



Resource sheet 7: *Changing Culture*

An introduction to some theories of organisational change

"It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory."

W Edwards Deming, US statistician, author (1900-1993)

Congregations are communities, organisations and institutions and they are changing constantly because they are made up of groups of people who are also changing. We all affect changes in our environment simply by being alive. However, by being self-aware and aware of and compassionate towards our fellow members of the body of Christ we can attempt to influence change for the better, for the deepening of faith and for the growing of God's Kingdom. The following information, drawn from years of thinking about organisational change, is to help LMDTs and individuals think about change in their congregations and communities so that we can be better equipped to help influence our life together towards positive growth and change.

How Does Change Happen?

The Change Equation (Katherine Dannemiller 'Changing the way organizations change' 1992)

For change to occur, sufficient energy has to be harnessed to be able to overcome the resistance and costs associated with the change. The Change Equation describes the factors that need to combine together to enable change to occur.

$$(D+V+F) > R = \text{Change}$$

D = Dissatisfaction with the current situation

V = Vision of what is possible

F = First practical steps to make positive progress

R = Resistance

If the product of the three factors (D, V & F) is greater than the resistance, then change is possible. Because D, V, and F are multiplied, if any one is absent (zero) or low, then it becomes much harder to overcome the resistance.

Dissatisfaction with the current situation

If people like the way things are at present then there will be no felt need for change. If a group has accepted a poor situation for a long time they may have come to accept it and have given up feeling dissatisfied. In many situations there are a range of dissatisfactions which have not been sorted or focused to enable momentum to be created. Dissatisfaction is often spread too thinly to be productive. Dissatisfaction levels can often easily be raised by asking people to consider the question "What is likely to happen if we do nothing?"

Shared Vision of the Future

Even though a group may be dissatisfied with their current situation they will not be inclined or able to move towards a different future state unless a critical mass of people shares a vision of the future that seems more desirable than the current state. Individual visions are not enough; they must be shared. The vision of the future will lack detail but will be at least sufficiently formed to give the confidence to take a risk.



First Practical Steps

The energy of many groups is immobilised by frustration of not knowing where to start. Dissatisfaction and a sense of vision are not enough without the practicalities of how to get into action. Great journeys start with the first few steps and so it is important to break down change into manageable elements.

The Cost of Change

There are many costs associated with change. They include time, money, personal energy and effort, risk of failure, breakdown of established social groups and relationships, those with vested interests in the present, having to learn new practices, physical relocation etc. We often underestimate the cost of change and, in particular, these social or emotional costs.

Another very useful way of presenting change issues can be found in a book by Harvard Business School Change 'guru' John Kotter: [Our Iceberg is Melting](#). Ideas about change are presented in the form of a story about a group of penguins who begin to realise their current way of life is in danger.

Change or Transition?

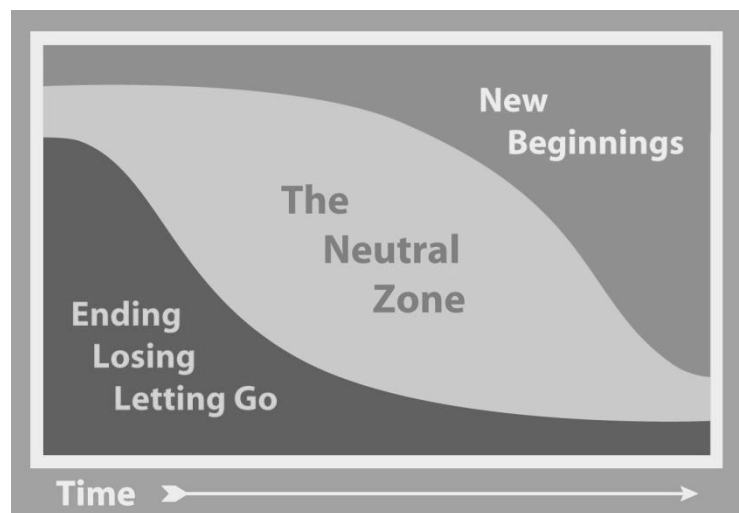
The Nature of Transitions (William Bridges, Managing Transitions)

Transition is the process of letting go of the way things used to be and taking hold of the way they will become. In between letting go and taking hold again, there is a chaotic but potentially creative 'neutral zone' when things aren't the old way, but aren't really a new way either yet.

Ending / Letting Go

To enable us to move on to new beginning there invariably have to be some endings

In the ending phase we lose or let go of our old outlook, our old reality, our old attitudes, even our self-image. We may resist this ending for a while. We may try to talk ourselves out of what we are feeling and then we give in, we may be swept by feelings of sadness and anger.



Neutral Zone

The neutral zone can either be a period of disorientation or a highly creative period of new possibilities. We can feel caught between old and new and can end up immobilised

Dangers of the neutral zone are that anxiety rises and motivation falls, we doubt ourselves, energy is drained into coping tactics and our effectiveness falls.

This is also however a time ripe for creative opportunity.

Beginning Again

Finally, we take hold of and identify with some new outlook and some new reality as well as new attitudes and a new self-image. When we have done this, we feel that we are finally starting a new chapter in our lives. No matter how impossible it was to imagine a future earlier, life now feels as though it is back on its track again. We have a new sense of ourselves, a new outlook, a new sense of purpose and possibility.



Suggestions for the Journey of Transition

Keep some things the same

We can cope with only so much change at a time so keep some structures and routines unchanged e.g. regular meetings with friends, going for a walk and so on

Avoid the temptation to just do something

The temptation to make things happen is normal in transitions. Don't turn back just because the unfamiliar is uncomfortable. Likewise, be wary of racing ahead in an attempt to feel better. Use a time of reflection to open up better options.

Understand the origins of your uncomfortable feelings

Recognise that the natural grieving feelings that arise in transitions relate to losses that are perceived or actual and that is what you are reacting against.

When you leave behind old ways of doing things and embrace new ones, things feel shaky!

Your feelings and reactions affect others

Others around you may be accustomed to relating to you in certain ways. When you change, so will your responses to others. This may lead to some sense of loss on their part too. Not all previous friendships or relationships will necessarily be strong enough to cope with changes.

Be kind to yourself during change

Times of transition give us great potential for growth but they are also times of vulnerability. Be aware of this and be kind and patient with yourself. Give yourself space to work through the changes. Attend to things like sleep, diet, fresh air, exercise, rest and recreation and time by yourself.

Think through the pros and cons of change

Stand back and try thinking through all the pros and cons in as objective a way as possible.

Talk with someone you trust and respect

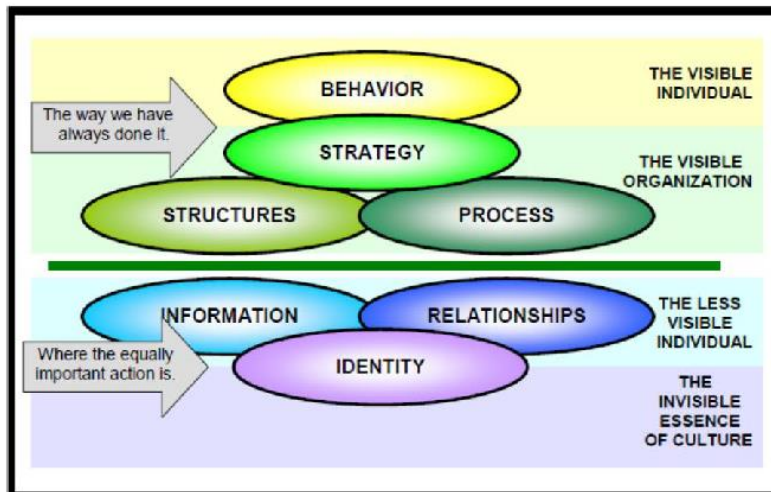
We all need a listening ear to help us to think through and make sense of how we feel, what we are losing and how we might choose to go forward. Talking through our options with others can help us to open up some creative possibilities that we had not thought about. Talking through with others can help us to see the bigger picture when we are so embroiled in the day-to-day details of just getting through.

Learn your lessons from the past

It is all too easy to move away from one difficult situation and walk right into a carbon copy as though there was no learning. Is the new beginning just a replay of an old scenario or is it a genuine new start?

NB Margaret Wheatley's work on change cautions against taking a too 'logical' or 'step by step' approach and emphasises the importance of seeing any group as an organic system. For change to be deep and lasting attention must be paid as much to relationships and communication as to structures and strategies:





How Change Affects Us Personally

Attempts to describe organisational change inevitably include how change affects us personally and emotionally as individuals. Elisabeth Kubler Ross's work on the stages of grief and loss has been extremely influential here. Through change those with pastoral skills and training will be an extremely important resource. John Fisher has described a Personal Transition Curve ([link here](#)) drawing on Kubler Ross which includes denial, depression and acceptance of change and the various temptations during any change towards apathy or over-confidence.

Change Quotes

"People are very open-minded about new things - as long as they're exactly like the old ones."
Charles Kettering, US engineer, inventor (1876-1958)

"It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage, than the creation of a new system - For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institutions and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would gain by the new ones."
Niccolo Machiavelli, Italian political theorist (1469-1527)

"The soft-minded man always fears change. He feels security in the status quo, and he has an almost morbid fear of the new. For him, the greatest pain is the pain of a new idea."
Martin Luther King Jnr, US civil rights leader (1929-1968)

"The human mind treats a new idea in the same way the body treats a strange protein; it rejects it."
Peter Medawar, Brazilian-born British biologist (1915-1987)

"Change is always a threat when it's done *to* people, but it's embraced as an opportunity when it's done *by* people."
Rosabeth Moss Kanter, US academic, management author (b. 1943)

And finally, Murphy says...

"Nothing will be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome."

