
BECOMING A *BUILT TO CHANGE* CONGREGATION

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Abstract

The contemporary challenge for Christian congregations is not just to identify ways to implement change, but to create congregations that are continuously adaptive. The question: Can we help congregations develop a new mental model where strategies of mission that were once core capabilities do not end up becoming core rigidities that make a congregation increasingly irrelevant to an ever-changing, globally aware, digitally connected, and ethnically diverse culture? This essay draws on Lawler and Worley's *Built to Change: How to Achieve Sustained Organizational Effectiveness*, adapting its conception of change principles that keep an organization continuously effective, in order to propose five principles that will exemplify congregations willing to become *Built to Change*.

Pastor Ed Marks was preparing to lead a retreat for the elders of the Center City Church (CCC). The elders were frustrated. They wanted to know, Why isn't our church attracting the new members we expected to get when we added more contemporary music? Pastor Marks had put together a well-researched response, but on the morning of the meeting, he rejected using it. He decided instead to pose a question to his leaders using something he found on the internet—a brief, twenty-seven-word, self-description of a thirty-something, young Christian woman from her blog: “**About Molly:** A follower of question that might help them grasp the real problem:

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Rather than try to explain why the changes they had made were not the answer, Pastor Marks decided to pose a Why would Molly want to be part of our congregation? Really? He knew the answer. She wouldn't. If Molly was looking to be part of a church community, such a community would be remarkably different than Center City Church. Twenty-seven words said it all. But would his leaders grasp why?

This once-vibrant congregation was now a grand downtown edifice with a beautiful sanctuary designed for a former era's more formal style of worship. Their current outreach ministries were designed to care for people whom the congregation never actually engages or sees. Letting organizations use the facility as a way of reaching out made for a positive reputation in the city, but it did not translate into visitors for worship or members of the congregation. Their actual numbers had been shrinking for decades. Not only had this congregation been left behind by the migrations to the suburbs, it never really figured out who their ministries reached. What was abundantly clear was how irrelevant they had become. It wasn't the gospel that was irrelevant. It wasn't the people who were irrelevant. It was this congregation's assumptions about the appropriate designs for organizing ways to be a church that had become irrelevant. They had failed to adapt to the interests of the diverse populations left in the center of the city. And the hard-won recent change they made to add more contemporary aspects to Sunday morning worship was oddly removed in its appeal for those who still attended.

Long ago, the congregation had set in motion principles of operation to provide for stability, to codify their ways of engaging in mission to ensure their ability to make a lasting difference. And great success had resulted—once. The challenge, Pastor Marks had come to see, was that what had once been the congregation's core competencies, competencies that had served them well for much of the twentieth century, had eventually become the congregation's core rigidities. They were built to last,

not built to change. The ability to adapt to change was simply not part of the DNA of their identity. In fact, they were designed to resist such efforts. It was as if those who put the congregational designs in place assumed that each successive generation would find those designs equally compelling, as if they represented the right way for truly spiritual people to accomplish purposes for Christ.

One doesn't have to spend much time on Molly Thornberg's blog to discover that spirituality matters more to her than religion. She is part of a church, but making a difference for others in the name of faith matters more to her than making her congregation prosper. Molly's voice on her blog speaks clearly for a whole generation of younger Christians for whom faith is something they do rather than something they belong to. And when they do choose to belong, they get involved with organizations in which being adaptively missional matters more than being an active member.

Pastor Marks was fairly certain why Center City Church was not going to attract the Mollys of the world. Such churches don't love the things she loves. Center City leaders think that if she were truly spiritual, then she would be a joiner like they are. Joiners are people who implicitly affirm their belief that the organization's current manifestation of practice is the right one. The challenge would be to get the Center City elders to see that they had confused joining in, something the Mollys of the world love to do, with joining up. Molly is not a joiner; she *links* and she *likes*, but she doesn't settle into a pew.

Pastor Mark's elders believe that the Mollys of the world are the ones who need to change. But he knew that if the Center City leadership continued to consider change to be a compromise of their congregation's time-tested identity, then they would not be where the Mollys of the world would want to go to church. The contemporary challenge for Christian congregations like CCC is to learn how to embrace change rather than resist it. The need for them and other congregations like them

is to become continuously adaptive, looking to involve missionally oriented Christians to join in rather than trying to make changes that will attract members who join up. The question facing many congregations today is how to make possible the proclamation of an unchanging gospel while creating congregations in which the means do not become the ends. How can congregations create dynamic delivery systems that embody the missional commitment that is core to a congregation's identity but sensitive to evolving points of contact with the needs of a surrounding culture? How can congregations ensure that what were once their core capabilities do not end up becoming their core rigidities, thereby making the congregation increasingly irrelevant to an ever-changing, globally aware, digitally connected, and ethnically diverse culture about them?

In response to these questions, I turn to Edward Lawler and Christopher Worley's book, *Built to Change: How to Achieve Sustained Organizational Effectiveness*, to derive principles that can help congregations discover how to make *change* rather than *stability* core to their identity.¹ *Built to Change* was written to help business organizations reframe their conceptions of effectiveness and to identify change principles that keep an organization continuously effective in achieving its missional purposes. Congregations need similar help in understanding how to reframe their existing mental models of organizing in order to imagine how they can become more missionally effective.

In what follows, I summarize how the authors of *Built to Change* believe they are advancing an argument that was first articulated in *Built to Last* by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras.² With this overview in hand, I then adapt Lawler

¹ Edward Lawler and Christopher Worley, *Built to Change: How to Achieve Sustained Organizational Effectiveness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

² Jim Collins and Jerry Porras, *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1994); See also Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001) and Jim Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: A*

and Worley's thesis by identifying five Built to Change (B2C) principles that exemplify *Built to Change* congregations for the twenty-first century.

Challenging the Stability Metaphor

Ed Lawler and Chris Worley argue that their book, *Built to Change: How to Achieve Sustained Organizational Effectiveness*, is the sequel to Collins and Porras's earlier volume, *Built to Last*. The focus for Lawler and Worley is on identifying practices of organizational effectiveness for the twenty-first century rather than identifying *Built to Last*'s principles of survival derived from enduring organizations. They agree with Collins and Porras about remaining true to one's basic circles of DNA—the core values of the organization and about how to think of organizational structures as dynamic and open to change. Lawler and Worley write that their book's title plays off the mistaken notion that *Built to Last* was about organizing for stability. Collins and Porras clearly suggest that the study was not about stability but about principles of survival over long periods, resulting in truly iconic companies. Collins suggests, in his Preface to the 2004 edition, that *Built to Last* is the sequel to his 2001 book *Good to Great*. We see *Built to Change* as the sequel to *Built to Last*. It represents what organizations need to do once they have developed the foundation for survival and want to increase their effectiveness over time.³

In 2004, Collins wrote that people have misunderstood the *Built to Last* title to argue that great companies tend to fix processes and become static. "Nothing could be further from the truth," he wrote, "*to be built to last you must be built to change.*"⁴ Lawler and Worley agree with that assessment and develop their

Monograph to Accompany Good to Great (Boulder, Colo.: Jim Collins, Publishing, 2005).

³ Lawler and Worley, xvii.

⁴ Jim Collins, "Preface," *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*. 10th Anniversary edition (New York: HarperBusiness, 2004), xiii.

analysis in *Built to Change* to describe what organizations that capitalize on this model of change would look like.

For Lawler and Worley, the problem with existing models of business excellence is that they do not help organizations get better at executing change because “existing theory and practice in organization design explicitly encourages organizations to seek alignment, stability, and equilibrium. Little mention is made of creating changeable organizations”⁵ They argue that “excellence is about change,” something that hardly any organizational theorist would have said when *Built to Last* was written. *Built to Change*, on the other hand, seeks to provide “a useful and internally consistent vision of how organizations should be designed so that they can be successful *and* change.”⁶ The authors maintain that, “Change, not stability, must become the coin of the realm.”⁷ This claim leads them to further claim: “The central thesis of this book, then, is to challenge the ‘stability equals effectiveness’ assumption and propose a model of organization in which change is expected and normal.”⁸

One of the most succinct summaries of their proposal can be found in Lawler and Worley’s MIT article published the same year the book was released. In this essay, they maintain that an assumption of continuous change rather than an assumption of steady-state durability is what must characterize organizations that will thrive in the twenty-first century.

Such a model requires the right approach to strategy. Instead of seeking a single sustainable advantage, built-to-change companies must continually pursue a series of short-term competitive advantages. Moreover, to create value over time, they must constantly ask themselves the right questions. Instead of “What do we do well?” they must ask “What do we need to learn?”; “How do our

⁵ Lawler and Worley, 2–3.

⁶ Lawler and Worley, xiii–xiv.

⁷ Lawler and Worley, 19.

⁸ Lawler and Worley, 20.

current capabilities need to evolve?"; and "What new capabilities do we need to develop?" In answering those questions, built-to-change companies must constantly balance resource allocations for present performance against investments that will create future fitness. These trade-offs will be made through make-or-buy decisions to add, modify, or eliminate certain capabilities. And the execution of those decisions will be greatly aided—or hampered—by a company's organizational design. Simply put, corporations with the right structure, employees, rewards, leaders, and information systems will be equipped to implement the necessary changes while those that lack them will tend to stumble.⁹

What kind of trade-offs do these authors have in mind? A practical example might provide clarity. When leading workshops, they often ask executives whether their organizations have job descriptions. The hands all go up. Then they ask, "How many of those job descriptions are up to date?" Very few hands go up. Most people just work around job descriptions to try to get things done. Not only is it costly to spend so much time on nailing down the present, the present never seems to remain stable. Job descriptions, they argue, are an obstacle to change. "They become hard-wired in an organization and calcified, rendering change difficult.... B2Change organizations simply abandon the fiction that fixed jobs and fixed job descriptions are a good thing...[believing instead] that every job has an expiration date."¹⁰

This B2Change model they propose assumes trade-offs like doing away with fixed job descriptions as the necessary reality of embracing change. This orientation to change represents a radical alternative to the Lewin's 1947 change phase model: Phase 1 involved *unfreezing* the current practices tied to the missional identity; Phase 2 involved the *movement* of implementing a set of reframed

⁹ Christopher Worley and Edward Lawler III, "Designing Organizations That Are Built to Change," *MIT Sloan Management Review* 48(1) (2006): 21.

¹⁰ Lawler and Worley, 93.

practices supporting that identity; and Phase 3 involved *refreezing* the new cultural *givens*, which means re-stabilizing the new infrastructure of the identity. One of Lawler and Worley's distinctive proposals is how it radically reconceives this model. Instead of treating Phase 1 as a task of trying to get the organization to be temporarily forward thinking and treating Phase 2 like running through the thistles to adapt to future needs, the B2Change model challenges the notions of *unfreezing* and *refreezing* as artifacts of a stability-thinking mental model. Instead of treating change as if it is the problem that must be suffered through, change is embraced as the medium of being effective in adapting to an environment that reflects exponential change.

Lawler and Worley argue that five re-orienting steps are necessary for creation of a B2Change organization. These are: (1) creating a change-friendly identity and organizational culture, (2) pursuing external proximities that avoid the "locked-in" practices that foster stability as the goal, (3) designing internal orchestral capabilities that consider future needs, (4) adopting strategic adjustment that assumes discontinuous-revolutionary change as the normal condition (as opposed to continuous-evolutionary change), and (5) seeking "virtuous spirals" of missional interconnectivity in which structural adaptability maximizes dynamic alignment with possible futures. Their final claim is, "What we do know is that the best way for an organization to prepare for whatever is next is to confront and abandon the assumption of stability and to embrace the principles that create B2Change organizations."¹¹

When organizations are built to be stable, it is difficult to affect change in them. Large-scale change processes implemented from above, without having already created a culture open to change, are notoriously ineffective because organizations are designed to resist change. The prevailing organizational change process assumption has been, "Unless we *refreeze* the organization,

¹¹ Lawler and Worley, 311.

how will people know what is expected of them?” But well-positioned start-ups often can capture innovation in an industry because they do not have to unlearn or disentangle old ways in order to implement innovation.

This problem of unlearning a prior generation’s organizational adaptations to meet the needs of a new generation raises a challenging question for well-established congregations: Is there any hope for the Center City Churches whose ministry and worship designs were built to last? Those involved with trying to help established congregations make significant systems changes know this challenge well. Too often a start-up congregation down the street with enough critical mass of folk to get it going can simply bypass existing churches in growth as well as in spiritual vitality. For this reason, I turn to the question of whether this radical re-conception of how to think about organizing and organizational change can have any relevance for existing congregations. Is it only the fresh congregational start-up that has the chance to thrive in this new environment? What are the most salient features for the *Built to Change* model that are relevant for existing congregational leaders who have decided that they must learn to embrace change?

The *Built to Change* Missional Challenge for Congregations

The elements of Lawler and Worley’s model were clearly developed to apply to the for-profit context rather than for organizations like congregations. The pathway to missional vitality is not to become more like a business; congregations have no interest in producing financial profit for shareholders. In his day, Jesus may have been able to draw useful implications from agronomy metaphors, but most theologians would suggest caution in turning to business literature for religious insight. Jim Collins was aware of this problem when he wrote *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*. The insights of this little booklet are equally useful in adapting Lawler and Worley’s business model. I will return to the question of deriving insight for the church from this kind of

literature below. At this point, it is enough to note that Collins shifts the “business driver” for organizations like congregations from a profit motive to the missional motive.¹²

The question I have posed here is whether Lawler and Worley’s work can help congregations reframe missional clarity for exploring twenty-first century ways of being the church. I have identified five B2Change challenges to the existing mental model of how congregations can think organizationally if the goal is to become a missionally oriented congregation:

1. Concern for *effectiveness* needs to be vindicated.
2. Organizational *strategy* needs to be re-assessed.
3. *Missional identity* needs to be forefronted
4. *Intentionality* needs to be vision-focused.
5. *Leadership* needs to be reconceived.

I discuss each of these briefly in what follows, suggesting a trajectory of application for congregations that want to become more intentionally missional.

Concern for Effectiveness Needs to Be Vindicated

Early in *Built to Change*, Lawler and Worley provide a model of the dynamic relationships; this model is integral to how they are reframing what counts as identity. They write, “The Built-to-Change Model shows the key elements that influence organizational effectiveness in motion. *Strategizing*, *creating value*, and *designing* are each viewed as *dynamic processes* changing in response to or in anticipation of environmental change.”¹³ They depict this kind of organization as an atom, with *identity* as the dynamic nucleus (of neutrons and protons); with the *strategizing*, *creating value*, and *designing* processes as ever-moving electrons; and with projected “environmental scenarios” representing constantly changing external forces that provide pressure and opportunity for the system. It depicts a dynamic rather than a static model grounded in the abilities to: (1) forecast possible

¹² Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, 1

¹³ Lawler and Worley, 28.

externally relevant future scenarios of fulfilling mission (external scenarios), (2) free up the drivers of the organizational resource engine processes—strategizing, designing, and creating value, and (3) let identity (the tensional neutrons and protons), rather than the “electron” processes, be that which remains stable. The center is paired down to the DNA of core values, behaviors, and beliefs of the organization.¹⁴

Unfortunately, congregations typically collapse these dynamic structuring processes into their identity, which is why they have such difficulty telling the difference between their missional purpose and the ministry structures they have put in place to accomplish it. If a congregation is to become missionally effective, it must find ways to permit the core competencies and capabilities of people who wish to join in with them to be released (thereby creating value). For example, they need to find ways to get typical church constitutions reduced to two or three pages, moving structural design and strategizing ministry initiatives into dynamic policy initiatives which, like electrons, can be permitted to adapt to external pressures by elected or chosen leaders without having constantly to amend the organization’s constitution.¹⁵ The ability to strategize new ministry ventures is almost impossible in many small and mid-size congregations because the process must overcome the hurdles that were set up with a built-to-last mentality.

Congregations often argue that it is their task to be faithful rather than effective. This conviction translates into organizational practices that serve stability rather than achieving missional purposes. For example, congregations often have difficulty holding people accountable because they are volunteers. But other

¹⁴ Lawler and Worley, 27.

¹⁵ Congregations need to identify a mission statement that identifies what are they are deeply passionate about and what they can do best (Collin’s Circles 1 & 2 from *Good to Great*) as a function of their core values (the congregations’ DNA) linked to missional identity (Collin’s adjusted circle 3 from *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*). This concept will be discussed below in the third B2Change challenge for congregations.

nonprofits that seek to meet people at their point of need have long since realized that holding volunteers accountable is absolutely necessary if that organization wants to remain viable in serving others. Congregations need to acknowledge this concern as well. Too often, in the name of being *nice* (and keeping peace), congregations permit good people to overstay their volunteer ministry roles without counting the cost in loss of effectiveness. If someone raises the question of effectiveness, he or she may well be chided for putting effectiveness before faithfulness to people.

Rather than fuss over the question of whether effectiveness is a theologically legitimate means to assess faithfulness and commitment, congregations need to ask whether they have collapsed their core structures and their existing ministries into their missional identity and, thereby, made it virtually impossible to change in ways that can make *being effective* possible. The fact that effectiveness should never be the *primary* criteria of determining the value of a continuing ministry does not mean that effectiveness need not matter. It matters. Faithfulness and effectiveness should never be posed as opposite poles on a continuum. The challenge for congregations is to be faithful to the missional purpose. Being faithful is more than being nice, being kind, and keeping the peace. And being effective is more than simply becoming more attractive to potential converts.¹⁶

¹⁶ At this writing, the blogosphere is filled with what is labeled the missional vs. the attractional church debate as if one must choose whether congregational purpose should be grounded in serving a missional identity or an evangelistic identity oriented to attracting new members. On the meaning of being missional, see Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998); Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000); Guder, "Worthy Living: Work and Witness from the Perspective of Missional Church Theology," *Word and World* 25(4) (Fall 2005): 424–32; Guder, "Leadership in New Congregations: New Church Development from the Perspective of Missional Theology," in H. Stanley Wood, ed., *Extraordinary Leaders in Extraordinary Times: Unadorned Clay Pot Messengers* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 1–29; Guder, "Walking Worthily: Missional Leadership after

Effectiveness involves remaining true to an organization's DNA of core values, behaviors, and beliefs while also strategizing ways to translate this and make it relevant to others. Concern for *effectiveness* needs to be vindicated.

Organizational Strategy Needs to Be Assessed

In missionally oriented organizations, strategizing is a process used to decide which products, services, and markets to focus on and how to compete. This process results in identifying a strategic intent that guides choices about how the organization creates value and designs itself.¹⁷ *Critical configuration* for a missionally oriented organization is achieved when its *strategic intent* becomes the dominant *interface* between its external environment and its internal identity. The leadership of the organization needs to find ways to put this vision of direction clearly and constantly before its people as a whole, inviting those who have passion, capacity, and capabilities to step up to help implement the next missional endeavor even as it continues to support its current missional efforts.

A great deal of energy can be devoted to arguing that the church is not the same as business and that theology cannot be based on business administration principles. The problem with this pseudo-discussion is that it confuses the organizational structures that function as ways of being the church with the theological purpose of the church. The latter is timeless, but the former is deeply rooted in time and is invariably a human response to a

Christendom," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* xxviii(3) (new series, 2007): 250-275. Other authors, too numerous to cite, have taken up this vision of the missional church in their effort to revitalize mainline congregational identity. The attractional model is primarily grounded in church growth principles and the effectiveness of mega-church congregations like Willow Creek in attracting people from the culture to come to church. On the latter point, see Ruth Vander Hart, "The Seeker Service: A New Strategy for Evangelism," *Reformed Worship: Resources for Planning and Leading Worship*, March 1992, <http://www.reformedworship.org/article/march-1992/seeker-service-new-strategy-evangelism>.

¹⁷ Lawler and Worley, 35.

divine mandate. For this reason, the church regularly has to ask whether it has sanctified human structures and treated them as if they are divinely ordained when they are simply humanly conceived organizing structures that were relevant at their point of inception, but need to be constantly assessed and permitted to evolve if they are to continue to permit productivity for the missional purpose. All organizations have a strong tendency to confuse wonderful means that were once developed to respond to a very real external need into an entrenched end, collapsing what was a dynamic core capability into what becomes a core rigidity. What were once core capabilities, if left unexamined over time, invariably become core rigidities.¹⁸

Unlike businesses that generally have Research and Development Departments and are continually testing to discover whether their products and services meet market demand, most congregations are simply reactive in these matters. Most new endeavors come with too much pain because the B2Last stability model controls what is funded and where passions and capabilities are to be directed. Those who have a passion and the capability to help realize the future are often marginalized when those who resist change begin circling the wagons to protect the past. For example, it is a rare congregation indeed that actually budgets monies directed toward funding projected external scenarios that can leverage the positive aspects of the congregation's core identity and support creative value for emerging possibilities.¹⁹ Budget monies by default are almost always directed toward maintaining existing programs, many of which, truth be told, have diminishing viability for fulfilling missional purposes. Unfortunately, in religious communities, to question the

¹⁸ See Dorothy Leonard-Barton, *Wellsprings of Knowledge: Building and Sustaining the Sources of Innovation* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1998).

¹⁹ On zero-based vs. line-item budgets, and the increasing value of a ministry-action budget for congregations, see Robert H. Welch, *Church Administration: Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry* (Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Academic, 2011), 168–69.

existing ministry line item is often tantamount to questioning “the faith” and the congregation’s core identity.

Missionally oriented congregations will find ways to set aside significant budget monies to resource the task of strategizing and then (typically in a zero-budget or ministry-action budget fashion) fund those ministries in which people with core competencies in these areas are willing to invest time, energy, and effort to realize new ministry efforts. These efforts need direction and helpful guidance from leaders, but power is moved from stable expectations to vision-bearing ones that draw people to support them and find constituencies that are responsibly served by them. The function of existing organizational *strategies* in congregations needs to be dramatically reassessed.

Missional Identity Needs to Be Forefronted

For this kind of change to occur, missional identity must become more important than other ways of construing identity (e.g., community service, denominational, fraternal, tribal, etc.). Missional identity must be considered separately from the dynamic processes that constitute what a congregation may be doing and the processes that constrain this action. Change that remains true to the missional identity regularly needs to be illustratively forefronted if the congregation is to be asked to remember why letting go of existing ministries with diminishing returns is needed as a way to address changes in the external environment. Change will never matter in the long run though, until the congregation can separate its identity from its governing and functioning processes. Missional identity represents the congregation’s fixed DNA. But the way a congregation works that identity out in ministry ventures is best determined by:

- What a congregation can contribute to the people it touches, better than any other organization—often including other surrounding congregations

- What passions and practices fuel the resource engines that create value, motivating people to want to be involved in meeting the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, social, and physical needs of others

If this way of working out identity does not occur, then strategic intent eventually collapses into the work of the few who are in charge rather than becoming something embraced as the mission of the whole. If missional identity is to remain vibrant, the primary identity of a congregation should not be that of creating worship events or particular programs. These events and programs need to be vibrant, but they should serve as the primary means of involving people in missional identity endeavors. Well-considered and well-reviewed changes (reconfigurations of existing strategy) can occur only in environments where the leadership has made it possible for people with needed capacities and capabilities to spread their wings without fear of being undercut by defenders of the established systems who themselves fear the loss of power that comes with turf turnover. Old processes (strategies of ministry) may need to be surrendered, but the identity of the congregation is never rejected. Capabilities and capacities developed to serve older processes will often still be needed, but the organization must put clear controls in place to ensure that drawing on these resources does not become a foothold for matriarchs/patriarchs who cannot help themselves from working to collapse these processes back into the organization's core identity—thereby confusing strategies with core identity once again.

One of the more startling ideas in *Built to Change* is that organizations need to rethink how people are selected to implement new initiatives. In the B2C model, the idea that someone has earned the right to lead because of his or her loyalty or longevity is gone: “The data clearly show that individuals are expected to manage their own careers. They also show that continued employment depends on performance and skills rather

than on loyalty and seniority.”²⁰ Missionally oriented organizations either find or develop the leaders they need to implement new initiatives. The former are referred to as *travel lights*—highly skilled knowledge workers who are contracted for a specified period of time to provide professional or technical services to help the organization achieve its missional purpose. Travel lights need a stable core of existing organizational leaders to guide their projects or initiatives. These leaders must be committed to developing the competencies and skills travel lights need or there will be “no there, there” in the changing organization. But travel lights will often serve a congregation for a stated/stipulated period of time rather than join the church as members.

When congregations become intentional about accomplishing missional purposes, they have to become proactive about finding people to help them achieve these purposes and then help those individuals develop the spiritual practices that keep ministries committed to the core identity. Large congregations are well aware that they need to engage in this kind of resourcing. The tension in smaller or medium-size congregations will arise over the issue of whether these travel lights must become members first.²¹ Where larger congregations typically have acceded to making adaptations like these, many mid-size and most small congregations still struggle with such adaptive concerns. At issue, more than size, is the spiritual orientation of the congregations and the assumptions that distinguish traditional dwelling-oriented and contemporary seeking-oriented congregations.

This distinction in the spiritual orientation characterizing congregations arises from the research reported in *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* by Robert Wuthnow. He describes the sociological

²⁰ Lawler and Worley, 167.

²¹ Amy Frykholm raises this timely question in “Loose Connections: What’s Happening to Church Membership?”, *Christian Century*, May 16, 2011 <http://www.christiancentury.org/article/2011-05/loose-connections> (accessed June 2012).

shifts in American conceptions of spirituality that clarify what is at stake in change process for many congregations. He argues that for much of the twentieth century, religious practice was typified by a *dwelling-oriented spirituality*, a perspective that was challenged after 1950 with a *seeking-oriented spirituality*. Dwelling-oriented Christians, he argues, derive their sense of spiritual identity from a religious experience that provides cohesion and makes them feel secure in the familiarity of their ecclesial identity and a sense of sacred space where they worship. Seeking-oriented spirituality, on the other hand, negotiates its identity through the promise of transformation, finding its identity in the search for sacred moments and individual sacred experience.²² These identities represent quite different ways of understanding how spirituality is expressed and what is central to being a person of faith. The former is more communal and the latter is clearly more individualistic, but both orientations significantly affect how parishioners experience the challenge of change.

Wuthnow concludes his 1998 study by identifying a third, then-emerging orientation of *practice-oriented spirituality*. It is primarily characterized by its quest to deepen a relationship with the sacred and communal traditions while also valuing the desire for individual transformation. With regard to the latter, he states, “Broadly conceived spiritual practice is a cluster of intentional activities concerned with relating to the sacred.... [through practices that] includes such activities as prayer, meditation, contemplation, and acts of service.”²³ What characterizes the essence of the practices of this newer spirituality is its interest in spiritual practices embedded in ordinary life. And it is this latter sensibility of congregations looking to a practice-oriented

²² Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1998), 3–4.

²³ Wuthnow, 170.

spirituality rather than the appeal of either the dwelling-oriented spirituality or the seeking-oriented spirituality that, for Wuthnow, portends the possibility of renewal for intentional corporate faith.

Let me apply these insights from the sociology of religion to the charge that congregations that embrace the B2Change model must learn to forefront identity. These missionally oriented congregations come to understand that retention of knowledge workers (what the B2C model often describes as *travel-lights*) is best achieved by helping them to remain current in their core competencies and by providing them with ministry opportunities that allow them to be more self-directed (autonomy), to get better at what they do (mastery), and to contribute to something transcendent (purpose).²⁴ If not, they will leave and join other congregations where these motivations will be valued. This choice to actively seek out people to help the organization achieve its missional purpose represents a radical departure from the existing congregational model in many dwelling-oriented congregations that have simply hoped the right people will come through the door. That model worked when a dwelling-oriented spiritual was supported by the dominant culture that regularly invited such people to church. In a post-Christendom context, however, practice-oriented congregations must pro-actively recruit and develop the people who will help them maintain a vibrant ministry of involvement in the lives of others. This is why missional identity needs to be forefronted.

Intentionality Needs to Be Vision Focused

When acting together as a people of faith, a congregation can make a tremendous difference in their community and beyond if they are implementing a vision

²⁴ I am drawing here on the Daniel Pink's TED talk on the three basic human motivators, "The Puzzle of Motivation," http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation.html (accessed January 3, 2014).

of intentional practices. Yet helping that community move into realizing a vision's claim on their corporate practices and faith identity often means they must surrender the comfort of a traditional identity in favor of a missional identity. As dwelling-oriented conceptions of spiritual identity continue to give way to either seeking-oriented spirituality or practice-oriented spirituality, the leadership of congregations will need to:

- Find the positive aspects of a current identity and leverage these to help implement the changes and overcome resistance.
- Ensure widespread participation and involvement in developing the strategic intent as a means to encourage the passions needed to facilitate creating value.
- Comprehend the difference between the missional identity and the congregation's ministry processes in order to reinforce the true power of the missional calling.
- Develop a robust strategic intent likely to bring the organization in proximity with where ministry is going rather than where ministry has been.
- Make changes in strategic intent in anticipation of where the congregation desires to be rather than in support of where it has been.
- Use environmental scenarios of possible ways of extending missional capability as important inputs to any discussion of evaluating the effectiveness of continuing strategically intentional ministry practices.

These functional choices may, at first, seem to have little relationship to spiritual orientations. But as Wuthnow makes quite clear, practices of spirituality arise out of social and cultural orientations of how faith is normally enacted in religious communities.²⁵ And to this end, a B2Change intentionality in ministry tends to encourage a practice-oriented approach to expressions of spirituality because its focus is more on the vision of

²⁵ Wuthnow, 170–74.

what can yet be than what currently is or has been. Adopting orientations of strategic intent like those listed here can become a functional means to help people realize faithful practices in their life together in a congregation.

A list like this also clarifies ways in which a missional congregation can focus on how to foster practices that meet people's needs rather than remain focused on fostering ministries intended to reinforce a fixed identity. Congregations would do well to ask how they have intentionally directed ministry activities in recent years. If the majority of the faith metaphors for people in a congregation resonate with variations on dwelling-centered cognates for *tradition, home, place, security,* and *dwelling*, a list of vision-focused intentions of this kind will seem unsettling. And it is equally likely that it won't appeal to people whose seeking-oriented spirituality is "characterized more often by dabbling than depth."²⁶ Those most likely to find this kind of vision appealing are people who desire to nourish a practice-oriented spirituality.

Bricolage, a French term for constructing things by "incorporating whatever elements are *immediately at hand*," is the term Wuthnow now uses to describe this practice-centered spirituality.²⁷ Like their predecessors, practitioners of *bricolage* spirituality still share many of the commitments of the seeking-oriented spirituality generation. But there seems to be an even greater desire among the *bricolage* generation to care about causes or movements. As a result, they are often more likely to join in and less likely to find meaning by becoming joiners. Where the baby-boomers were characterized by a continued disquiet about their lives, itinerantly joining one thing after another but never quite being satisfied with their search for personal meaning, the *bricolage*

²⁶ Wuthnow, 168.

²⁷ Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 15.

generation appears to be more at ease with practicing faith more as pastiche. This generation lives more comfortably with the tension of faith's unresolved questions, making sense of them by incorporating whatever elements of spiritual practices are *immediately at hand*.

Missionally oriented congregations place their focus on helping individuals develop spiritual capacities that are sensitive to changing needs in the external culture. This is why an orientation toward a *bricolage spirituality* may be more adaptive to being vision-focused than dwelling-centered or seeking-centered spiritualities. Vision-focused congregations are more willing to be intentional in their efforts to help congregants develop spiritual practices that enhance the quality of the person's faith life and also enhance openness to meet other people's spiritual needs. Intentionality needs to be vision focused.

Leadership Needs to Be Reconceived

This process of disestablishing a former identity and embedding a new one will increasingly require that pastors understand how to lead change. Much of a pastor's day-to-day ministry in a parish is administrative and managerial. But when a congregation chooses to move beyond its established identity to take up a missional identity, the pastor must be able to lead this change. As many congregations face the process of *detraditionalization*, perhaps including loss of denominational identity as the primary locus of legitimating authority, pastors will increasingly be required to become leaders who can move beyond the Christendom role of managing ministries in order to take up a post-Christendom role of facilitating the process of helping a congregation discover an intentional, missional identity.²⁸ Pastors become leaders by becoming the vision bearer of the way forward.

²⁸ Jackson Carroll argues that, "Detraditionalization is a process that involves a shift of authority from something that is 'out there' and external to us—for example, an inherited way of life, an inerrant scripture, an infallible teaching

The confusion between leadership and management is a major topic in leadership studies. Managers necessarily operate with a *maintenance* orientation that keeps their focus on structures, systems, efficiency, and other operational elements. Leaders operate with a *journey* orientation that keeps its focus on mission, vision, and strategies necessary to realize organizational effectiveness. In *Changing Minds*, Howard Gardner writes that, “Leaders almost by definition are people who change minds—be they leaders of a nation, a corporation, or a nonprofit institution.”²⁹ It is this process of leading change that defines when a person is functioning as a leader as opposed to doing only the very necessary work of managing. Clergy who are primarily vested with responsibilities of overseeing existing ministries and ensuring they continue to work well are not leaders. They are administrative managers. They may be good, caring, and effective managers, but they are managers rather than leaders. Being an effective manager is a necessary and noble activity. It should not, however, be confused or conflated with leadership.

When congregations look to clergy or other appointed elders to provide leadership, they need to acknowledge that they are asking these leaders to take them on a journey. The essence of every journey is change. Leadership becomes most apparent in any change process because as resistance inevitably arises in times of change, the ability of a leader to influence organization members

office, one of the historic confessions, or the Enlightenment’s tradition of the primacy of science and progress—to authority that resides ‘in here,’ in the self, in the authority of our own knowledge and experience as individuals. No longer do we rely without question on traditional formulae for doing things or on the power of long-established institutions and their representatives to give us direction for living” (15–16). Jackson W. Carroll, *Mainline to the Future: Congregations for the 21st Century* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 15.

²⁹ Howard Gardner, *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People’s Minds* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2006), 1–2.

becomes apparent.³⁰ Definitions of leadership abound, but the best ones tend to focus on the relationship between the individual's ability to influence/facilitate change. W. Warner Burke argues that leadership "is the act of making something happen that would otherwise not occur."³¹ Notice that change process is at the heart of this definition. It is during a change process that we are able to see how leaders get persons who otherwise resist doing something, to do it. This is why James MacGregor Burns, originator of the transformational leader concept, argued that leaders induce "followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers."³² These definitions privilege the idea that leadership is about helping people make a journey to a new place, to new ways of knowing and understanding not just what is happening but who they can now be in this new culture.

Hence, our understanding of leadership in the life of a congregation needs to envision the role of the leader as one who facilitates direction, alignment, and commitment as something that arises from shared sense-making efforts.³³ What makes this role orientation actually leadership rather than just good management is that these tasks are engaged with a view to make something productive happen that would otherwise not occur. To that end, missionally oriented leaders, collectively, must maintain a constant focus on the questions of change, of alignment, and of shared sense-making. Missionally oriented leaders ask:

³⁰ See Robert Stephen Reid, "Responding to Resistance During a Change Process," *Transitions: Leading Churches through Change*, ed. David N. Mosser (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 173–88.

³¹ W. Warner Burke, *Organization Change: Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage, 2011), 250.

³² James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1978), 19.

³³ See Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2006), 63–116.

- What do we do well?
- What do we need to learn?
- Whose contributions do we need to listen to in order to understand what will be needed from us?
- What's next?
- What changes and alignments will we need to have in place to be able to fulfill our mission in response to these new demands?³⁴

In this sense, missionally oriented leaders always assume that change is occurring in the external world and that their leadership (as opposed to their necessary managerial functions), will be defined by the quality of their capacity to help a congregation on the journey of continually realizing its missional identity. For this reason, such leaders adopt an orientation to continual change as the defining quality of their leadership. Leadership needs to be reconceived.

Can Churches Change?

This is the profound question at issue for many congregations. It is the subject of lots of literature addressing issues of congregational life at the present moment. But when one reads *Built to Change*, the model is so different that it makes one wonder whether any business organizations have really made this seismic shift and become missionally oriented organizations. The answer is yes, but this reorientation involves a developmental process of getting there.³⁵ *Built to Change* offers examples of organizations that have already adopted elements of its model throughout. It provides no example of an organization that is *the* ideal B2Change

³⁴ These questions are adapted from Worley and Lawler, "Designing Organizations."

³⁵ See Macy, et al., for a report of one organization's effort to implement aspects of this kind of realignment; Barry A. Macy, Gerard F. Farias, Jean-Francois Rosa, and Curt Moore, "Built to Change: High-Performance Work Systems and Self-Directed Work Teams—A Longitudinal Quasi-Experimental Field Study," *Research in Organizational Change and Development* 16 (2007): 337–416.

business. In a very real sense, this model is more about developing a new mental frame about how to respond to change than providing a blueprint for the institution or process to get there.

Congregations that make the decision to take the question of effectiveness seriously, that are willing to ask the tough questions about the role of organizational strategy in their ministries, that are willing to make missional identity the touchstone of their identity and intentionality the driver of looking toward the future, are ready for a pastor who can actually lead rather than merely manage—those congregations can learn to live with change. They will also look to create fluid structures that permit effectiveness, have leaders who model the way, have rewards that are appropriate to ministry as mission, and provide information systems that permit them to manage what knowledge they have.

Can congregations change? We know congregations can change because there are success stories out there.³⁶ But as others try to emulate this success, too often they miss the fact that these transformations typically have more to do with embracing and reframing the mental models of and the attitude toward change by those congregational leaders and parishioners. In addition, it should come as no surprise that the congregations that were able to separate their missional identity from their commitment to existing strategies of ministries will find it easier to adapt. The shift is often more difficult for people committed to a dwelling-oriented spirituality than for those committed to a seeking-oriented spirituality. But both groups, in quite different ways, will need to embrace commitments that will transform much of how they previously thought about the relationship between

³⁶ Functionally, many of the congregations that Diana Butler-Bass has recently described have implemented changes that correlate with many of the proposals here; Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church Is Transforming the Faith* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2007); Bass, *The Practicing Congregation: Imagining a New Old Church* (Herndon, Va.: Alban Institute, 2004).

being faithful and being open to what can yet happen in the life of a congregation.

Does a congregation have to be large to begin to make this turn? No. The argument presented here is more a question of the mental model of organizing that controls how a congregation differentiates its core identity from its missional practices, not a question of size. Some congregations have often intuited much of this model, which is why they have seen new vitality. The model presented here provides congregations that want to move toward a practice-oriented approach to missional ministry and identity with the conceptual tools to make *the necessary turn* regardless of their size.

Hope for Center City

To return to our opening question, “Why would Molly want to be part of Center City Church?”, we know why Pastor Marks chose her as his example. She evidences, in twenty-seven simple words, the quintessential elements of a *bricolage* Christian faith identity. As long as Center City Church continues to grudgingly think of change as a thing that has to be implemented, only when they finally have to, she will not be interested in their congregation. As long as Center City Church treats change as something it does in order to try to save itself from extinction, it will remain an enterprise in decline, capitulating either to irrelevance or death.³⁷

Pastor Marks has to challenge the cultural lock-in orientation of his elected leaders and help them to grasp that if they are to remain relevant, they must change their organizational orientation to embrace the value of change itself.³⁸ It is not a question of whether they have the right

³⁷ I am drawing here on the five stages of an “enterprise in decline” as described by Jim Collins in *How the Mighty Fall: And Why Some Companies Never Give In* (Boulder, Colo.: Jim Collins Publishing, 2009).

³⁸ The phrase *cultural lock-in* comes from Foster and Kaplan as a descriptor of the problem organizations face in dealing with changing intransigent system processes, which keep an organization from coming to terms with the challenge of recognizing that they must adopt to *constant* change in order to

music or have implemented the latest fad of what attracts people to worship. What is needed is a revolution in understanding how to be the church in mission. It will involve great risk for him. He might even have to step down as pastor of this congregation—step down if his desire is truly to lead while their desire, frankly, is to remain focused on keeping dwelling-oriented members content.

So, as Pastor Marks enters that meeting, he must first step up to the task of helping these elders come to terms with what it means for them to be leaders rather than just managers of the ministries of their congregation. His second task is to become a vision-bearing pastor and recruit as many of them as possible to a vision of a practice-oriented missional ministry. What excites him is the possibility that they may decide that being genuinely missional matters. Imagine that. Really. Imagine that.

continue to be relevant; Richard. N. Foster and Sarah Kaplan, *Creative Destruction: Why Companies that Are Built to Last Underperform in the Market—and How to Successfully Transform Them* (New York: Currency/Doubleday, 2001).

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