

THE SGI JOURNAL OF LEADERSHIP

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NAVIGATING CHANGE

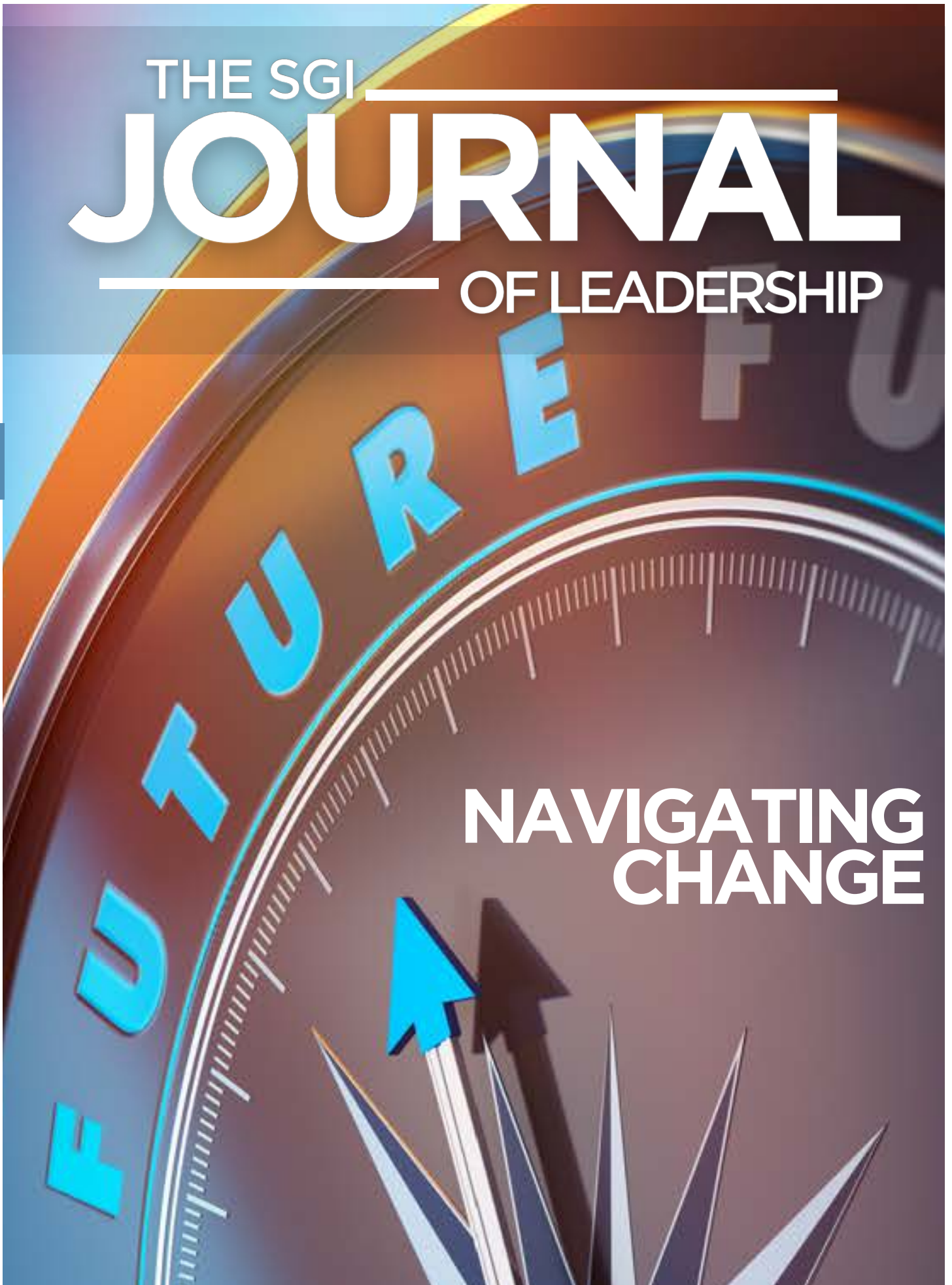


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Change Readiness Assessment

MISSION STATEMENT

Leading the United Pentecostal Church International to think strategically about future growth.

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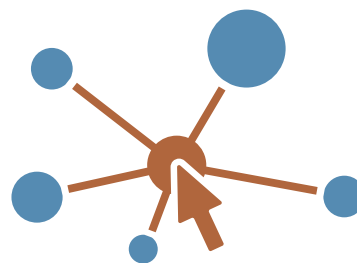
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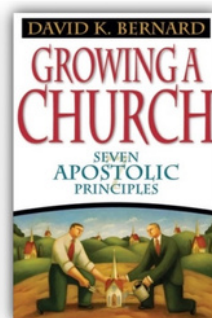
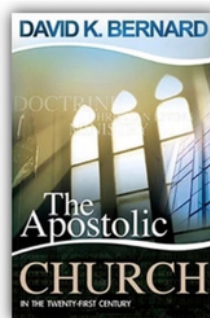
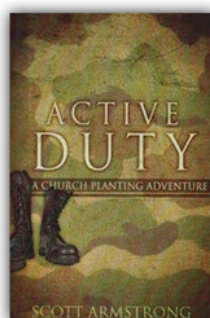
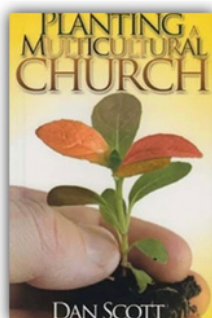
Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) Resources



The Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) was born in the heart of General Superintendent David K. Bernard as God gave him a vision for growing the North American church. The General Board of the UPCI approved the forming of SGI for the purpose of highlighting growth in the areas of the number of churches and ministers in North America. The four focus points of SGI are outlined below along with resources available through the Division of Publications.

Multiply the number of churches

SGI will assist districts by providing promotion, planning, and training with the goal of enabling every district to at least double the number of churches (including preaching points, daughter works, autonomous church plants, multicultural church plants, integrate independent Apostolic churches, etc.) in one decade.





DARREL JOHNS
SGI Committee Chair

IDEA IN BRIEF

- Truth is non-negotiable.
- Apostles changed methods to fulfill their mission.
- Know the difference between what must not change (truth) and acceptable change (methods).
- Implement practical steps for healthy change.

We live in a rapidly changing world. Navigating healthy change is incredibly challenging, and knowing what must not change and what is acceptable to change is crucial. Anchoring to principles that never change frees us to make healthy, needed changes.

Truth is a fixed stake in the ground and is non-negotiable. Truth never changes. The cultural climate constantly changes and must be prayerfully negotiated. Truth focuses on revelation, while methods focus on relevance. The message and mission of the church never change. Methods should change to advance the mission but must never undermine it by compromising truth.

Acts 6: A biblical case study in change.

In the early church, a demographic group felt that they were being neglected. It was a potentially explosive problem that could have divided the church. Hellenistic Jewish widows believed they were being neglected by not receiving their fair share of benevolence funds. These widows were understandably sensitive and shared their feelings.

The Apostles did not deny that there was a problem but were wise not to allow themselves to drown in the details of the dilemma. "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples

unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables" (Acts 6:2).

The Apostles recognized that their methods had to change to fulfill their mission.

They gave clear direction regarding this change: "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3). The Apostles solicited input from the people, but the final decision rested with the leaders. (See Acts 6:3.) The Apostles empowered the seven men to lead this new ministry with their support.

The Apostles clearly showed the benefits of this change. The new structure and methodology provided better care for the widows. It also benefitted the church by freeing the Apostles to focus on their primary calling of prayer and preaching (see Acts 6:4).

With the acceptance of the people, the change was successfully navigated and produced positive results: "Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

This passage is a template for positive, healthy change.

Freedom to change.

The freedom to change comes from knowing the difference between what must not change (truth) and what is acceptable to change (methods). Some things need to change because the culture is changing. We need to connect to our culture, but not at the expense of violating our principle-based convictions.

Keys to Implementing Healthy Change.

- Cast a vision to show what could be and should be by making changes.
- Communicate early and often.
- Inform the right people in the right order. Ask who needs to know what, when, how, and from whom?
- Bring key people on board early in the process to refine the proposed changes and take ownership.
- Empower people with authority to implement change.
- Allow time for people to accept and embrace new initiatives.
- Continuously affirm the message and mission as you implement new methods.

Darrell Johns

Darrell Johns serves as pastor of Atlanta West Pentecostal Church, Assistant General Superintendent of the Eastern Zone, UPCI, and chair of the Strategic Growth Initiative Committee of the General Board.





From the General Superintendent

Calling and Direction from God

Spiritual leadership is the key to church growth. Of course, direction and power of God are essential from start to finish, for God's work is not accomplished by human ability but by the Spirit of God (Zechariah 4:6). In addition, God has chosen humans to build His church. In the Book of Acts, the apostles and elders (local pastors) provided the leadership for church growth.

In order for spiritual leaders to be effective, they must have the call of God upon their lives. First, they must have a divine call to the ministry that they seek to fulfill. Second, they must have a confirmation in the specific field of their labor. It is true that Christians can and should be effective witnesses of Jesus Christ wherever they go. Thus, ministers should be able to work for God in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

To see significant long-term results, ministers need to receive clear direction from God as to location and timing.

Paul is a good example. At the beginning of his Christian life, Paul received a call of God for ministry (Acts 9:15-16; 22:14-15). After years of preparation and service, he received a missionary call (Acts 13:1-2). As a missionary and church planter, he received direction from God regarding where to go and where not to go at certain times.

Acts 16:6-10 reveals some instances in Paul's ministry: "Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them." Later, God did lead Paul to minister in Asia Minor (Acts 19:10), and churches were also established in Bithynia (I Peter 1:1). While God wanted the gospel to spread throughout the world, He had specific plans as to timing, location, and personnel.

As another example, when Paul ministered in Corinth, he made some converts but also faced significant opposition. God confirmed that he was at the right time and place and that God wanted him to build a church there. "Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city'" (Acts 18:9-10).

Because of this type of direction from God, Paul ministered with assurance. Confident of God's will, he was able to seize opportunities, overcome obstacles, and endure opposition. We need the same kind of direction and assurance today to establish and grow apostolic churches. In times of opposition, setbacks, and discouragement, God's calling and confirmation will sustain us until victory comes.

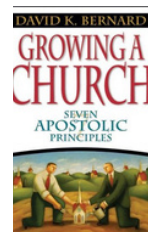
In 1981, I graduated from law school but, having heard the call of God, I entered full-time ministry instead of pursuing a legal career. As newlyweds, my wife and I moved from Austin, Texas, to Jackson, Mississippi, to pursue our ministry. When we left town, I told her I felt impressed that someday we would come back to Austin to work for the Lord. Over the years, we carried a burden for the city, and I was approached on four occasions about ministerial positions there: to start a daughter work, to be assistant pastor, and to be pastor of two different churches. In 1986 we seriously contemplated starting a church there, consulting with family, friends, spiritual leaders, the sectional presbyter, and the district superintendent. All human signs were encouraging, yet we did not feel positive direction from the Lord, so we did not go.

In 1991, our burden intensified. Once again, we began praying, seeking counsel, and gathering necessary information. As my wife and I prayed together on December 31, the Spirit of God came upon us. I asked God to fulfill Romans 8:26 in our lives: "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Immediately, I felt as if a heavy weight pressed down upon my chest, almost as if I were drowning, and I began to sob and to speak forcefully in tongues. We knew God had answered our prayer and would soon give us direction. Two days later, on January 2, 1992, in prayer my wife and I both felt a strong sense of victory and a confirmation that we were to make plans immediately to begin a new church in Austin. After approval by the district board, we went.

In retrospect, the timing could not have been better. Unknown to us, about the same time we moved to Austin several families also moved there who were to become building blocks of our new church, including a family who had received the Holy Spirit in the charismatic movement and one who was holding prayer meetings in their home. In the late 1980s, Austin suffered a severe economic decline, but in the early 1990s it began an unprecedented boom. We were able to buy a home and land for a church just before real estate prices skyrocketed. In two years, our land was worth almost double the purchase price. Humanly speaking, we could not have anticipated, planned, or orchestrated these and many other events to bring our church to such a level of growth and revival, but God gave us supernatural direction at the right time.

The calling and direction that we needed from God came through prayer.

David K. Bernard



Recommended Resource
Article adapted from *Growing a Church: Seven Apostolic Principles*
by David K. Bernard
(Word Aflame Press, 2001).



Article No.1

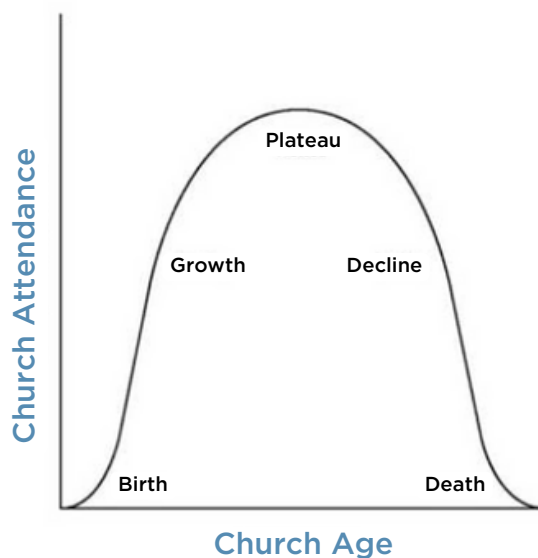
Proactive Change

Organizational Lifespans

All organizations, including churches, have a life span. Organizations have an expiration date, like a gallon of milk in the refrigerator. An expiration date determines when to stop using a product as it has exceeded its anticipated shelf life. Products are typically good for a period beyond the expiration date. At the same time, some go bad much earlier due to a harsher-than-anticipated environment. For example, the dairy farmer did not intend for someone to purchase their product and then leave it in the hot sun for several hours.

Leaders can consider numerous models regarding organizational life spans. Most models tend to follow a traditional bell curve. In the church context, while using different labels and definitions, all models tend to consist of four or five stages, including an initial launch phase, growth, maturity, plateau, decline, and death. Each stage has its challenges to overcome, just as in human development. As in all development models, organizations move at different paces, they can get stuck in phases, and stages overlap. The critical point is that regardless of pace, the end result is always death.

The Life Cycle of a Church



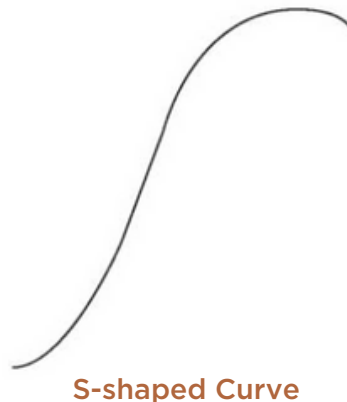
Whenever discussing the life span of organizations, and whenever someone mentions that a church has an expiration date and will eventually die, it feels like being engulfed by a wave of nausea. Verbalizing the possibility sounds blasphemous. Emotionally, it is depressing due to a love for local churches and having witnessed the eternal impact they make in the lives of the only creation made in the image of God. Objectively, when stepping back, the reality that numerous churches close yearly in the UPCI is incontrovertible.

Church planting is essential for growth. Launching new works is a part of the mission of the UPCI (The Manual, General Constitution of the UPCI, Article I, Purpose). Yet, regardless of how many new works launch, congregations reaching the end of their lifecycle will keep the organization at a zero-sum balance. Every time a church closes, it casts a long shadow over a church just launched. Thankfully, there is an alternative to decline and death. Change.

The Constancy of Change

"Change is the only constant in life" is attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Organizational leadership must accept that change is unavoidable, as the lifecycle demonstrates. Attempting to avoid change is futile. Thriving, healthy, and stable organizations must lean into change. The ability to embrace and leverage change is essential to remain effective.

Aubrey Malphurs argues in his book *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* that the solution is to understand the concept of the sigmoid curve or S-curve. The S-curve represents the lifecycle leading up to and including the apex of the traditional bell curve, stopping short of the decline and death phases. Once an organization matures, plateaus, and begins to decline, it will die if it does not start a new growth trajectory to interrupt the decline. Organizations must be willing to launch new initiatives that lead to revitalization and growth to become multigenerational congregations that thrive until Jesus returns.



Innovation

The Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company (3M) began as a small-scale mining venture in 1902 (https://www.3m.com/3M/en_US/company-us/about-3m/history/). The founders of 3M began mining for corundum, a mineral for making sandpaper and grinding wheels. What they thought was corundum was a low-grade mineral called anorthosite. Rather than quitting, the company persisted, turning to different materials and applying them to other products, slowly building a company now known for its innovation and collaboration.

3M is currently ranked 102 on the Fortune 500. Today, customers use more than 60,000 3M products in their homes, and one-third of the company's sales come from products invented within the past five years. The company states, "But our success and longevity were not apparent from the start. We tried. We failed. We tried something new. Repeat cycle. Innovation and perseverance drove our founders, and it continues to drive 3Mers today."

Innovation is not a secular business concept but an attribute of healthy organizations.

Leaders must be willing to lead change, seek God for direction, collaborate with stakeholders, try new things, persevere through failure, and discover how to address present and future leadership challenges to remain effective.

The Book of Acts records numerous obstacles that the first-century church experienced after the launch and growth phases recorded in the first few chapters. Luke relays in Acts 6 how the apostles are receiving complaints regarding the neglect of Hellenistic widows in the daily distribution (Acts 6:1). Acts 15 is about the question of circumcision and whether it was necessary for salvation (Acts 15:1). The discussion surrounding the question resulted in dissension and dispute. On both occasions, new S-curves began in the church due to prayer, study, the wisdom of shared experiences, and collaboration. The word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied (Acts 6:7). In Acts 15, the congregation rejoiced, and the church was strengthened.

Complacency

Too often, organizations continue along the bell curve, following the standard path toward decline and death because they have never experienced a sense of urgency. In his book *Leading Change*, John Kotter states that the most prominent mistake organizations make is underestimating the power of complacency. There are forces in every organization that reinforce complacency and that help to maintain the status quo.

Kotter references several sources of complacency that include the absence of a significant crisis; too many visible resources; low-performance standards; measurement systems that focus on the wrong performance indexes; a lack of sufficient performance feedback from external sources; a kill-the-messenger-of-bad-news, low-candor, low-confrontation culture; human nature with its capacity for denial; and too much happy talk from senior management.

Unpacking the numerous sources of complacency are beyond the scope of this article. It bears noting that the sources of complacency are primarily matters within the organization rather than forces from the outside. Change is more than a head issue; it is one of the heart. What frequently looks like laziness or disinterest is often exhaustion. Chip Heath and Dan Heath, in their book, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*, do an excellent job identifying the emotional component of change.

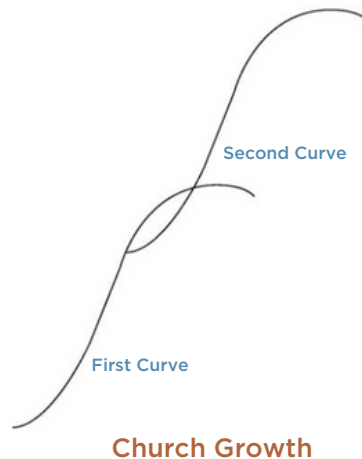
Christian culture values optimism, a byproduct of a relationship with God. Creating a sense of urgency within a local church can feel like a lack of faith and detrimental to the congregation. Church leadership must recognize the biblical responsibility of being attentive, sober, diligent, watching, and sounding the alarm to warn constituents of danger. The apostles were able to encourage people in the faith while also warning them of imminent threats. Contemporary leaders must realize that this is not a problem to solve but a tension to manage.

Don't Wait

Remember the expiration date on the gallon of milk mentioned in the opening paragraph. Wisdom requires diligence and monitoring to ensure that appropriate action takes place whenever a product begins to spoil. Some companies inform the purchaser when it is best to use their product, choosing to identify when it will be at its best rather than to estimate when it will no longer be safe.

Gary Hamel, in his national bestseller, *Leading the Revolution: How to Thrive in Turbulent Times by Making Innovation a Way of Life*, referenced that the founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates, acknowledges that the giant software company is always two years away from failure. Gates recognizes that innovators are working in their garage, developing the next big breakthrough.

The pace of change has increased. Theorists refer to the past as a placid lake. Calm waters allow boaters in canoes and rafts to strain at the oars, gain momentum, and then rest with the paddles out of the water as they glide toward their destination. Oppositely, whitewater rapids are the contrasting image of the present. Disruption and rapid and unpredictable change characterize the current reality. When a boater decides to rest and take the paddles out of the water, he will soon be upside down, capsized by the rapids and rocks. There is no ego underwater.



Malphurs urges church leaders to proactively start a second curve while the organization is still growing, not waiting for it to plateau and begin to decline. Launch a new initiative, and test new ways of increasing effectiveness when the congregation is doing well and has the time, resources, energy, and spirit to invest in change. Do not allow complacency to set in. Do not allow past success to create a false sense of security in the present. Too much is at stake. It is not the will of God that churches die, but He does expect them to change to meet the challenges of the present and future.

Brent Coltharp

Dr. Brent Coltharp serves as Lead Pastor of FAC Aurora, as the District Superintendent of the Illinois District UPCI, and as the President of Urshan College (UC) and Urshan Graduate School of Theology (UGST).



Article No.2

Change Your View of Change

Change is constant and happens whether we want it to or not. It is simple yet complex. It can be deliberately initiated or unforeseen. Most people resist change, thinking it will be difficult. Often it is. A better approach is to navigate change. To get out in front of it. To lead things in the way they should go. Such were the sons of Issachar who knew what Israel should do. (See I Chronicles 12:32.)

The challenges we face are significant. For one, in recent times we have dealt with a pandemic that has altered things, many of which our society is still struggling to understand. The question isn't how to return to the norm. That is impossible. In many ways, things will never be the same.

This is just one of many examples. Thus, the question isn't how to keep change from happening. Instead, it is about how to lead change. The following are a few things to consider.

1. Change the Way You View Change

Not all change is bad. Most change isn't. Yet, despite the necessity of change, it can be challenging. Why? Often it is because of our attitude. Plainly stated, we don't like change.

If you don't like change, consider this—why not change how you view it? Instead of seeing it negatively, why not view change positively? Opportunities for good things abound. If you are looking for them, you will likely see them. If not, they will be difficult to find.

Consider Acts 6. The church was facing a significant crisis, one that threatened growth. The underlying issue in the Hellenistic widows' complaint was pre-existing prejudiced feelings. The disciples, however, did not preach on the need for unity. Instead, they changed the structure of the church. No longer would the twelve disciples lead the way. Instead, seven other leaders were added to the team. Subsequently, due to change, the church experienced increased growth.

What growth might you generate by changing the structure of the church? Does everything have to cross your desk? Do you have to be a part of everything? Or can you make changes that will empower others to lead within their respective areas of ministry? Such questions should be carefully considered. Sadly, growth is often thwarted due to resistance to change.

2. Stay Aligned with the Vision

Change for the sake of change shouldn't be the goal. Neither should it be simply because others have changed. A good place to start navigating change is to determine what you will not change. For example, doctrine should not change. Paul writes in Galatians 1:8, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Truth does not change. It is constant. Unmovable.

It isn't enough, however, to identify what shouldn't change. You must also identify and align with the vision. What is the vision? What is the goal? For some, it is a less important thing, like seeking personal validation, pursuing material things, and so on. A more important goal would be to seek the advancement of His Kingdom. Knowing the vision, knowing the goal, and keeping it front and center, keeps lesser things from becoming the focus. Your effectiveness in navigating change is enhanced when you are aligned with what is most important.

Also, consider the importance of shared vision regarding alignment with the vision. Contrary to what some might think, shared vision differs from the leader sharing their vision with others. It is inviting others to participate in creating a vision. This is where the buy-in is formed. For example, you might have a vision of a new ministry and empower someone to lead it. You would then ask that person, "What do you envision this ministry being?" You might give a 30,000-foot view, but you would invite the ministry leader to dream alongside you. Such a vision becomes robust, and your role and responsibility might be mentoring the leader, removing the obstacles, and helping to shape the culture.

3. Consider Church Culture

Church culture is the way the people of a church operate or function, which is also impacted by the behavior and core values of each member. It is the silent code of conduct. It is the personality of the church.

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast."
- Peter Drucker (world-renowned management expert)

This means no matter the importance of the goal or how sound the strategic plans might be, success in accomplishing it will be largely determined by the people within the church.

Church leaders are often inspired by something at a different church or conference and seek to duplicate it at home. This seldom works. The reason is the culture is different. This does not mean you shouldn't initiate change. It does mean you can't sidestep culture.

Also, consider the impact change will have, or is having, on your culture. Is it positive or negative? It is easy to become so consumed in dealing with change that you overlook its impact on culture. Yes, culture eats strategy for breakfast. But culture is not static. It is ever-changing and is influenced by what is happening within the church.

4. Connect with Key Influencers

A widely known model for change management consisting of unfreeze, change, and refreeze, offers some insight. This simple process helps us understand that change is only complete once it becomes solidified. Hence, leading change consists of more than changing; the focus must also be placed on making change stick.

When considering the various stages of change, remember the role key influencers fulfill in bringing others along the journey. One person alone cannot lead change. Key influencers lead it throughout an organization. Hence, if your change thoughts do not involve key influencers, think again.

Understand and appreciate the varying differences in personalities. Some of the strongest influencers in a church are not always the loudest. Often, they are the steadiest and the ones who have developed healthy relationships. Such relationships are based on one's character, not a position or title. Thus, don't allow positions and titles to cause you to overlook a key influencer.

Take time to connect with these key influencers. Bring them along slowly, if needed. For some, you might need to talk with them early in the process. For some, you might need to connect outside of any formal setting. Or, you might need to _____ (you fill in the blank).

If the key influencers are on board with the change, it has the best chance of succeeding. In contrast, change doesn't stand a chance if key influencers are not on board, or if they are not enthusiastic about accomplishing it.

5. Live In the Comfort Zone

Several years ago, God challenged me to step out of my comfort zone. The word was clear, but I struggled to follow through with it. While conversing with someone a few weeks later, I remarked it was out of my comfort zone. This person commented, "Doesn't the Bible say, 'The Holy Ghost shall be our ...'?" As she paused, I softly replied, "Comforter." The Lord then spoke to me and said,

"I want you to be so comfortable walking in my Spirit that everything else is uncomfortable."

It was a life-altering moment.

When change is uncomfortable, and it usually is, you can find comfort by walking in the Spirit. You are a spiritual being first. Stay aligned with the vision. Hold on to the word God gave you. Everything you need is wrapped up in it. At the end of the day, it will be a God-thing, not a you-thing. You will never get to where you need to go by staying in your comfort zone. You must walk in His.

6. Break Big Change into Small Change

It is said, "If you want to eat an elephant, do so one bite at a time." You can lower the stress of a big change by breaking it into multiple small changes. Moreover, a few small changes often can have a ripple effect, leading to additional changes. In other words, don't be afraid of big change. A big change is accomplished by many small changes.

Breaking big change into small change often entails prioritizing what needs to be done, creating the next step, and acting on the next step. If you are a big-picture person, this might mean you involve someone who is detailed to help in the process. In contrast, if you are a detailed person, you might need to engage in conversation with team members who are big-picture oriented to identify the best next step.

Big change usually consists of many small changes strung together.

Conclusion

Today's world is changing faster than previous generations. A quick look at emerging trends lets us know that we will soon encounter things we have never faced. For one example, consider AI. The ramifications are far-reaching, both positive and negative. How might it influence the church? How might we use it to advance the Kingdom, and so on? It could potentially generate an array of changes.

Jesus birthed a movement during a time of significant upheaval. It succeeded in extraordinary ways.

There is no reason to think we (empowered by His Spirit) can't be instrumental in doing the same. By changing how we view change, staying aligned with the vision, considering church culture, connecting with key influencers, living in the comfort zone, and breaking big change into small changes, we can best navigate change.

Eugene Wilson

Dr. Eugene Wilson serves as president of Texas Bible College. He is the founder of the coaching and consulting organization Equipping Leaders. He has a doctorate in strategic leadership from Regent University and over thirty years of pastoral experience. He has written several books including *Realign*, *Seventy*, *Rodentivity*, *Rhythm*, and *The Difference Maker*.



Read more works by Eugene Wilson by clicking the image above.



Article No. 3

Leading Change

Pastors lead change in a variety of circumstances. Whether we are calling individuals to repent, encouraging them to take steps of discipleship, repositioning leaders, leading a capital campaign or building program, managing a pastoral transition, or pressing into spiritual renewal and harvest, much of what we do relates to leading change. Depending on the circumstances, change can be quick, or it can be incremental and drawn out. And no matter a pastor's intention or the ultimate good at stake, change can be received in a variety of ways by parishioners.

Continuity vs. change

Knowing what cannot change is the foundation for change. A leader must know what is nonnegotiable. There are absolute nonnegotiables, such as theological truths, but there also are relative nonnegotiables. Some things are part of a church's culture or gift set, and while they could be changed, changing them would be the undoing of the church's identity, strengths, or stability. And while changing these things is not heretical, the cost of changing them outweighs any potential gains change might bring.

Sometimes leaders are called upon to lead continuity more than change. When I was elected pastor, our church unexpectedly lost its beloved pastor and was not looking for change. At the same time, the church was undergoing a campus relocation project, and therefore it was a season of forced change. It was my task to maintain continuity in as many ways as possible. Although there were other things that needed to change, things about which the former pastor and I agreed, there was only so much change the church could endure at that time. Some things simply had to wait. Emphasizing continuity during this season gave me the credibility and leadership capital to make changes farther down the road. Sometimes leading continuity is equally as challenging as leading change. Before a leader launches into change, he must discern whether this is the proper season for change.

Change has no inherent value.

There must be a defined why behind significant change. We engage in change to bring the church into alignment with its vision, and the vision is a contextualized effort to achieve the mission. Therefore, mission and vision are important, not change. Change for the sake of change leads to uncertainty, inefficiency, and distorted messaging. Change can give a temporary sense of achievement but change for the sake of change wastes resources and only leads to busyness and distraction.

It is crucial to understand organizational priorities. Change is in service of vision, and vision is in service of the people to whom we minister. If we get these priorities confused, we can subjugate people to our vision rather than orchestrating a vision that serves the people. And if there is no vision linked to significant change, people become mere servants of change. This is unproductive and unhelpful. Therefore, if people are seemingly getting in the way of change, it could be the change is unwarranted or untimely.

Why people resist change

In his book *Leadership Pain*, Samuel Chand draws the following conclusions: growth = change; change = loss; loss = pain; and therefore growth = pain. Change requires letting go of the familiar. Most people have some aversion to change, and, as leaders, we don't always know which changes will evoke emotions from the people we lead. Depending on their connections to what is being changed or their prior experiences with change or their fears of what might happen next, people sometimes react in unexpected ways.

For example, although people say they want their church to grow, many assume growth means their church will scale up in size but otherwise remain the same. However, growth necessitates change, and sometimes this change is challenging. People often embrace vision at an abstract level, but the real challenge comes when the change required to fulfill the vision is enacted. This change is often more disruptive than imagined, and this is where difficulties come into play. Here are some reasons people resist change, all of which can be associated with deep emotion:

- They don't see the value of the change. What they have seems adequate.
- They are emotionally connected to the past.
- They ascribe theological value to their personal preferences.
- They feel a sense of loss.
- They have had negative experiences with change in the past.
- They lack trust.
- They simply disagree.

These aversions to change cannot be ignored.

This is why a pastor cannot dictate change; he must lead change.

Here are some ways a pastor can effectively lead change:

Associate change with vision.

When significant change is warranted, connecting it to the vision helps people understand why the change is necessary. This requires the existence of a strong and compelling vision. If there is an exciting vision for church growth, it is much easier to lead the change required to make growth happen. Clarity of mission (the unchangeable) empowers us to see more clearly what the future could look like (vision). Change then becomes the mechanism that incrementally moves us toward the vision.

Communicate.

When a pastor thinks he has communicated well, he likely is only beginning to communicate. Say it, say it again, send e-mail messages, post it on social media, teach it, preach it, project it on the screens, put it in the bulletin, and say it again! And then say it again. Communicate the vision and the change necessary to fulfill the vision.

Get buy-in.

It is important to get agreement from key leaders and those most affected by the change prior to making public announcements. You want to build a supportive team of people who comprehend and support the change. You are not ready to go public until you can convince key leaders and those impacted by the change.

Allow key players to shape the change.

Rather than announcing what they will do, invite key players to participate in shaping the change. This inevitably leads to a better outcome.

Appreciate the past and promise a future.

It is vitally important to acknowledge the successes of the past before enacting significant change. Whatever needs to be changed from the past was likely the product of people's labor and love, and they need to know it was not in vain. This also is true for people who transition. For example, when it comes time to help a leader change roles, even when you both know they need to change, it often is very difficult to make the transition. I have learned there are typically two things at stake for a leader in these situations: (1) they want to know their work up until now was meaningful and appreciated (they don't want to transition because things are horrible), and (2) they want to know they have a future beyond the role they are relinquishing.

Establish a culture of change.

A thriving church will always be changing. A pastor can set the expectation through preaching and teaching that change is inevitable and necessary. Even staffing transitions can be celebrated as positive change. I always publicly applaud leaders who transition. Not only does their transition allow room for someone else to step up and lead, but they will also carry their experience elsewhere in the organization and be a blessing there. This helps set the stage to help other leaders transition.

Encouraging the congregation to embrace change to fulfill the vision is an ongoing task. Without a culture of change, each change can become a battle. Even so, a culture of change is not to be confused with a culture of uncertainty. A culture where everything is always in flux, and nothing is certain is unhealthy and will not inspire confidence.

Pull the trigger.

After a pastor has done the hard work of communicating the value of the change and answering the questions, he must forge ahead with change, even if some still protest. Some people are incapable of embracing change or are unwilling to, but the vision cannot be held hostage by this minority. A pastor must move forward lovingly and with faith. Rarely will significant change be carried out as planned. There will be obstacles, and at times, it will be apparent the change was ill-conceived or flawed. When this happens, own the mistakes, shift gears, and refocus on the vision.

Rodney Shaw

Rodney Shaw has been a part of the pastoral staff since New Life Austin was established in 1992. After serving as assistant pastor and associate pastor, Pastor Shaw became senior pastor in 2010. He earned a master of arts in theological studies from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and a diploma in theology from Texas Bible College.

CHURCHWORK
How leaders & followers work together in the church



RODNEY SHAW

Read more by Rodney Shaw by clicking this image.



Article No. 4

Emotionally Navigating Change

Over the past few years, we have seen a century's worth of social change and cultural shift. There are several factors that have contributed to the more rapid changes in our world, not the least of which is the new digital world in which we live. Information is provided faster, processed faster, and, in turn, it must be dealt with faster. As leaders, we are always trying to work ahead and be prepared to lead and help others. It can be emotionally and mentally crippling to try to deal with change at the current speed of life.

This rapid speed of change can easily create somewhat of a backlog of things that need to be dealt with and processed. This is where leaders can become overwhelmed, buried in the emotions of the many things that need to be processed.

Sometimes things happen so quickly that it can be hard to accept or process the change. Recently we had a lead pastor who was frustrated about a change with another leader in the local church. They had worked for three years to get to a place of real progress and consistency in leadership and organizational flow, when this leader was met with an unexpected life change. Everything seems to collapse at those moments, and here is where leaders either advance or are crippled.

Whereas, at one time, leaders may have had the luxury of preparing themselves and others for change. But today, change often comes so quickly that we do not have the time needed to prepare ourselves or others for the changes.

Consider the frustrations that the Jews dealt with as Jesus came along to challenge their "old ways" of processing the law and customs of the Jewish people. So unwilling were the Jewish leaders and rulers, that not only did they end up denying the God they claimed to serve, but they missed out on one of the most important moments of God's work among mankind.

There is no way we can truly keep up with the rapid changes that are taking place. Instead, we must position ourselves to protect our own peace and the work that God has called us to do.

1) Change affects everyone.

Never assume that you are the only victim in the battle to process and accept change. Only those willing to seek and accept options beyond the common and normal will be able to make the necessary changes to meet the true needs of the moment. Don't allow yourself or the enemy of your soul to cause you to think that you are the only one dealing with the negative or overwhelming aspects of change.

2) Embrace change sooner.

The longer you linger in the past and don't deal with the change, the further behind you fall. In that case, you won't be able to be the leader in a moment of change where you are needed most. In Jesus' day, those who could not see what God was doing, got so caught up in where they used to be that they could not accept or acknowledge what God was doing in that moment.

3) Change is a sign of life and growth.

Don't be so married to ideas, traditions, and ways of doing things that you end up killing the thing that could actually be bringing you life! Look for the fruit of life that is coming from this moment.

4) It's ok to let go.

If you hold on to ideas, relationships, or ways of doing things to the extent that you cannot let go, then you are creating a place for guilt and emotional chaos. That will only bring forth frustration and confusion.

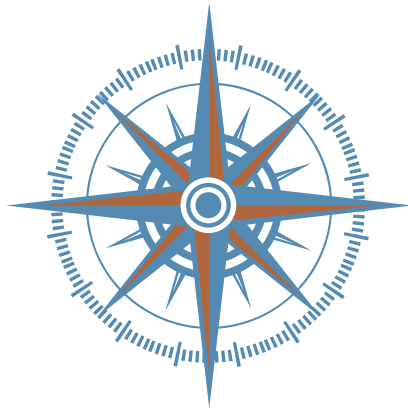
Our times are in God's hands. Although things are taking place at lightning speed, we must choose to be leaders in every area, including change. Always consider this: We will be an ambassador of change, a product of change, or a victim of change.

David Bryan

David Bryan is the founder and director of Mission37; a ministry designed to partner with spiritual leadership and churches, providing leadership and organization consulting and strategic planning. David serves the kingdom of God in pastoral and evangelist capacities throughout N America and around the world. The Bryan family bases thierwork and home in Nashville, Tennessee.



ISSUE 15 TOOLBOX PRACTICAL TOOLS YOU CAN USE



Change Readiness Assessment

Welcome to the Questionnaire on Readiness for Change

This questionnaire is to determine aspects like readiness/willingness, overall attitude and experience with changing situations in a professional environment.

There are no right or wrong answers when it comes to dealing with change. Therefore try to be very honest with yourself when providing your responses below.

At the end you will receive some consolidated feedback on the aspects mentioned above based on your input.

Let's get started!

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