. Walk through the hallways between services. Engage with people on your personal social media rather than just through a church account. Call new volunteers, personally lead a group or membership class, and bring donuts to early meetings. The subjects of these conversations, informal and pastoral, should be the individual.[9] Ask questions about them, their background, family, interests, worries, dreams, and quirks.[10]

The narrative discovery process, described in detail in Chapter Four, begins with an intentional strategy for listening. In this phase of the change, the leadership team creates a strategy for unearthing the vocation of the organization they lead. This listening takes time and is best done qualitatively. However, it may be launched with a survey and

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[8] During our changes at Buckhead Church, we communicated values as a temporary placeholder for having a vision. I communicated to my team that while we were discovering our thematic goal, our goal was going to be *focus* and *trust*. During another change effort, as we began our listening tour, our temporary placeholder values were *attentiveness* and *clarity*.

[9] Chapter Five explores the work of Christine Pohl and the need for communities to feel belonging to one another.

[10] Jeanne Liedtka says: "Asking a more interesting question can help teams discover more-original ideas." Liedtka, "Why Design Thinking Works," 24. Specific trust-building questions, as well as questions for each phase of the change process, are listed in Appendix A.

informed by current data trends.[11] Separately surveying staff, volunteers, and attendees will illuminate themes and inform what types of questions to ask on the subsequent listening tour.[12] Senior leaders should start by listening to their teams, then inviting them to help listen to the congregation and community, forming a listening team. The members of the listening team should consist of a wide range of constituents: staff, senior volunteers, and elders should be commissioned to engage in thoughtful listening to the people around them. By developing a consistent group of questions, the leadership team can help direct the scope of a conversation and make it easier to listen for themes and gather feedback. In this part of the process, the goal is not to evaluate a particular proposal for change; it is to discover the language and values of the community.[13] Asking constituents to tell you who they think you are may feel counterintuitive; after all, church leaders are often in the business of communicating the other way! By listening, however, leaders will discover what is core to their church and why people choose to belong.[14]

As the listening tour concludes, staff should gather to share themes, particularly to listen for commonly vocalized tensions. Here is where the work of giving work back to

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[11] For example, if you've noticed a dip in attendance or engagement in a particular area, you could consider adding a question in your listening tour about that facet of your ministry.

[12] A listening tour is a time-bound strategy for listening and learning. Staff who participate in the listening tour should have at least four hours of listening. This helps them be able to make multiple connections, curbing against overly anecdotal or incongruent feedback. To help decrease personal bias, staff can be encouraged to meet with volunteers in a different demographic than their own (different age, stage of life, area of town, background, race, etc). For example, a parent of young children may be able to connect more quickly to another parent of young children, but has to work less hard to understand them and may be listening for confirmation rather than discovery and understanding.

[13] The goal of these questions is not quantitative; it is to hear emotion, values, and motivations. As you ask questions, it is equally important to hear what they are not saying as it is to hear what they are saying. What ministries or strategies are not coming up? What do few people mention has impacted them or they would miss? Specific suggestions of questions are cited in Appendix A.

[14] Put another way, do not innovate away what people love, or protect what they don't.

the people, as described in Chapter Three, begins. What are the personal and community problems the church is helping to solve? What tensions kept coming up, and with which ones did the listening team most resonate? Leaders should listen with curiosity, pushing through the discomfort of hearing what is not going well.[15] If leaders have a particular change in mind, they should either commit to waiting until the process is finished or make the change before beginning the process.[16] Any proposed changes cannot violate the embodied values or discovered vocation of the organization.[17]

New narratives that seek to break the mold will not stick.[18] This is particularly true if you are not the senior leader. Then, it is more critical than ever to discover the values of the point leader and learn to translate what changes you have heard unearthed through the senior pastor's felt needs.[19]

Two major learnings for the church should emerge from listening: who you are and what opportunities you have to grow. Together with a leadership team, the senior

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[15] Most people like your church, and they probably like you. After all, they have stayed invested. They do not want to hurt your feelings, so at any sign of discomfort about the process or emerging truth, they will be tempted to soften their feedback. Leaders must curb this by asking two or three times more questions, refusing to defend or explain away challenges. Remember, the goal is not to solve problems here, but to identify commonly held tensions in order to tackle bigger challenges.

[16] People will know if you are using the listening process as a cheap form of proof-texting for your proposal. This will decrease their trust in you and their willingness or interest to be honest in the future.

[17] This may include the mission statement, statement of faith, Rule of Life, or other guiding documents or values. As discussed in Chapter Four, the values of an organization are more often lived in the hallways and not on websites, through the behavior of people and not in a document.

[18] The work of Cameron and Quinn, discussed in Chapter Three, exposes how important it is for organizations to identify their current cultural values if they want to make lasting change. This is part of what Heifetz referred to as *thinking politically*, recognizing the relational and historical elements at work behind the scenes.

[19] Often, those felt needs are around budgets, attendance, and Sundays. Rather than being frustrated that these (or others) are primary drivers, learn to communicate about the vision you have heard through the lens of what they value. For established churches, it may also be important to be cautious about communicating an overhaul, and instead talk about preservation (i.e., adaptation vs creation).

leader should distill and clarify the findings into as simple terms as possible. Chapter Four described how the narrative of the organization must be clear and consistently repeated. This is not the place for long mission statements or complicated charts.[20] The vocation is a clear response to a compelling problem to which the church can uniquely respond. Providing this clarity is ultimately up to the leader.[21] This is the paradox of leadership: to engage as many people as possible in the identification of the organizational identity and vocation, and then to turn and take responsibility for reflecting it back to them with clarity.

The leader takes what they heard, distills it, and then communicates it back to the people.[22] While they may communicate a new direction, leaders are primarily reflecting back to the community the story it is telling. Tell church constituents about their vocation.[23] The more portable and memorable this vocation is, the more likely it will be carried and communicated by others.[24] Once the message is distilled, leaders do not have to communicate it alone. Invite others to share stories in staff meetings, on the stage, and

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[20] For example, in a process with one church campus, we distilled our listening of volunteer leaders into a simple phrase: *an inspiring leadership culture*. With a multi-campus team of staff, we identified the problem with small groups is members do not understand *the purpose of a group and their purpose in it*.

[21] While this paper has not advocated for leaders to "get alone and get a vision," this is a reminder that the internal stability of a leader is crucial in the next few steps. The leader ought to get alone, not to ideate about a strategy, but to draw on an internal resilience rooted in an identity in Christ.

[22] An example of vision overview for several major changes at North Point Ministries are included in Appendix B.

[23] This vocation is the intersection of how they love their community and how they specifically live out the Great Commission. It includes the unique way this church answers the question of why they exist, what matters deeply, and their unique contribution to their community.

[24] Several examples of these portable vision statements are included in Appendix B.

through emails. Paint it on walls and print it on t-shirts.[25] Ask every team to include it in their volunteer trainings and new member classes. Set a goal as a senior leadership team about how many staff meetings and Sundays will include this narrative over the next 90 days.[26] This vocation should be more emotive than descriptive. It describes where you are going, but not how you will get there.

Role Clarity

The second phase of leading adaptive change is to invite a variety of constituents into their part in the organizational narrative.[27] The best ideas about the future do not come from an isolated creative genius, but from groups of people given direction and empowerment. Role clarity helps to distribute ownership of the new direction to the right constituents. The essential tasks during role clarity, often concurrent with the process of narrative discovery, are to engender trust, listen, and clarify. As the vocational narrative of the organization is clarified, it has the potential to cause disruption for staff. The leader, steeped in the vision and likely full of ideas, has to lead first with empathy and last with opinions. They should acknowledge what has been lost and continue to be

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[25] These simple examples are opportunities to shape environments, a critical component of change described in Kurt Lewin's theories in Chapter Three and Chapter Five.

[26] The leader is ahead of their teams in the four-part framework, as they are already setting vital measurements for themselves. At Buckhead Church, our rally cry was *For Atlanta*. We said *for far too long the church has been known what it is against, we want to be known for what we are for: we are For Atlanta.* We aimed for 75% of all Sundays to include our new church rally cry, and at 75% of staff meetings to share stories and highlight social media posts around the hashtag #foratlanta.

[27] "Storytellers," Eugene Peterson writes, "invite participation." Eugene Peterson, *Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012). While in the first phase of narrative discovery this story is broad, here it becomes personal.

present. They continue to engender trust by the way they listen, determined to demonstrate interest in people.[28]

The second task of role clarity is listening to individuals to discover how to empower them towards the enactment of the organization's vocation. Here, the leader seeks to better understand each team member to discover their best role on the team.[29] A person's best contribution to the organization will be at the intersection of the narrative direction with their competence and passion. This listening seeks to discover their team's resonance with the new direction and how their skillset and wiring can contribute to it. Leaders who do not start with listening risk giving people the wrong role.

As leaders listen, they can reflect clarity to those around them about the unique contribution each person makes to the organizational vision. For staff, this often includes changes to their job. Adapting job descriptions can provide specificity of how team members can win. Clarity for volunteers and staff may be as simple as one-sentence descriptions of their unique responsibility.[30] Setting a specific date for the change helps to generate momentum and provide clarity about the beginning of the new direction. Changing titles and office locations can be a more emotive reminder of the permanence of the change.[31] For volunteers, tell them how to help promote and champion the new

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[28] Leaders realize, often too late, that the greatest significance comes not in using others to make your dreams come true, but helping others' dreams come true. This is one more reason listening is so critical, and so powerful, and why leaders who proport leader-centric visions rarely see past their own ambition.

[29] Role clarity was described in detail in Chapter Four. Leaders can listen for where those team members are energized, discouraged, and bothered. A list of potential questions are cited in Appendix A.

[30] At Buckhead Church, we used both one-sentence job descriptions and champion statements. For example, "Champion the cause of community for men at Buckhead Church" and "Create an expanding network of men's community group leaders at Buckhead Church."

[31] For example, we had a department previously named *Care* that we renamed *Mentoring, Crisis,*

direction broadly as well as in their specific ministry area. Elders can be invited to help mentor young staff through the change or help decide how to pay for the new direction. Not every constituent has to be given responsibility or authority, but they can be given a role.[32] As people step more fully into their role, the momentum of the change will grow as they become vision carriers. This will lead to the need to adapt organizational structures and measurements in response to a growing movement of change.

Organizational Structures

New directions often require significant changes to organizational structure. In this third phase of the change process, the essential tasks for the leadership team are the ones described in Chapter Five: to reorganize around priorities, create environments, and clarify new responsibilities.[33] Reorganizing must be done in tandem with providing role clarity. Begin by giving clarity to the new leadership team, followed by other staff members. During this process, the senior leader should see it as their responsibility to keep the vision in front of everybody. They are the symbol of stability for anybody wondering if the new vision will stick. Then they work together with a team to discover the best organizational structure. While they give the team credit for the changes, they see

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and Counseling. We moved their offices, changed email signatures, and together shredded old stationery and business cards.

[32] For detractors or late adopters to the new direction, they might be encouraged that their role is to be a participant and not a leader in this season. You might ask them to invest time in learning more about the new direction (for example: watch a recording about the vision, or read through focus group or survey data). Do not give people authority who are not on board with the new direction. You will not convince them with more power, and you will not make the problem go away by giving them leadership.

[33] This author alternatively refers to the four steps of change as a mandate to take care of things in this order: the people, the process, the product, and the profit. People create processes, who create products, which builds profit. Often, change starts with a product in mind, without attention to the supporting processes that sustain great products. In churches, the product may be ministry environments, websites, sermons, budgets, retreats, etc.

themselves as the one ultimately responsible for the change; when there is inevitable pushback, the leader absorbs the stress of the change and takes responsibility for the decision.

Next, decide whether the adaptive change requires incremental or wholesale changes. Incremental changes are less disruptive, but take more time and rarely reinforce a new direction like a wholesale or widespread structural change. However, large changes are disruptive and costly. The recommendation of this essay is to determine the pace of change by imagining a completed transition three years from now. Then, evaluate what changes are needed in the next six months to be on track to completion. The size of the change will influence the scope of the change. Begin by identifying the core tasks needed in the new change. Think about the new organizational vocation like it is a process; what are the steps needed at each point in the process? Then, identify who on the team makes most sense to lead that portion of the process and let the teams make smaller adaptive changes as necessary.[34]

As structural changes are occurring, leadership teams need to attend to communication channels, budgets, and environments. Start with communication.[35] During reorganization, every person must know who they report to. Clear lines of leadership and authority are essential. No team member should be on an island, independent and isolated from others. Give new responsibilities to teams, not to individuals, and especially not to a

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[34] At Buckhead Church, we organized around attracting new attendees, engaging them in the life and mission of the church, and creating environments for children and adults. Therefore, our senior leadership team consisted of a point leader for *Attract, Engage, Adult Environments, Children's Environments*.

[35] As seen in Chapter Five, people feel valued when they feel "in the know." They may also feel devalued if they are left out.

new hire dedicated to the new idea.[36] Though this process may be slower, it will create more long-term organizational buy-in to team led decisions and processes. Solidify changes by creating new meetings, a new arrangement of office space, new titles, and reorganized budgets. In the listening tour, leaders may have discovered processes, ministries, and behaviors that no longer contribute to the vocational direction—this is the time to remove them. Do not wait for them to be forgotten. Give teams the explicit permission to no longer manage something that is outdated.[37]

Reorganization also requires reconsidering communication channels and budgets. This essay recommends assigning oversight of communication, staffing, and budgets to three separate leadership team members. This will force collaboration and unity among the leadership team, at least during the transition period.

Reorganizing staff is an adaptive process. Chapter Five demonstrates the need for patience with a change process and permission to create within constraints. The process of listening never stops. The leadership team needs to continue to listen to their teams about what is working, what roles need to be shifted, and what needs to be funded, shut down, or clarified. Leadership teams should have standing agenda items to evaluate if they have the right people in the right seats. During a change process, the leadership team may opt to organize cross-functional teams rather than reorganizing staff. This is a way to

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[36] Although this might appear to be the best strategy for a new project, eventually everybody else will drift back to their old way of behaving and working. This will leave the new person even more isolated and, eventually, irrelevant.

[37] Perhaps most notably, during the COVID-19 pandemic, North Point Ministries announced we would not host in-person services for the last six months of the year. This gave staff the permission to lead and do ministry in new ways as they no longer had to work toward creating Sunday environments.

test drive a new organizational strategy without as much disruption, while still increasing collaboration.[38]

Vital Measurement

As discussed in Chapter Five, new teams need to be given a goal. These goals should be made public as soon as possible and teams should report back on their measurement as often as possible. The goals should be in line with each team's specific charge.[39] Long-term tracking of measurements helps to ensure that teams do not over- or under-react to long-term trends. While the goal is to discover long-term measurements that can be tracked over time, often an immediate goal is needed to give a target of where to focus attention immediately. This short-term goal can be less directly tied to the mission, and more focused on developing processes and teams that will create the lasting change.[40] Then, pick a measurement and stick it with it for at least ninety days, but continue to listen to the team about if they have identified the right goal.

Internally, teams should also track what helps them make progress toward the goal. This is known as a lead measure, something over which people have more day-to-

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[38] During a recent change, Buckhead Church created three cross-functional teams. One was designed for immediate community response, another for listening to constituents about our best next step, and a third toward a plan for re-entry.

[39] For example, at Buckhead Church we created a scorecard for each of our four teams (cited in footnote 20 of this chapter). An example of this scorecard is in Appendix C. The leadership team set the numeric expectation for each goal, and then teams reported on them weekly.

[40] For example, a new team leader may state that their rally cry in the next 30 days is to establish trust, define clarity, and meet for one full-day offsite to make plans for the next quarter. At Buckhead Church, one immediate goal was to execute a listening tour with staff. Another was to connect with every volunteer personally in the first 21 days after a change was announced. For cross-functional teams, their goals are both more immediate and long-term, such as meeting with two groups of parents in every age group.

day control.[41] While they may not have control over how many people are baptized in a given quarter, they do have control over how many invitations are given for baptism, how many first-time guests are called and welcomed, how often they offer a new members' class, or how many staff are actively engaged in an evangelistic relationship.

The scorecard with both lead and lag measures[42] should be made public to the staff. Even better than having the scorecard available, it could be created weekly at a team meeting or on a visible scoreboard in the staff offices.[43] The principle is also true for volunteer teams: clarify the win, and the follow-up about the win.[44] In addition to a weekly scoreboard, teams should have monthly and quarterly check-ins about their major projects toward the implementation of a new vision. While weekly measurement keeps movement going, quarterly goals help to tackle bigger issues and projects within teams. In fact, picking the right weekly measurement often leads to the identification of the most important quarterly or annual projects to solve.[45] Without weekly goals, teams often

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[41] The sense of personal control, also known as agency, significantly impacts a person's ability to stay in a change process for the long haul. For example, although the Adult and Family Environments teams were evaluated against the retention of people and volunteers in their environment, internally they tracked how many weekly touchpoints they had with their teams.

[42] As defined in Chapter Five, lead measures are variables over which staff have some predictable control. Lag measures "lag" behind lead measures, often resulting in a common financial or engagement metric.

[43] Again, the scoreboard may be a numeric measurement, but it may also be qualitative. A scoreboard could highlight the story of a new volunteer, celebrate a meaningful conversation, or a highlight of good done in the community. The scoreboard keeps the evidence of progress front and center, whether or not that evidence is quantitative.

[44] The goal for volunteers is not management, but to keep the new direction in front of everybody as often as possible. The weekly goal should not be a stretch goal, but something manageable on an average week. Especially early on, these goals should lean toward people being successful and not overwhelmed and discouraged. Adult small group leaders could have the goal of one touchpoint per week outside of group, guest services volunteers could call new guests, and preschool volunteers could pray for a child by name every week or write them cards on their birthday.

[45] For example, at Buckhead Church the Engagement Team has a weekly measurable of how many people they help take a step. By measuring this weekly, they became dissatisfied with the number of people

retreat to focusing on the squeaky wheels in their ministries (usually, dissatisfied or hurting volunteers and attendees) or to the margin of their own team.[46] A cadence of weekly accountability keeps a bigger goal, their specific implementation of a vision, in front of them.[47]

Leaders who crave movement and change may be quick to skip step one (discovering a narrative vocation). Listening, after all, feels slow, complex, and emotional. However, if they go through the process of listening, they will see a rapid escalation of momentum in this fourth phase. Role and team clarity, combined with the synergy of an agreed-upon vision and direction, will expedite execution. Teams will know how to win and will begin moving quickly, understanding how their role and behavior are tied to what is most important.

Conclusion

Church leaders need not wait to adapt until the end of this pandemic or the beginning of a new one. The mold for church has been disrupted and will continue to be. Leaders can begin leading change now. Narrative discovery and application can begin today, no matter the size, affiliation, or setting of a church.[48] Listen well. Surround

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who took steps. They made a quarterly goal to change the website's ability to welcome new guests and give them the best next step.

[46] Managers in ministry often spend the most time with staff teams. Therefore, those teams (and their passions, complaints, and bandwidth) can become the primary object of the manager's concern. Managers must keep the vision and measurements of the team in front of themselves so they do not *only* remain focused on the well-being of the team.

[47] At large churches, staff often have large volunteer teams of insiders. It is very easy to drift toward their mission being to engage, develop, or care for those volunteers. While that is an honorable aim, it slowly pulls staff away from exterior-facing ministry to their local communities.

[48] A sample worksheet for use during the four phases of adaptive change is included in Appendix D.

yourself with great leaders and rely on them to help you listen, clarify, and execute. Expect pushback and be decisive. Help people win and celebrate when the change is working. Keep the vision in front of everybody all the time.

Change is more like an evolution than an overhaul. God uses the transformational work of disciplined and empathetic leaders to lead their organizations into new seasons of ministry. This change is less like being a bull in a china shop and more like moving one piece of furniture at a time. When you do not know what to do, stop and listen. When movement feels slow, do less than you think you can, but communicate about it more. When you are full of ideas, empower teams with the ability to create within constraints. When you feel resistance, trust people enough to hold them accountable. When you feel alone, ask for help.

The mission matters. It matters more than the comfort of your people or your craving for certainty. You cannot wait until conditions are perfect. You need not wait for permission to take responsibility.

APPENDIX A:

QUESTIONS FOR THE LEADER'S TOOLBOX

Narrative Discovery

Questions to engender trust

Goal: Listen, connect, laugh

Where did you grow up? What do you think about when you think of your hometown?

What were you like as a kid? How would people have described you?

Questions to listen

Goal: Discover, unearth

When you think why you love our church, are there any stories that come to mind?

What would you miss if our church went away?

What do we do, that if we stopped doing, would change the DNA of our church?

Questions to gain clarity

Goal: Clarify, unify

What tensions do we hear that we are helping address for people and for our community?

What problem is bothering people?

With what tension did our teams most resonate?

What is the common language we want to use to communicate about this change?

Role Clarity

Questions to engender trust

Goal: Relationships, empathy, connection.

How has this process been for you? What are you excited about? What have you lost in this season?

How can I help?

Questions to listen

Goal: Align, empower

What is energizing you?

What do you wish you could spend more time on?

What is bugging you? What doesn't seem to be working well?

Organizational Structure

Questions to reorganize

Goal: Invest in new models, clarify responsibilities

What are the core processes or steps of our ministry (remember, these are not ministry environments, but closer to categories of ministries)?

If we grew in those key areas, would we consider it successful?

What did our listening tour tell us about what ministries to invest more or less in?

What does the data say about what areas might need to be cut?

What areas are we comfortable getting a “B” in right now so we can get an “A” in others?

What are we currently over-funding?

What are the new projects for which we need to create cross-functional teams?

Questions to identify leaders and communication channels:

Goal: Provide leadership and overcommunicate

Who are our rising stars? Who do we think has potential to lead more?

Do we have diverse voices represented at the leadership table?

Who do we want at the leadership table? Who takes responsibility without complaining?

Who will own internal communication in this transition?

How often will the leadership team meet?

Vital Measurement

Questions to identify the measurement:

Goal: Tell people how to win in the new normal

What are we doing right now that helps us move toward our new goal?

Three to twelve months from now, would we know that we were successful?

What would be the internal decisions or behaviors that result in success?

Questions to create a public scoreboard:

Goal: Tell everyone how we are doing, keep momentum in the direction of the change effort

What is a reasonable rate to expect that behavior?

How will we invite staff participation?

How will we make this measurement internally public? How will we celebrate when it's going well?

What will our follow-up be if the measurements continue to fail to meet our goals?

APPENDIX B:

ONE-PAGE VISION EXAMPLE

Our Values:

1. We want people who don't know Jesus to see Jesus.
2. We are For Atlanta.
3. We reach people and grow people through people.
4. We look to our homes and neighborhoods, not our buildings, as the place for spiritual growth.
5. We pioneer the future of the church.
6. We refuse to be limited by a singular perspective (nationality, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, or even age).

Our Aspiration:

We inspire people to follow Jesus by engaging in the life and mission of Buckhead Church by connecting people to each other in their neighborhoods and equipping them to grow spiritually in their homes.

Our Approach:

- Over the next year, our primary focus will be on Homes and Neighborhoods.
  - The Home for EQUIPPING to follow Jesus.
  - Neighborhoods for CONNECTING to each other.
- We will leverage Online and our Church Building as tools to do so.
- We will develop cross-functional teams to discover how to equip people, connect people, and create online environments to reach people.

Our Measurement:

- We see an increase in group participation.
- We see an increase in the number of people who fill out the "new here" form on our website.
- We have identified leaders and baptism stories in every zip code.
- We see an increase in online engagement with family content.
- We see more students engaging in our middle- and high-school ministries.

APPENDIX C:

BUCKHEAD CHURCH SCOREBOARD

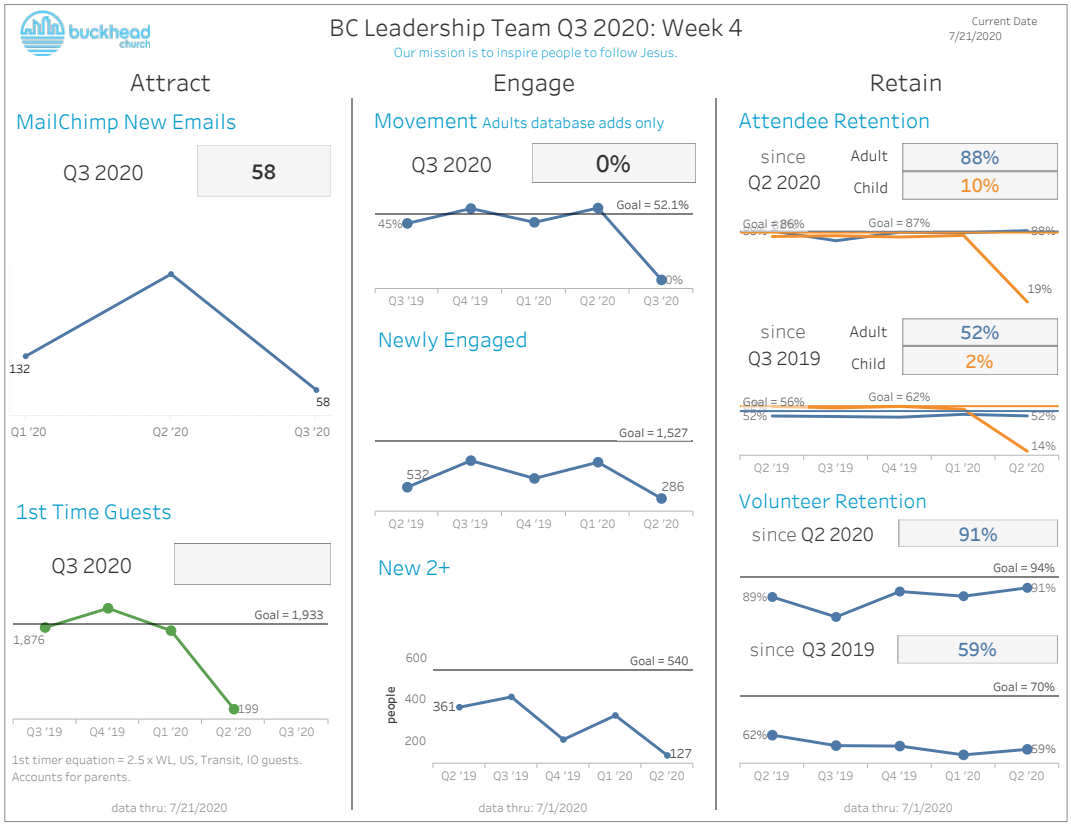


Figure 1—Lag Measures

Title	Goal	Average	Aug 03 - Aug 09	Jul 27 - Aug 02	Jul 20 - Jul 26	Jul 13 - Jul 19	Jul 06 - Jul 12	Jun 29 - Jul 05	Jun 22 - Jun 28	Jun 15 - Jun 21
ATTRACT: MailChimp Adds (Stay Connected)	>=125	177.17				58	11	312		287
ATTRACT: New Here Adds	>=40	44.5				45	16	21	73	47
ENGAGE: Total Steps	>=117	197						286		
Engage: Make BC my Church	>=25	26.5				26	9	10	46	16
EXPERIENCE: Volunteer Connections (AME)	>=45	99.88				141	136	36	75	84
EXPERIENCE: Volunteer Connections (FM)	>=51	146.88				85	134	64	126	230

Figure 2—Lead Measures

APPENDIX D:

WORKING THROUGH THE FOUR-PART FRAMEWORK

These two pages are designed to be filled out during the four-phase framework of the change narrative outlined in Chapters Four, Five, and Six.

Phase One, Part One: Narrative Discovery

We will complete this phase by this date: _____

We plan to listen to these constituents:	We will ask these questions:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Phase One, Part Two: Consensus and Clarity

We will complete this phase by this date: _____

Organizational values:	Our unique contribution:
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	

The tension we can uniquely address:	Our summary of our vocational narrative:
_____	_____
_____	_____

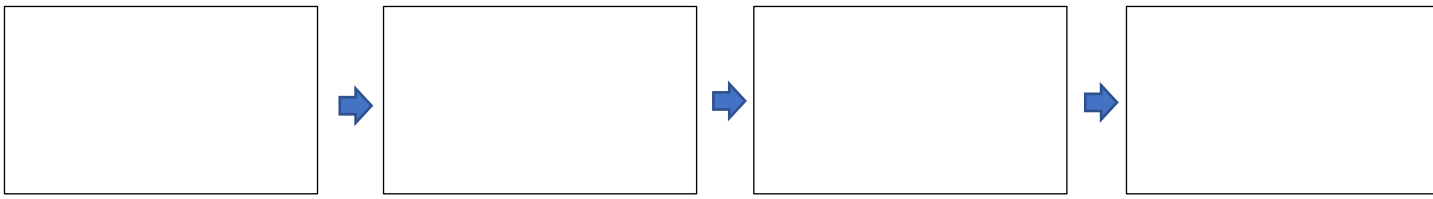
Phase Two: Role Clarity

Our plan to communicate our clarity and their role to our:

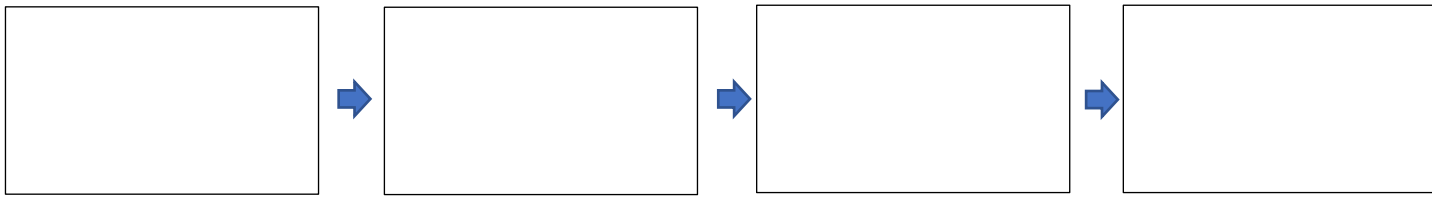
Staff:	Elders:	Members/Volunteers:
When: _____	When: _____	When: _____
Where: _____	Where: _____	Where: _____

Phase Three: Organizational Structures

The core parts of our organizational process (typical processes have 3-5 phases):



Who we believe are best people to lead each phase (and the teams we will put around them):



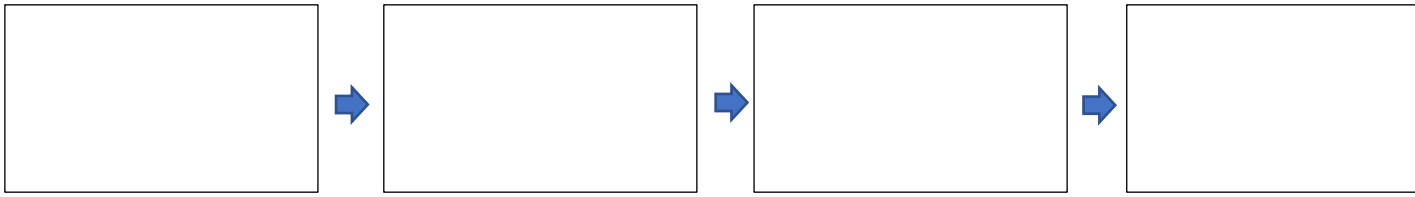
Who will communicate this plan: _____

When they will communicate this plan: _____

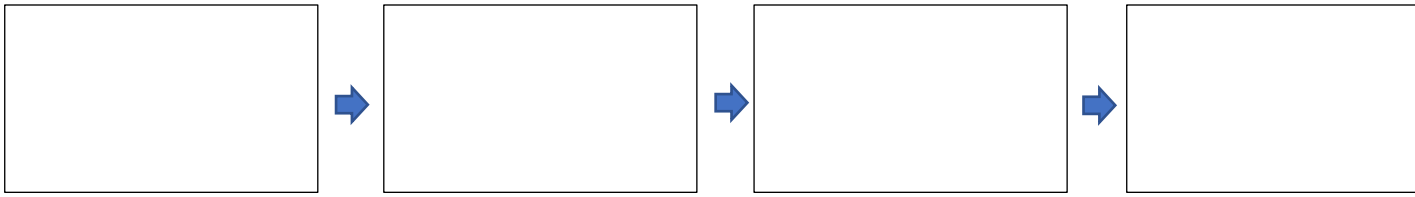
How we will fund this plan: _____

Phase Four: Vital Measurement

Our teams told us this is the best measurement for each phase (lag measures):



Our teams told us these behaviors lead to movement in the above measurement (lead measures):



Our plan to make these measurements public and to continue listening.

Public Accountability	Our Long-Term Listening Plan

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