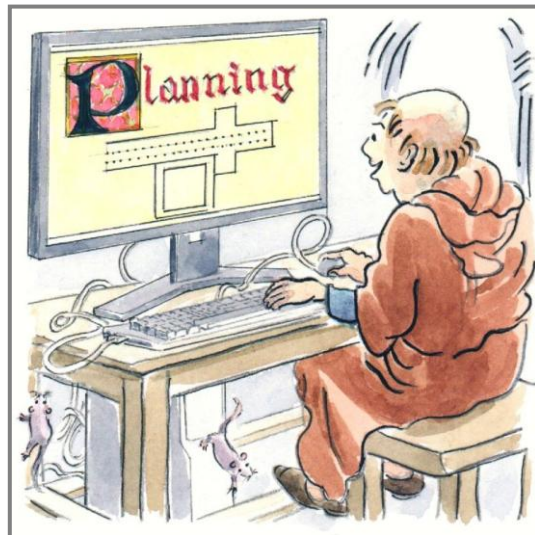


How to handle change

A DIY training aid



W7 Workshops series: Planning

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This material for the leader/enabler takes the form of a DIY workshop for leaders of churches or mission agencies, or leaders of various ministries within a church or mission.

Its aim is to help people understand the change process from a biblical perspective with opportunities for exercises to put this into practice. It is, in essence, a write-up of my own training on this topic over many years.


Explanation for leaders and enablers

This material can be used by individuals but it is really designed for a church group with a leader/enabler, preferably someone who is not part of the host church and so not linked to particular people or viewpoints. It can be run fairly quickly over three hours with a 20 minute break or, more carefully, over five hours with appropriate breaks.

You may want to adapt what is presented in print here so that it better fits your local context. This write-up gives you a structure and a possible text to work from.

You are welcome to rework this for an event with some reasonable variation and without copyright restriction, other than to acknowledge source, please, and point to my website.

There are a number of practical exercises to take part in throughout but these can be supplemented by participants sharing details of changes they have themselves managed or ones that they have observed other people leading. In a training event these form a vital part of the learning process.

The material here is based on a number of items on this website and these are clearly referenced so that you can check those out to give a fuller picture if required. There are also 12 handout sheets for everyone to use covering headings and these exercises. These come at points in this material marked with this symbol  and a handout reference.

1: Blood on the church carpet

Whether for our lives or our churches, most people think that to stay put is the norm and to change is the variation. This important introduction to this event argues that they need to see it the other way round! Reasons we could give for this include the following.



Handout 1

Change is natural

Human beings are constantly changing in a world that is constantly changing. Consider our bodies, the seasons, tides. Dead things do not change. History is the story of change.

Change is of God

He is the God who does not change but who is in the business of changing us. See Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8, 2 Corinthians 5:17 and many other examples. Disciples need to grow and change.

Pastors need to be leaders of change for their congregation

On this analysis change is at the heart of all Ministers' work. And that of the elders/trustees/PCC ... which may surprise some of their members! See Colossians 1:28, etc.

Change is everywhere

Our society is undergoing significant and rapid change. People regularly hit major change issues at work and in their families. That is the context for the small change in daily routine we may be planning. But some people see the Church as a haven from change!

Significant change is nearly always painful and messy

Do not be deceived by the analysis we shall work through in this event! Change is always messy and church change even more so. Gifted pastors will find this especially hard.

Discernment is necessary

It's vital to make sure you are making or receiving the right changes, and in the right way, especially for 'volunteers' in a church. You need to have good self-awareness to understand your own attitude and behaviour. Be aware that most literature about change is in an employment setting, not a volunteer setting as for churches.

This workshop should help you both *manage* and *live with* change

Sometimes you will need to initiate specific changes, and at other times to live or cope with those imposed on you (by family, circumstances, work, church – or yourself!).

It is important to distinguish between the change itself and the process.

Stories that we can tell

This event needs to be earthed in reality from both our experience of church and from our experience of life. So we need to tell each other stories of change: the good, the bad and the particularly ugly.

It is worth getting hold of the booklet *Who moved my cheese?* by Spencer Johnson. Then cite the handwriting on the wall which says:

Change happens – *they keep moving the cheese*

Anticipate change – *get ready for the cheese to move*

Monitor change – *smell the cheese often so you know when it is getting old*

Adapt to change quickly – *the quicker you let go of old cheese, the sooner you can enjoy new cheese*

Change – *move with the cheese*

Enjoy the change! – *savour the adventure and enjoy the taste of new cheese!*

Be ready to change quickly and enjoy it again and again – *they keep moving the cheese*


EXERCISE 1 *Handout 11*

In groups of three list and share all the changes that members of your congregation may be going through at the moment (without mentioning any names), whether in life, work, school, relationships, culture, etc.

EXERCISE 2 *Handout 11*

In the same groups share the story of one change you have been through in life *outside* church. What was it like? What did you learn from it? Report one or two examples in a plenary session to follow.

2: Analysing change

Here is one way of analysing what is happening in any change process. It speaks of a 'journey' from one 'scenery' to another. This is simply giving a language to understand what is going on. It is expressed here in objective terms but people's feelings and emotions will be very much in this too. A change may be physical, cultural, attitudinal, mental. Try not to limit your thinking to only physical changes.  *Handout 2*

Five key questions

These are taken from Training Notes TN81, *Changing the scenery*, in the Resources section of the website. Try to provide relevant examples of each one as you lead the session.

THE SCENERY QUESTION

What is the change?

This is the difference between two sceneries. Sometimes you don't know much about 'scenery two'. Differences may fall within all five of our senses.

THE TRAVEL QUESTION

How do we get there?

There will be issues of cost, resourcing, speed, timing, etc. Some journeys are swift, some slow, some unexpected, some prepared for. Consider someone travelling to holiday by either plane or bus. Some revel in travel, others dislike it.

THE PURPOSE QUESTION

Why are we changing?

Knowing the reason (if a valid one) may give reassurance. The benefits must outweigh the losses of 'scenery one' plus the cost of the travel.

THE PEOPLE QUESTION

Who are the stakeholders?

Are we alone, or in company? Who leads? Who tells whom what? Consider different groups involved in different ways (eg. someone dying, spouse, friends, hospital staff).

THE CONTROL QUESTION

How much control do we have?

Most prefer to handle the speed or the impact in some way. What problems will arise? Some seek to exert control by their leadership role but others may try shouting loudly to drown out the leader and take control.

But there are also different types of possible involvement in a change process...

Four types of involvement

- 1 You have to **manage** a change, to lead others through it (so you need management advice). An issue for leaders initiating something. You are in control.
- 2 You have to **live with** a change that someone else is managing, when you are followers (so you need counselling). You may have little control.
- 3 The same as 1 but when the change itself is outside your control. It may be an unexpected crisis, or it may be an unknown timing.
- 4 The same as 2 but when the change itself is outside the leader's control.

Illustration

Do not rush this exercise. Let each group take its time to let each member talk about a major change by using the language of 'sceneries' and 'travel' as introduced in this section.

EXERCISE 3 *Handout 3*

In groups of two or three each person chooses one significant change in their life (or their church's life if they would prefer not to share a personal example).

Describe 'scenery one' and answer any questions from the other members.

Describe 'scenery two' to contrast with scenery one and answer any questions.

Describe features of the travelling.

List reasons for the change and who might not have understood this.

List who went with you and in what capacity.

Describe the level of control you had.

How has this analysis helped you understand what was happening?

Planning principles

In any change process, keep the following in mind throughout:

Ask 'Why?' before you ask 'How?'

And make sure your answer starts 'so that...' and not 'because...'. The latter takes you back into the past. The former moves you on into the future.

Distinguish purpose from vision

And your part from God's part. Purpose is why we are doing this. Vision is what we have the faith to believe God might do if we fulfil our purpose.

Define the purpose of any church

Suggestion: growth in relationship God-wards, us-wards and out-wards. Is our proposed change going to deliver one aspect of such growth.

Help people to think visionary

Suggestion: the 'emigrate to Australia' approach. This is described in DIY Workshop W2, *How to run a church vision day*.

If you use purpose and/or vision statements, ensure they are communicated, owned and applied in every area of church life. Otherwise they become just a slick form of words which mean little.

3: Reacting to change

So by now we have an idea as to what change is all about. But how do people react to change or plans for change? It is well worth understanding different types of reaction and then adjusting our plans to fit different people. Here are two models to help you understand what is going on. The first one, *Reactions to change*, is analytical. The second one, *A better system of decision-making*, enables everyone to see what is going on emotionally.

Reactions to bereavement

We start by noting how different people react to bereavement because there will always be a bereavement in change – the loss of scenery one in the language we have adopted. Here are some possible reactions. Note that you have little control in most bereavements.

- Ignoring it
- Talking about it
- Burying feelings
- Expressing grief
- Displaying anger
- Acting irrationally
- Becoming depressed
- Complete denial

But people often go through different reactions as time goes on. These range from the shock of the bereavement, especially if unexpected, on to some form of denial as to what has happened, with then a gradual acceptance of what has happened and so on to coping though sometimes very slowly

This can be drawn on a competence / time graph (see next column). See how the previous paragraph fits the curve shown.



Reactions to change Handout 4

Research by Rogers and Shoemaker is often cited but it assumes an accuracy that is not present and some terminology is questionable for church use. Think instead of a slightly simplified analysis of four groups of people reacting to a church change process.

First, **Enthusiasts**. They are out in front longing for change, clear as a bell on vision. You need them but be aware they can be dangerous if they put others off and will want you to jump to their tune. You need some enthusiasts but not hyper-enthusiasts. They are usually quite few in number and react in line with their emotions.

Secondly come your **Supporters**. They are valuable and will have considered the change in their minds and reckon it is the right thing to do. They may need evidence and a good idea of purpose but they will support your plans. They are a larger group than your Enthusiasts and react in a rational way.

Behind them come your **Hesitators**. This will also often be a large group and will not vote 'Yes' immediately but will need some careful persuasion. As with Supporters they think rationally and so are likely to be put off by your Enthusiasts. But this is a vital group to be won over because with your Enthusiasts and Supporters they create a sizeable majority.

Finally, in our procession, come the **Protesters**. They may be a small group but will be very vocal. They will try to block your plans and are unlikely to be won over by reason. Listen to them, show them you have heard, but do not be too disappointed when they continue to block you.

Another way to consider this

Some people find the **future** exciting and want to get there as soon as they can. Others are comfortable with the **present** and need convincing for any change. A third group belong to the **past** and want to get back there to be in their comfort zone.

EXERCISE 4 *Handout 11*

How does the idea of Enthusiasts, Supporters, Hesitators and Protestors work in a church change process you have recently led or experienced? What proportion of people were there in each group? Note that the proportions can differ hugely for different changes but a typical example might be something like 10%-40%-30%-20% in the order of E,S,H,P.

The decision to change


This is an issue of leadership – and usually better if a shared leadership. There is no straightforward process for all cases, and it is usually a matter of circling round a process a number of times. But the essential activities include:

- 1 Pray
- 2 Share / explain the vision
- 3 Consult / involve
- 4 Listen / reshape
- 5 Judge the time
- 6 Decide

For thinking on how to do some creative thinking, see Training Notes TN103, *How to encourage*

creative thinking, in the Resources section of the website.

A better system of decision-making

Here is a second tool to encourage understanding of how people react. You will see the obvious link to the first tool.  *Handout 5*

When it comes to a decision, enthusiastic visionary leaders frequently fail to hear people's reactions – because they use the blunt instrument of a vote. They assume YES means as enthusiastic a yes as their own. It may simply mean 'not NO'. There is a better way

+100	I embrace
+80	I enthuse
+60	I back
+40	I prefer
+20	I allow
0	I am undecided
-20	I question
-40	I disapprove
-60	I reject
-80	I protest
-100	I block

For further details of how to use this, see Training Notes TN8, *Major decisions – a new approach*, in the Resources section of the website. It is worth explaining the spectrum of feelings carefully and taking questions.

EXERCISE 5 *Handout 11*

In pairs, consider situations where this sliding scale as a form of expressing support or otherwise might be useful. It is not a legal means of voting but can be very useful to be honest as to how people feel about a major issue.

EXERCISE 6 *Handout 11*

From John chapters 13 to 16, consider how Jesus prepared his disciples for the major change that would come about through his death.

Conflict in the church  *Handout 6*

Conflict is always emotional, but especially so in a church. First people cannot walk away from it at 5.00 pm., secondly their church and their faith are tightly bound together, thirdly some feel that the church should be the one body that does not change today. Acts 15 is an interesting success story, but then see what happens right at the end!

- 1 Do not muddle creative tension (good, to be expected) with destructive conflict (bad, can destroy relationships) – though these are on a continuous spectrum.
- 2 Minimise unnecessary conflict by following the principles throughout these notes.
- 3 Pray yourself (to discern causes, to be open to your own contribution to it, to find solutions), but never misuse spiritual means to win the upper hand.

- 4 Listen, show you are listening, and check you have heard correctly (mirroring).
- 5 Stay on issues not people who hold positions on those issues. Love people.
- 6 Identify the true cause of any conflict: it may not be the presenting issue at all.
- 7 Conflict in the meeting is to be preferred to conflict in the car park afterwards.
- 8 Distinguish between what is foundational and what can be flexible, between what is agreed by both parties and what is not.
- 9 Holding people together is a priority but when 'resignations' are offered, accept.
- 10 Never chair a conflict situation addressed at you. Group leadership is better than solo. Involving an independent, external listener may well be necessary.

Taking up a new ministry

Too many consultancies I have undertaken came about because of significant misunderstandings created when a church changes its Minister.

From the church's point of view

Even when a church gets the tradition and theology they were expecting, the new Minister may have marked differences from his or her predecessor in:

- Leadership style: authoritative to laissez faire

- Desire to delegate – or push things through
- Choice of priorities
- Church practices such as baptism
- External responsibilities – so away from the church for a significant time
- Gifts such as preaching or leadership

This section of the workshop is taken from Training Notes TN70, *Do's and don'ts for a new leader*

From the leader's point of view  *Handout 7*

DO

Rethink your methods

What worked at A may not work at B

Get to know people

Learn names and faces

Choose some appropriate actions

Find a win-win change early on

Ask questions

Show you value people's viewpoints

Make a date for a public assessment

Don't be seen to be inactive for too long

Identify the gatekeepers

Unexpected people may hold much power

Understand yourself

Be self-aware

Learn from the community's stories

Understand the local area and networks

Seek prayer support – you are a mission worker.

DON'T

Get up-tight about secondary issues

and fight unwise battles

Try to prove yourself

by making your mark too early

Arrive with a fixed plan

and assume you know it all

Stamp on existing traditions

and ignore what is precious to people

Criticise your predecessor

and make yourself enemies

Ignore natural grief

and fail to understand where people are at


Seek to empty the church

and fill it with people who will follow you

Ignore people's lives

and assume everyone is like you

4: Easing the process of change

This final section looks at practical ways in which we may ease a change process though. There are no simplistic answers and each change is different. But here are ideas to consider.  *Handout 8*

1 **Keep God's Kingdom as the focus**

That does NOT change! A change is a journey of faith, so prayer is vital. Change is dangerous and people are fearful. But never silence doubters by spiritual blackmail.

2 **Never lose sight of the destination**

Keep the vision before everyone at all times. Many people will start to focus on the process of the travel, not the destination. Explain purpose in terms of vision.

3 **Show it's part of something bigger**

Know why you are changing. Show that it is an outworking of an agreed strategy (eg. a mission statement), or a detail of something more general that has already been agreed.

4 **Consult and communicate in every way you can**

Many change-leaders felt they failed to keep people in touch sufficiently. You need to continually reassure people, and involve them. Welcome discussion. If people feel they are in the dark, they will worry, then fear, then block further action.

5 **Plan and monitor the travel with care**

Plan the implementation meticulously. Monitor the journey at every stage and be ready to adapt aspects of it if necessary. Be an avid listener, check misunderstandings, welcome feedback without compromising leadership.

6 **Think before you go public**

Don't publicise anything until you have thought through all the possible snags. A half-formed idea released in public may get shot down in its entirety just because there were a couple of small faults in the prototype.

7 **Try an experimental period**

Where possible, have an experimental period so that people can experience Scenery 2 without committing everyone to it on a permanent basis.

8 **Keep everyone together**

A shepherd keeps the flock together. Aim to do this as far as is possible, but not at the expense of complete inactivity.

9 **Ripple it out**

Work on the 'ripple principle', convincing groups of people from the centre to the edge of the church pond. Identify protestors and give them attention.

10 **Model the new setting**

People's fear of change is often caused by worry at what scenery two might be like. So help people to understand and 'feel' scenery two as far as is possible (model it, let people 'walk it'). Let people ask questions about it and give clear answers.

11 **Know your history**

It may be that the change is in fact a return to something done some years ago. People who tell you that it's always been done this way, often have very short-term memories!

12 **Take it in stages when you can**

Examples include new songs where the tunes can be used before or after a service some weeks ahead of the song being learnt.

13 **Let people say goodbye to the old**

Arrange a rite of passage event, so people can say their farewells to scenery one. Allow for a period of grieving.

14 **Celebrate milestones**

Celebrate what has been achieved at various milestones. Remind people of what has been achieved.

15 **Admit when you get something wrong**


And learn from every mistake.

You will find more about these ideas and others in Training Notes TN12, *Twenty ideas to help people change*, on the website. If you need to stop something in church life, try Training Notes TN34, *Closing down a church activity*.

EXERCISE 7 *Handout 11*

Ask everyone for other practical ideas which they have used successfully in their church.

Questions to ask

The following questions draw together much of what we have covered.  *Handout 9*

The task questions

- 1 Why am I seeking to make this change? Is this crystal clear to all?
- 2 What does 'scenery two' look like? How does this compare with 'scenery one'?
- 3 How is the travel going to work? What is the timetable?
- 4 How am I going to keep people in the picture at each stage? How am I going to listen to their feedback?
- 5 Who is in charge? Who does he or she work with?
- 6 Have we got sufficient resources to carry this through? What might go wrong?
- 7 What happens once the process is complete? Is there a new challenge?

The feelings questions

- 1 Upon whom will the change have the most impact? What is that impact?
- 2 For whom will it have most benefits? What are those benefits?
- 3 For whom will it be most difficult? What are these difficulties?
- 4 What are my personal feelings about the change? How do they affect the way I handle the process?
- 5 What baggage do I and others bring to this change process? If any needs to be left behind, how can I help people (and myself) to do this?
- 6 What can I do to help those for whom change will be most difficult?
- 7 Who is most likely to block or sabotage this change? How can I guard against such action?

Use these lists as a summary but break up your input with questions and comments from everyone.

Here is a case study which you can use at any point in this workshop.

St Constant's *Handout 10*

Robbie arrived as the new Minister of St Constant's and felt that his first priority should be to develop the style of music at the main morning service into something more appropriate for today's culture.

The church had stated on their church profile that they were open to development in worship as the previous Minister had left things unchanged for many years.

Robbie was told that many in the congregation were keen to appoint a worship leader and bring younger people into a music group. The teenagers were moving to more lively churches nearby. The organist had not indicated any strong views so it seemed the door was open for immediate change.

Robbie invited Steph, someone he knew from the local Community Church, to come and lead what he called 'a time of worship' during the first part of the service.

The enthusiasts were thrilled, though even they found it hard to sing some of the new songs that Steph was leading, and no one quite knew who this young girl was in any case. It was rumoured that she had written some of the songs herself and people cringed at some of the language.

By now there was a considerable contrast between this part of the service and the rest.

After a month or so of this, some of the congregation were looking distinctly uncomfortable and starting to stay away, though their places were being taken by people from other churches who had heard what was happening.

The teens were thrilled and were even inviting their friends from school. Then the organist had a stand-up row with Robbie during the service one day and walked out.

It was at this point that 24 members of the church signed a letter to the local newspaper....

You have been asked to advise Robbie on what to do.

The above only provides an outline of the situation. You may make any assumptions about details that you need in order to be able to offer wise advice.

WEBSITE RESOURCES  *Handout 12*

Here is a range of resources on the website all relating to change management in some form. Much of the material in this DIY training aid has come from some of these.

<https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources>

Articles

- A44 Making things happen

Training Notes

- TN3 The bewildering world of change
- TN8 Major decisions: a new approach * *
- TN12 Twenty ideas to help people change * *
- TN34 Closing down a church activity
- TN59 Don't you dare change anything
- TN70 Do's and don'ts for a new leader * *
- TN81 Changing the scenery * *
- TN103 How to encourage creative thinking
- TN121 Making a case for change
- TN152 Should a church set 'targets'?

* * Materials used, or adapted for use, in this workshop

EXERCISES 8 - 10  *Handout 11*

It is important to break up some of the material in this workshop to prevent boredom and change (!) the dynamic. At any point in the workshop you could run exercises such as the following.

First, get people to list how the world has changed in people's lifetimes and then list the points made in Training Notes TN3, *The bewildering world of change*.

A second example would be to take Training Notes TN34, *Closing down a church activity*. You might ask everyone how to go about this task and then compare answers with the training notes.

A third example would be to take Training Notes TN121, *Making a case for change*, after getting groups to come up with principles they might employ when working with a set of church trustees or elders.

This training aid is available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/DIY-Workshops-index> then W7. See also a range of other Articles and Training Notes listed in the text.

John's resources are marked for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication, Administration. File W7 under Planning.

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