

T. E. A. C. H.

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Dealing With Changing Times

Dan Harrison
C. E. Chairman

There are some facts about life that impact all of us. Just as today is not simply an extension of yesterday neither will tomorrow be an extension of today. Each is new and different. I am not the same, you are not the same, the world is not the same and certainly the church is not the same as it used to be. We are living in a whirlwind of change and that is not all bad. Unless we are already perfect we need to improve, to grow, to change and to move forward.

Resisting change is normal to some degree but it is often interesting to investigate the resistance to the point of discovering its basis and foundation. Resistance sometimes flows out of our desire to protect our traditions. Sometimes it springs from our fear of losing control or our fear of failing. It can also flow out of our fear of personal loss. Being the "Big Duck" on the pond can be fun even if it is a small pond. Our resistance to change may be due to the fact that we are not persuaded of the benefits the proposed change would bring about. Another possibility is that we have carefully analyzed the benefits and we believe they are not worth the effort that will be involved in producing them. But perhaps the biggest hindrance to us accepting change is that we are satisfied with who and what we are and we see no need for adjustment or improvement.

I have recently been challenged by the following statement - "Christianity is a life-style of lifelong change." I am not sure of the author but I am convinced of the truthfulness of the thought. If change is necessary and inevitable how can we become less fearful of it? How can we come to view it as an ally to be managed not as an enemy to be avoided?

Have you stopped recently to realize that all of the benefits you enjoy today are the result of change? Nearly all advantages that are presently being enjoyed began as a perceived "pain in the neck" because for the new advantage to be realized required that we do something differently. We quickly forget the inconveniences of the adjustment and we begin enjoying the benefits. So perhaps the beginning point for most of us is to modify the way we think and feel about change, realizing most often it is a friend to be

embraced not an enemy to be resisted.

A helpful step in learning to more successfully manage change is to educate ourselves about the process of change implementation. The order of the process is far more important than most people realize. The rule of thumb is to communicate the proposed change to a few, then more, then yet more, and finally to everyone who will be impacted by it. The few who are initially exposed to the change should be the key leaders who have been given leadership positions because of wisdom, maturity and openness to innovation. The second group would be the remaining persons who serve in leadership positions beyond the first group. Next the workers who will be largely responsible for the implementation of any proposed change need to be consulted for their assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the idea. Finally the entire congregation will need a clear picture of what is happening and why it is the right thing and this is the right time.

Introducing change successfully is always a multiple step process involving a great deal of time and energy. Joe Ellis in his book entitled *The Church on Purpose* (published by Standard Press in 1982) offers a ten step overview of change that I have found to be invaluable. I want to quickly sketch out the ten steps and give a brief explanation of each one. (cont. on page 2)

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1. **Unawareness of Need** - People are satisfied and see no need for change.
2. **Vague Awareness of Need** - Something is creating a little discomfort.
3. **Area of Need is Identified** - The exact cause of the discomfort is identified.
4. **Nature of Need Becomes Clearer** - Everyone begins to agree there is a problem.
5. **Uncertainty or Retrenchment** - Concern that the group may not have the know how or the resources to address the problem.
6. **Rejection, Postponement, or Foot Dragging** - Often something has to be rejected at least once before it can be adopted because it is difficult for us to work up the courage to do what we know needs to be done.
7. **Fear and Postponement Recognized** - Open discussion of the change allows people courage to become stronger as they face their fears and work through them.
8. **Commitment** - A core of key people come to the point of saying, "We'll do it!"
9. **Planning the Change** - (Set goals - Plan the strategies & time lines - Execute the plan - Evaluate the outcomes)
10. **Complete the Implementation of the Plan** - Overcome the obstacles that come up and celebrate the benefits that result.

Being aware of the change process makes it possible to have confidence in knowing what to expect and what to do when the expected happens. Pastors and lay leaders can greatly enlarge their comfort zones and confidence regarding change by increasing the number of tools they possess for change management. Leaders can only lead effectively to the extent that they are learning, growing, developing and maturing their leadership skills and their walk with God.

The future of our individual lives and the lives of those we minister to will be profoundly impacted for good or for ill by our ability to be useful in God's hands. The sharper our tools both spiritually and practically the greater our usefulness and our effectiveness. We are awash in a sea of change that is unprecedented. The tides will either overwhelm us and leave us wondering what hit us or we will use their strength to carry us to greater heights that we ever thought possible. The choice is ours. I know what I am going to do, what about you?



Not Seeing the Church for the Pews!

Bruce Morrison

So often we make the mistake of trying to be all things to all people. But size, structure and other limitations just won't allow it. But an equally devastating mistake might be resting on that philosophy as an excuse to not reach out to those we can. Just because we only have two young people in our youth group doesn't merit giving up.

We at Lincoln Heights Church are trying to reach out to our people and impact them in their everyday walk with Christ. In our attempt to develop a family-oriented church, we have seen tremendous results in two elective adult Sunday School classes where men have studied "Promise Keepers" literature and the ladies have studied "Dialogue Series" materials that address their family and marital concerns. In addition to these Sunday School classes, we also have started a Women Mentoring Women group and a Men's Task Force to develop our members into stronger disciples. We also offer two Junior Churches (Preschool & Elementary) and two nurseries for each Sunday morning and a Children's program is available for Sunday and Wednesday evening services. When people sense a relevant ministry for their families, they will respond. It works. . . . just try it!

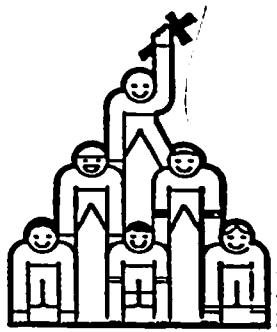
You don't have to look far, just across the pews!!



A Visit

One day I rang a doorbell
In a casual sort of way,
Twas not a formal visit
And there wasn't much to say.
I don't remember what I said--
It matters not, I guess--
I found a heart in hunger,
A soul in deep distress.
He said I came from Heaven,
And I often wondered why;
He said I came to see him
When no other help was nigh.
It meant so little to me,
To knock at a stranger's door,
But it meant Heaven to him
And God's peace forevermore.

Heights Baptist Church
Pensacola, Fl.



"PASSION"

The 1995 Mid-East Church Growth Conference

Mike Holbrook

The 1995 Mid-East Church Growth Conference was held in Anderson, Indiana on March 31st-April 1st. In planning to attend the conference the excitement grew to a higher level as 12 of the laity from Circleville First Church decided to go. The Church Growth Conferences have always been a true blessing to me. They have not only motivated my mind but also my heart. When the conference started with Dr. David Jeremiah speaking about "The Bends In The Road", I knew the Lord was going to meet with me again to challenge my mind, revive my spirit and strengthen my soul.

The twelve that went along from the church were truly moved and you could see them growing as God was working in their lives. This is what two have shared concerning the conference:

"I realized how easy it was to be in a comfort zone. I knew I needed to stretch myself and challenge others to stretch themselves and move to a higher level spiritually and in church growth." Charla Holbrook

"Last year was my first time to experience Church Growth at Anderson, Ind. and it was a true learning experience. I personally came back blessed beyond words from the knowledge I gained from that trip. This year was no exception. It is almost like a revival. After a full day of classes you are treated to a General Session that evening. There were special singers and a wonderful message was given by John Maxwell. The classes I attended have helped me to gain new insight to better teaching, preaching and pastoral care."

I feel fortunate to get the opportunity to go to the conference. I personally think it will be a blessing to our church for everyone to go next year. Let's work together to build God's Kingdom." Kevin Frasure

I have two highlights concerning the 1995 Church Growth Conference. One is that my wife was able to go. We grew together as we envisioned what God could do for us and the church we serve. The second highlight was after

the Friday night service. Our church group found a pace to get alone and share the wonderful things we were learning. God came on the scene as we laughed and wept together and then prayed for one another.

Passion was the theme of the Church Growth Conference. Each of us left with a new passion and love for God and the desire to build His Church



Up To Date Church Growth Conference!

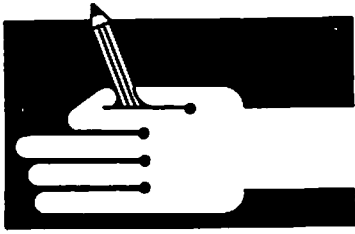
Michael Adkins
Quincy Chapel

Actually, except for a brief Church Extension ministry, I have been out of the primary pastoral position since 1984. Things have changed. I felt a need to brush up. I felt that my church growth studies of the 70's and 80's were probably out of date. I was right!! I thank the Lord for the opportunity to attend the Annual Mid-East Church Growth Conference hosted by John Maxwell.

As I studied my Conference packet that first day I was impressed by the wide variety of possible seminars. I could not even attend all the seminars that I chose as one's that would be helpful to me. As I did attend various seminars, I found that I was listening to men or women who knew what they were talking about. They were prepared and knowledgeable about their fields. They were precise with information and up to date. I found tangible help for my new pastorate. Mostly though, I liked the sincerity of the presenters: their genuine efforts to help and their obvious commitment to Christ. They practiced real servanthood.

I know this sounds like a commercial and that's not what I was asked to write, but I was impressed! I found up to date information, real answers, and on going resources. As I hung out with two CCCU pastors and their church groups there, I saw and heard church members come back to their groups excited and charged up about going home and doing ministry. Then I was sold. God willing, I'm going back next year with several people from my church!!





Reflections on Church Growth '95

Ralph Hux

There are no others words for a John Maxwell Church Growth Conference than excellent. The seminars are all well thought out, professionally prepared and significantly designed to meet the present challenges of the Church. This conference will reconfirm your personal call to ministry regardless of your title - Lay Person or Clergy. The burden for the purpose of the Church (winning all people everywhere to Jesus Christ) becomes unavoidably apparent.

John Maxwell, in a very unique way, has discovered the fine art of honoring the traditions within the evangelical church with the innovative creativity and leadership of meeting the needs of our society in order that the Church and its biblical message and the gospel remains relevant and uncompromised in the twenty-first century.

No matter if Church Growth is "your thing" or not, this conference will contribute to the diversity of the Church/Para-Church interests. For certainly, every Christian is concerned that the Church of Jesus Christ continue to go forward in the power and provision of the Holy Spirit. Church Growth definitely represents the spirit of the Church concerning the future of all Christian ministries from the academic perspective as well as the grass roots.



Conference Tapes Available!

The Christian Education Office has available cassette tapes of all the workshops and general sessions from the Church Growth Conference. This is a great way to glean the information shared at the conference if you were unable to attend. These tapes are available in the Tape Library at the CE Office. You may request a complete listing of the titles and presenters by calling the CE Office. The telephone number is 513-695-0025. Ask for Cindy. Then get ready to listen to some fantastic general sessions and workshops!

Change the Sunday School?

What is the most difficult ministry in a church to change? That which has been successful before. As Dr. Hadden Robinson says, "The hardest thing to change is what has worked before."

One of the success stories of the church in the United States has been in Christian education, particularly Sunday School. Not many stories of evangelism, discipleship, and training can match that of Christian education over the past two hundred years of ministry. Yet, it is precisely due to its great success that the Christian education ministries of many churches are floundering in our changing times. The success of the past is lulling many in education to sleep as they continue to do things that worked in the past but are not as effective today.

Buggy whip makers of the late 1800's must have wondered what to do. Noisy contraptions called automobiles were belching down streets, frightening horses and threatening to take away their livelihood. They must have realized that with improvements, these new inventions would provide faster and more comfortable travel. They must have realized that they were seeing history in the making. They must have been unsure how to adapt to their changing times.

Some of us, perhaps many of us, living today have a kindred spirit stretching back nearly one hundred years to those buggy whip makers. We see life changing and realize we must adapt. Here are some changes taking place in Christian education and some ideas on how to adapt.

1. *Stress for Life Application*
2. *Focus on the Learners*
3. *Growth of Christian Schools*
4. *Disintegration of the Family*
5. *Lack of Volunteers*
6. *Broader Training Needs*
7. *Situation based Education*
8. *Low-tech to High-tech*
9. *Multiple Education Times*

The public education system is being forced to evaluate its organization and curriculum due to a changing environment which made the older forms of education obsolete. Change is the name of the game for Christian education also. While we certainly don't want to compromise the Scripture for the sake of relevance, we do need to understand the changes taking place and formulate a biblical response to Christian education in our changing times.

(The above information was taken from the book *The Issachar Factor* by Glen Martin & Gary McIntosh, published by Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee)



Bringing Change to a Traditional Church

Bringing about change in a traditional church can be as much fun as running waves in a lake. At other times, it can be disastrous.

Sometimes the wakes caused by change are fairly small like those usually traversed by water skiers. Other times they can be much larger like waves found in the ocean. Occasionally they become almost tidal waves, too powerful for anyone to jump. As wave runners in our churches, we need to carefully structure a plan to effectively run the waves of change.

Starting new ministries, restructuring older ones or eliminating previously successful programs is difficult in any situation but can be a major wave to jump in a traditional church. The following ten steps are a composite of ideas suggested by those who have run the waves before us and are given here as insights for running our own waves of change in a traditional church.

#1. Bless the past.

Unless you are a church planter, you will be building on the foundation of others. It was their commitment, sacrifice and love for the Lord that provided for your church to be where it is today. Always respect and honor the leaders who have served faithfully over the years.

#2. Affirm previous ministries.

Learn what ministries are legend in the history of your church and begin to affirm them and the people who served in them.

#3. Stress principles not methods.

Highlight the foundational principles that undergirded past ministries. Think through each ministry that will need to be changed and identify the biblical principles that made it valid. Teach and preach those values and principles that are timeless and remain valid today.

#4. Present change as an extension of past ministries.

Present your new approach to ministry as an "extension" of a former ministry. For example, if your desire is to begin a new worship services, focus on the fact

that you are just expanding your present worship service so that it will reach more people.

#5. Illustrate how the change carries on values of a former ministry.

One church wanted to move from a mid-week prayer meeting to a small group ministry. The church leaders helped their people to see that the value of the mid-week meeting was prayer. As church leaders demonstrated that more people would be praying if there were several small groups meeting at different times during the week, the congregation agreed to give it a try.

#6. Assure people that you will be carrying on biblical principles.

Take time to educate people so that they understand it is the "form" of the ministry that is changing and not the "foundation." Keep stressing the biblical principles of the past more than the styles of the past, bridging into an explanation of how the newer forms carry on the old principles.

#7. Listen and love.

Leaders need to give people time to share their feelings, vent their frustrations and become accustomed to the new ways of ministry. It is wise to provide small forums where a few people can ask questions, rather than have a full congregational meeting.

#8. Communicate that traditions are honored best when they are carried on in new ministries.

There are dead traditions and living traditions. The dead ones continue to be remembered but with little impact on life and people today. The living traditions continue on by providing the historical reason for ministries that are being accomplished today. The best traditions are the ones that point to the future through effective ministries that reach people today.

#9. Be patient.

Understand that in urban and suburban areas of the United States, it normally takes 5-7 years to turn a traditional church in a new direction. In more rural settings it often takes 10-13 years and sometimes longer.

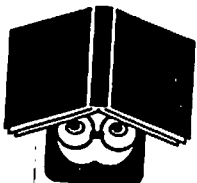
10. Trust God to make it happen.

The old hymn says it well, "O God, our help in ages past our hope for years to come." What better words to bear in mind while leading a traditional church. As we love God and His people, He will help us bring about the necessary changes for effective ministry.

(The above article was written by Dr. Gary L. McIntosh, The McIntosh Church Growth Network, San Bernardino, Ca.)



Resources from the CE Library



How to Handle Conflict and Change

by Carl George
This audio seminar represents the most in-depth, up to date, and innovative material available on this subject. With insight and encouragement, George reveals effective perspectives and practices for dealing with conflict and change in the local church. (8 cassettes & study notes)

10 Sunday Schools That Dared to Change

by Elmer Towns
This book provides inspiring proof that a strong commitment to the Sunday School is not only possible, it is essential to the overall ministry of the church. This book examines the importance of the Sunday School from infants to adults in a wide range of denominational settings.

The Heart of a Great Pastor

by H. B. London, Neil Wiseman
This unique book will help you take a second look at your ministry and find new ways to "bloom where you're planted." You will find inspiring wisdom and detailed, practical ways to help you revitalize your relationship with God and your congregation. When you seek God's heart

and will in the midst of your present circumstances, you'll discover that obstacles become stepping stones.

Solving Church Education's Ten Toughest Problems

by John R. Cionca
After conducting a national survey of over 1,000 pastors and Christian education leaders, Dr. Cionca discusses solutions for such problems as recruiting teachers and leaders, staff burnout and turnover, and apathy and declining attendance. Here's a dependable dose of help from someone who's made it work in this own church.

What I Really Need!

by Dr. John Maxwell
A Gallup Poll recently identified people's six greatest needs. They said, "What I really need is...Security, Appreciation, Understanding, Friendship, Purpose and Spiritual Growth." Listen to Dr. Maxwell as he insightfully identifies the roots of each need and shares scripture teaching how those needs can be met by God. (6 cassettes & notebook outline)

*Contact Cindy at the CE Office with requests for these items from the Lending Library, 513-695-0025. Many other resources are also available, please call for a complete listing.

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