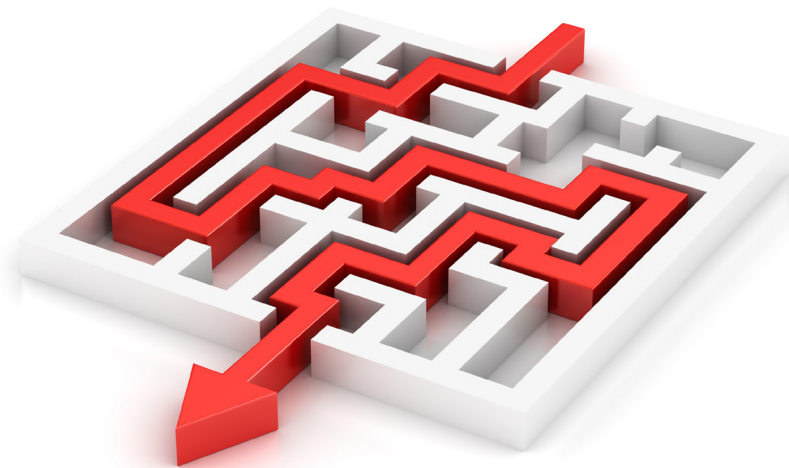


Navigating to New Places



**A resource for Kirk Sessions
on leading change well**

Why a resource on ‘leading change’?

Change is part of life. In fact it is a biblical requirement that we are transformed both individually – to reflect more of Christ – and as his church to fulfil his mission and reflect his glory. Bringing about change in the local congregation requires leadership to discern what should happen, when it should happen and how it should happen. This requires a particular set of leadership skills in order for the road to change to be as smooth as possible. This is often difficult because it is a mark of our fallen human nature to prefer things to stay as they are even if the change will ultimately be beneficial. **This resource aims to provide a set of tools to help the leadership team of the congregation, the Kirk Session, to navigate and lead the way to successful change for the building up of the church.**

How to use this resource

Leading change is a complex task and the length of this resource reflects this. It is recommended that the Teaching Elder is familiar with the entire resource. There is a shorter ‘quick start’ version covering the essentials of this longer resource along with the suggested discussion questions. The ‘quick start’ guide is more useful for Kirk Sessions because it is an easier document to refer to during discussions and it is recognised that not all Ruling Elders will wish to read this lengthier resource (although it is available for all who want to read it). Both the ‘quick start’ guide and the full resource can be used either to help a Kirk Session think through a specific major change or to equip them to lead changes whether they are minor adjustments or large scale initiatives (for equipping it’s best to use an example and work it through). The resource works in the following ways:

Chapter One: Mapping the Territory: Considering Change (page 3)

Start here to work out what sort of change is being considered. This will help you decide what the best approach might be to the change you are considering and whether it is viable.

Chapter Two: Preparing for Obstacles: Handling Potential and Actual Conflict (page 9)

Conflict is nearly inevitable because people often have strong emotional attachments to what is being changed. This chapter prepares the way to deal with conflict in an appropriate and helpful way to enable people to accept the change rather than leave or remain disgruntled.

Chapter Three: Making the Journey: Implementing Change (page 13)

Change doesn’t happen just because the Kirk Session has decided it should. It needs a plan to put it in place and ensure it is rooted in the practice of the congregation otherwise things will all too easily revert back to the old way of doing things. Various tools for implementing change are provided.

Chapter Four: Giving Route Directions: Communicating Change (page 23)

Communicating the change is such a key part of implementing change that it has a chapter by itself. Merely telling people about the change does not make the change happen but without good communication the change is unlikely to succeed.

This resource is approved by the Committee for Training and Resources. The committee would like to thank Kate Marshall for her major contribution to this resource. As well as many years’ experience of consultancy work at a high level in the business world, Kate is also Director of Mentoring for Arrow Ireland, a Christian leadership training organisation. Contributions were also made by committee members and others within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Copyright 2013 ©

Permission is given to those within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to reproduce this resource either electronically or as paper copies.

Chapter One:

Mapping the Territory: Considering Change

Use this chapter as a way to evaluate a specific proposed change or as a way to equip the Kirk Session in considering any sort of change. The first section on ‘why change?’ could be a useful discussion if there appears to be a general reluctance to embrace change.

Why Change?

Change is inevitable but some things in life seem to change less than others. These things can give us a sense of security when everything else seems to be shifting and changing like the waves of the sea. For many people, church provides that sense of security. The familiar hymns, the set time and order of service, the building, even the pews (have you noticed how people nearly always choose to sit in the same place week after week?). Leading change will bring us head to head with those who do not wish the church to change. **So why change?**

The answer must ultimately be rooted in theology. There is only one certainty in life and that is God who does not change (Hebrews 13:8). To put our security in anything else above God is idolatry even if it is in how we ‘do church’. This is not a license to change everything all the time and there are biblical principles to keep within. Set patterns of church life can have much value but they should not be untouchable. If the congregation seem happy with the way they worship and serve God then why change?

The answer is God’s mission. The world is a fallen and broken place. The church is God’s means of bringing his Christ centred salvation plan to people and transform them. If the church is failing to do this because its familiar patterns only suit a select few, then it needs to change.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus tells his disciples they will have a global mission (which incidentally includes people they don’t get along with – the Samaritans). Despite this the disciples stay in the place that is familiar to them – Jerusalem. Like us they don’t like change! However, the Holy Spirit has other plans – see Acts 8 and 10 for two examples.

Change will not happen unless someone or some people take the lead. This requires courage, conviction, wisdom and above all, it involves seeking God’s will. As a Kirk Session it is helpful to ask the question: “How can we best fulfill God’s purposes in the context he has called us?” Leading change well is also as much about **how** we bring about change as **what** we change. It requires a deep sense of pastoral compassion for the congregation. We must not focus on one group and cater only for them but seek to reach as many people as possible. For example, not neglecting the ‘old faithfuls’ for the new crowd on the one hand or maintaining the status quo to keep a small and shrinking flock happy on the other.

Suggested opening discussion question on the subject of ‘why change?’

- To what extent is our congregation about making new disciples and being transformed together as disciples of Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20)?

Types of Change

Not all change is the same. Some changes are very straightforward while others are complex. Understanding what sort of change is being considered is crucial to understanding how to approach it. This section is quite long but worth reading. A mistake in recognising what type of change is being considered can have adverse long term consequences.

Reactive and Proactive Change

There are two basic sorts of change – change that is reactive and change that is proactive:

Reactive Change: Kirk Sessions often deal with reactive change. A problem occurs and needs a response. Examples might be:

- The heating breaks down yet again and the boiler needs changed (committee business really!) – do we go with oil or gas?
- An influx of new families overburdens the existing children’s work. A good problem to have but it requires some change to accommodate them.

Proactive Change: Proactive change is when the Kirk Session decides to change something where there wasn’t an apparent problem. Why do this? “If it ain’t broke don’t fix it!” But something is broken – the world we live in – and God has a plan to fix it. Reactive change we cannot avoid but proactive change is something we tend to shy away from (we’re not alone – Moses, Jonah and Jeremiah initially had cold feet). To get proactive change off the ground we must show the real need for change – this is covered in chapter three. Proactive change is just reactive change for which we initially cannot see what we are reacting to!

Types of Change Depending on Outcome

The following table shows different types of change. Notice how they have differing outcomes. The first type has a very clear outcome that can be planned. The outcomes become less well defined as you go down the list. Although the first type of change can involve big challenges and commitments, the process is fairly straightforward. The other types of change can be harder to implement. All types of change need to be led by the Kirk Session but this resource in particular focusses on the second type – disturbing the ‘way we normally do things’ because this is where leadership really comes to the fore. Nevertheless, insights from this resource will be helpful for any of these types of change.

Type of change	Examples	Picture of change	Leadership role	Dangers to avoid
A planned project with clear goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A building project • A new evangelistic course • A new major event in the church calendar 	<p>A machine with predictable responses (a linear step by step process)</p> <p><i>Bible example: Exodus 25:8-9 (building the tabernacle)</i></p>	Set the goals, design the project (sometimes with expert outside help), organise those involved, monitor progress, manage any difficulties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgetting to consult and inform everyone involved by the change • Expecting it to be completely problem free • Not letting people get on with their task (micro-managing)
A change that requires disturbing the ‘way we normally do things’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding a second morning service • A new youth project meaning less resources for existing work • A new system for pastoral care 	<p>A political system with perceived ‘winners and losers’</p> <p><i>Bible example: Acts 11:1-18 The New Testament church starting to reach out to Gentiles</i></p>	Persuade people of the necessity for the change, set a vision for change, create a strategy, get enough key people on board to create momentum, embed the change so it doesn’t switch back.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to implement the change with too few people on board • Not communicating well • Not helping losers become winners (by giving them new roles where possible) • Not communicating how the change has worked well

Type of change	Examples	Picture of change	Leadership role	Dangers to avoid
Change that is about adapting and shaping church culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equipping people to be missionaries in their workplace Encouraging people to use their gifts Making discipleship an expectation rather than an option 	<p>An organism that grows and 'evolves' (the church is a described in the Bible as a body)</p> <p><i>Bible example: Ephesians 4:11-16 the body of Christ growing and maturing</i></p>	Helping people discover what their gifts are and what their area of service is, equipping people to use their gifts, communicating what the hoped for state of the church should be.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being too rigid about programmes to enable this change to happen But also not being intentional enough about this change and not making sure it permeates everything in the church Putting people in a box rather than giving them room to explore their gifting and area of service
Change that comes from the 'grass roots' and not 'top down'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives that emerge from church members rather than leadership like starting a prayer group Initiatives that come from outside like a request that the church set up a scheme to help those in poverty 	<p>A flowing river that changes its course (the flow is not controlled by the church leadership – they respond to it)</p> <p><i>Bible example: Acts 8:4-25 Philip goes to Samaritans. The leaders, Peter and John, follow and endorse and consolidate Philip's actions</i></p>	Creating connections so that change can emerge and be encouraged from the grass roots, giving permission and facilitating the change, celebrating successful change to foster more of the same.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saying yes to every request or suggestion without discernment Allowing it to happen just to 'keep the person happy' Assuming it will fail rather than helping it to succeed (the initiative may come from the grass roots but the Kirk Session must assume responsibility for it if they encourage it)

Types of Change Depending on the Degree of Change

Changes come in all different sorts and sizes. The amount of leadership required will often depend on the size of the change. That doesn't mean small changes are always easy! It just means the Kirk Session has to decide how much organizational leadership effort will be required. Here are some types of change from small to large:

<p>Personal Change</p> <p>Change that only impacts you and requires a different perspective, behaviour, approach, way of working or doing relationships. Although this affects only you, it may well be the starting point for leading others.</p>
<p>Incremental Change</p> <p>These are small changes to improve what we do already. They are easier to implement largely because it's obvious how people will respond to them. The cost of the change not succeeding will be minimal. This sort of change can also be planned strategically to achieve a major change. An example might be to start a small team of pastoral visitors who can visit the housebound on a regular basis with the intention of building on this after it has been tested. Not all changes can be done this way (unfortunately). A new building can't be built brick by brick over ten years. Sometimes the urgency of the situation means it's too late for incremental change and something more radical is required.</p>

Major/Complex Change

This involves a significant departure from the 'way we normally do things'. It could be a major shift in vision and the resulting practice in terms of ministry and congregational programmes. It will require coordination of people and complex decision making. It will definitely change the way people think and behave and may well require significant resources in terms of volunteers and/or finances. Examples might be a major building project that involves replacing the existing church building rather than merely adding to it or changing the system of delivering pastoral care from Elder's districts to home groups.

There is a high risk that resistance to major or complex change can lead to failure. However, there will have been others who have successfully completed the change before. While it may not have been exactly the same it does give a model to follow. Success in this sort of change can lead to transformational change. In summary, major change involves **outer shifts** in strategies, practices, systems and structures along with **inner shifts** in mind-sets, values, aspirations and behaviours.

Transformational Change

This is change that will put you in a new paradigm of church. You have not been there before as a congregation and there are few models or examples to learn from.

Considering the Effect of Change on People

Reaction to change

The difference between success and failure of any change initiative is often down to your ability to handle the effects of change on people. One thing we can be sure of is that people react differently to change depending on their perspective and willingness to be open minded. Most people agree that change is good. They just don't want to go through the pain of changing or giving up something they hold dear or habit are reluctant to give up.

Personal exercise: The most important reaction to change is yours! Think of how you personally react to change. Reflect back on a recent change in your life. How did you react? What can you learn from your own recent experience of change?

Thinking ahead to help people embrace the change

Many leaders make the mistake of believing that the most important thing to focus on is to sell the benefits of the proposed change first. While the benefits are important, research shows that is not the most important thing when trying to persuade people to embrace the change (and not to oppose or merely tolerate it). Identified below are the four main concerns that must be addressed and answered fully for members of your congregation:

What **evidence** is there that we must change and what **benefits** will it bring? Help me see and understand the reason we are doing this and what motivates it.

How will this change impact me **personally**? (Remembering we like routine and pattern and that's comfortable).

Is there a clearly **united and consistent approach** to this change from the Kirk Session? (This is not always achievable if every single Elder does not fully support the change but the example set by Elders as leaders is crucial to successful change.)

What will this **mean for us** as a congregation and **will it help us to fulfill our purpose and vision** for our life and witness as a congregation?

The Kirk Session and Minister must be able to communicate a clear and unified message in less than five minutes when answering these questions. Any longer and it will be obvious that the change has not been well thought through.

The process of adapting to change

As human beings we go through a psychological process during change that is closely related to the grieving process. It may not be as intense but the same stages can be evident. Considering these in advance will help prepare the way for the negative impact of the change to be lessened. Not everyone will experience these negative emotions. Some may be excited about the change, some may be indifferent, but you need to be pastorally sensitive to those who find it difficult. For example, if a building project involves radical change think about the impact on those who have been members for a long time and perhaps where married there, had their children baptised there, etc. The stages are:

- **Denial:** “It will never happen.” You need to persuade people that it will happen and help them prepare for it. As much as you can, help them see what things will look like after the change so that they engage with that reality but make sure you don’t make promises you can’t fulfill.
- **Anger:** “I am opposed to this change.” When the reality of the change sinks in and people don’t like it they may get angry particularly if they feel powerless to do anything about it. Involving people in a consultation process early on and sincerely seeking their input can help. It also helps to show them how they can continue to play an active part in church after the change even if it is in a new way. People will really get angry if they feel an area of service they are involved in and that is dear to them is being made redundant. Try to see if they can be transferred to something else that continues to require their gifts and dedication.
- **Bargaining:** “I’ll let you make that change if we can keep this.” As people realise the impact and inevitability of the change they will try to lessen it if they don’t like it. Planning ahead will help offset the negative impact this can have on the change by assessing what concessions can be made without undermining the overall change. Waiting until the bargaining begins puts the change effort at greater risk.
- **Depression:** “I’m unhappy with this change now that it is here.” If people don’t embrace the change they may leave. However, if their attachment to the congregation runs deep, they will probably stay but be unhappy and disengaged from congregational life. Eventually they may pull out of this dip but helpful pastoral conversations will enable them come out sooner. Be prepared for some unhappiness and negativity.
- **Acceptance:** “I can’t understand why we didn’t do it this way before.” Hopefully everyone will come to accept the change. It can take time but remember that opposition to change is often because people like the familiar patterns. Once the new way is well established, it then becomes the familiar pattern! But it requires real leadership to get to that point.

Discernment in Change

Change is something God requires of us but not all change is good and therefore we must seek the change that God desires. This requires discernment. A change may be good but the timing may be wrong (for example, trying to do too many changes at once). A desired change may be good but the process for achieving it must also be good – the end does not justify the means! Therefore, the Kirk Session must seek God’s will for:

- What to change.
- When to change it.
- How to change it.

Related to this, the Kirk Session must also consider what must not change. The most obvious example is that the gospel message remains the same but how it is presented must change in order that people understand it. There are also biblical norms for being the church that must not change, for example, meeting together as a community of believers.

Suggested exercise: For each item of change, ask the question if we change this then:

- What will we keep?
- What will we lose?
- What will we gain?

We need to remember that change is often about 'losing'. It is part of our willingness to humble ourselves and think of the interests of others. It can even be about toppling our idols and putting Christ back in his proper place in our lives.

	Keep	Lose	Gain
Change			

6. What will we decide as a Kirk Session regarding this change?

Change description	
Proactive or reactive change? What is the need for the change?	
Type of change depending on outcome? Issues to consider?	
How big a change?	
How will people react? How can we engage with their reaction?	
What are the implications of this change (keep/lose/gain)?	
Decision: yes/no/not yet?	

Chapter Two:

Preparing for Obstacles: Handling Potential and Actual Conflict

Use this chapter as a way to equip the Kirk Session to think through the value of conflict as a result of change and how to handle it well – both as it is anticipated in reaction to a proposed change and when it arises. This chapter comes before the chapter on implementing change because it is important to make this preparation first rather than react in unhelpful ways as conflict arises.

Introduction

Change can lead to conflict for the simple reason that some people are strongly emotionally attached to the old way of doing things and resist the new way. Well managed change using the tools in the other chapters in this resource can minimise conflict but it may still arise, especially with a large scale change (but sometimes even with relatively minor changes).

This chapter aims to help you understand the root causes of conflict, how it can appear in different ways and how to handle it well to create a positive outcome. Before addressing these factors, it is important to note that although we are often 'conflict avoiders', conflict can actually be beneficial and should never be swept under the carpet but lovingly and openly dealt with in a biblical manner (Ephesians 4:15). By avoiding change because of the conflict it may bring we may be merely avoiding addressing the underlying issues that arise.

The Benefits of Conflict

Not all conflict is bad! Conflict, if dealt with well, can be very constructive and lead to better congregational emotional and spiritual health for the following reasons:

- **It is useful for challenging our own perceptions.** Maybe we haven't got it quite right. Maybe there is something we didn't think of. Maybe we forgot about the impact it would have on that person or group of people. If a challenge to the change we are leading arises because of these reasons it should be appreciated for its value even if it is expressed poorly or in an unhelpful manner. When people express their resistance to change with angry words or negativity we need be careful not to respond in a like manner but seek to understand where they are coming from and if they have a valid point it will actually prove beneficial to all concerned.
- **It can bring about new ideas and help build confidence.** Initially conflict can seem destructive but dealt with well it can actually lead to a stronger position for everyone if both parties are happy with the outcome that is agreed. It can lead to the addition of new ideas to the change effort rather than something being taken away if dealt with in a creative and imaginative way rather than just 'closing down'. It can lead to those who opposed the change feeling like they are now very much a vital part of it.
- **It can create a new understanding and strengthen relationships.** Conflict that is resolved well through a change effort can have a greater lasting impact than even the change itself if the way it is handled leads to better understanding and deeper relationships. Introducing a change when change has been rare may seem like rocking the boat but actually highlights the fact that the only reason for the apparent unity was that no one ever had to really understand each other or have a relationship in church that was anything other than superficial.

Addressing the Roots of Conflict

Conflict can often initially appear to be a mystery. "Where did that come from?" might be our initial reaction but understanding the roots of conflict is essential to dealing with it well. The roots of conflict relating to a change are not often about the change itself. The change has merely served to highlight a division that existed but didn't become apparent until the change forced people to face it. There are many possible roots for conflict but the main question to

ask yourself is “why is this person resisting the change in this way?” Sometimes if you ask them they can easily tell you but often you will have to work out why they are acting in the way they do. This requires much understanding and there is much written on this subject. There are many biblical examples because the Bible deals with the broken relationship humanity has with God which in turn leads to broken relationships with each other. Even two mature leaders in the early church, Paul and Barnabas clashed (Acts 15:36-40). Some common roots of conflict are:

- A **‘clash of personalities’** – a conflict because two or more people have different perspectives arising out of their personalities. Neither may be wrong or sinful in their outlook but sin can result in the way they deal with their differing points of view – do they seek to understand each other or oppose each other? Two common examples of causes for personality clashes are:
 - Task/people focus. Some people tend to be more concerned with the task at hand whereas others tend to be more concerned about what people feel. A conflict can arise when a ‘task person’ seems to a ‘people person’ to be ignoring how people feel. Or a conflict can arise when a ‘people person’ seems to a ‘task person’ just to be keeping people happy rather than actually doing what needs to be done. Resolution comes when both listen to each other and work out a way to both achieve the important task and help people do it in a way that recognises their feelings.
 - Flexible/organised. Some people are very flexible and are happy to ‘wing it’; others like everything to be carefully planned. The reality in a change of any sort is that it will almost never go exactly according to plan but it is also true that a plan is required in order for the change to happen. Those who like to be flexible need to recognise the value of those who are planners and those who are very organised need to recognise the value of being able to adapt the plan as things progress.

This sort of conflict often arises because two people have very fixed but different ideas. They may even have the same ultimate goal but different ideas of how to get there. Resolution arises from both understanding the other person and self-understanding. Properly following the process for change with careful consideration of its impact on others can prevent this sort of conflict. Keeping focused on the change proposed and not the personalities is crucial. This also means not allowing previous disagreements or issues to cloud the present discussions. Seeking to impose change without thinking it through will inevitably lead to this sort of conflict.

- A tendency to have an **exaggerated feeling of rejection** or a tendency to be **rebellious** towards authority figures. People often tend to one of these two sinful states perhaps because of as a result of negative experiences they have had in life. Those who tend to feel rejected will see a change in light of how it may exclude them. Those who tend to be rebellious will see a change in light of how it may require them to do something for someone perceived to be in authority over them. There may be nothing at all wrong with the change but if it is not communicated well these two reactions can arise. To resolve this sort of conflict ask, as leaders and exercising our authority...
 - How can we show that this change can make people feel **accepted** and included? If some church activity will cease as the result of the change, how can we include people in what is new? How can we make sure if someone’s role changes that they are affirmed in their new or altered role? How can we affirm and celebrate past service when moving on to new forms of service?
 - How can we show that this change **empowers** people? How can we show that this change is not being imposed but give people a voice to shape the way things are done? How can we show that this change releases people to more fully use their gifts in God’s service?

It is true that everyone needs acceptance and no one likes to feel powerless. However, it may also be necessary, depending on the severity of the reaction, to address the underlying root cause and help the person see that their adverse overreaction to the change is a result of their outlook on life. Change is an opportunity for growth and especially for spiritual growth in finding our ultimate acceptance and purpose in Christ. We need to be careful not to be glib in giving this counsel – good Christian leadership is about including and empowering people.

- Closely related to the above as a root of conflict is people’s **sense of security**. Does the change shake their comfort zone? If it does, they are likely to oppose the change. The greater the sense of security they receive from the old way of doing things, the greater the opposition will be. Remember that their opposition is a sign that they care. This should be welcomed and in resolving this conflict it is necessary to show how the changed way of doing things can provide a greater ultimate security and affirmation of self-worth. However, it may well be that

this root is a sinful root because those opposing the change had become so attached to the old way of doing things that it had become idolatry – in other words, the way of ‘doing church’ had become more important than obeying and worshipping God! Nevertheless, people do need some degree of security and therefore it is important to show how God works through the church to provide these – but it doesn’t have to be through the old way.

- **Blocked goals** can cause conflict. If someone has a particular thing they want to happen and the change prevents it then conflict can arise. Again this is related to the above because the goal may be linked to their feeling of self-worth – it is what they believe will bring them fulfillment. If the goal is something godly, for example, to worship God or to care for others, and the change affects this then conflict can be prevented by helping them see how they can continue to do this in the changed way of doing things. A blocked goal might be less honourable than this, for example, to feel important because of a position they held that the change has now made redundant or to get to the golf course by a certain time but that is made harder because the Sunday service time has changed. Also, be very aware of personal or group agendas that are more about personality and power and less about building God’s Kingdom. In these cases conflict can be prevented or at least lessened by communicating the real need for the change. If the change is not perceived as really necessary then it will be resisted if it blocks even trivial goals let alone more important ones. When there is real opposition because people have different and less than honorable agendas, it is all the more necessary to show the need for change so that false agendas do not win the day.
- Or the root reason for the conflict could simply be that the proposed change is flawed or has not been thought through or communicated well enough! Therefore this source of conflict should be welcomed and resolved in order to find a better way to go about the change or not do it at all.

From the above examples, it is obvious that a key aspect of resolving or preventing conflict is communication. Too little or bad communication can make a conflict situation worse. Good two way communications can address the root causes of conflict and prevent or resolve conflict. See chapter three for more on communicating change well.

How do we handle conflict?

Addressing the root cause of conflict is central to dealing with conflict and finding a resolution. However, it is important to realise that this is a process and often a difficult one. If everyone involved was able to be calm and rational and pray about, discuss and reflect on the root causes of any differences, then it would not be at all daunting. However, in our fallen human nature we tend not to be so calm or rational. Instead we tend to three possible reactions to a conflict situation. They are:

- **Aggression:** This is not necessarily expressed in physical conflict but could be in angry words and raised voices.
- **Passive aggression:** Probably the most common response which is a tendency to say nothing but ‘simmer inside’. It is expressed in indirect ways, for example, complaining to someone not involved in the conflict, resisting the change by a lack of cooperation or communicating displeasure in non-confrontation ways like email or letter rather than face to face.
- **Emotional overload:** This is where emotions become out of control as a result of a conflict situation. It may be tears or just an inability to speak for fear of the emotion showing in our voice.

None of these three responses help the conflict situation. Passive aggression is particularly destructive but aggression can also cause a lot of harm (although the person is more likely to apologise afterwards). Being overly emotional shuts down calm and rational discussion and focuses all the attention on consoling the emotional person rather than getting to grips with the conflict issue.

None of these is the biblical response which is to have the courage and wisdom to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Anger may be a normal response but the bible tells us not to allow our anger to lead us to sin (Ephesians 4:26). Therefore, it is important to be aware how we naturally react to conflict and ask God’s help to act in a Christlike way. It is equally important to understand how others might react and respond to them appropriately. For example, if someone complains to you about someone else tell them that the biblical response is to speak to the person they have a problem with (Matthew 18:15). If the Kirk Session becomes aware of murmuring about a change then it should seek to speak to those who are complaining directly to help them fulfil this biblical response.

Some practical ways to biblically respond to conflict are:

- Don't ignore it!
- Listen to understand, not to condemn (put yourself in their shoes).
- Admit your own bias (even if just to yourself).
- Ask great questions and then listen more.
- Dig for clarity, ask further questions to get to the heart of the conflict.
- Remain calm and separate the issue from the emotion.
- State clearly without emotion your own needs and expectations.
- Don't focus on just meeting your needs but seek to meet theirs.
- Generate solutions rather than seeking to blame.
- Recognise that most people don't set out to be difficult .
- Find creative ways to engage with them, for example, 'listening groups' in the congregation facilitated by Elders.
- Adapt your communication style to match theirs (see chapter on communication).
- Chose which battles to fight and have grace to walk away when you need to.

Questions for the Kirk Session to ask regarding conflict and change:

- Do we know how we personally react to conflict and how to respond in a biblical way?
- Have we thought about where and when conflict is likely to occur?
- How can we encourage people to be open about what they think and what they prefer?
- Have we asked for God's help to remain calm and separate the issue from emotion?
- Can we find ways to listen well? (e.g. 'listening groups' in the congregation led by Elders)
- Are we focussed on generating creative solutions (rather than seeking to blame)?

Chapter Three:

Making the Journey: Implementing Change

Use this chapter as a toolbox of ways to implement change. It is important to use chapter two first to consider what sort of change is being implemented so that the tools are used appropriately. The tools can also be used to equip the Kirk Session for leading change.

Introduction

Change does not happen just because we wish it to. It requires leadership to successfully implement it. Change is not an event, it is a process. It is important that the process is recognised and followed otherwise the change will not stick and things will revert to the original way of doing things. This chapter contains several tools to help the change process. You can refer to any of them that are useful. In summary these tools can be used for:

Understanding the role of the Kirk Session in the change process

Use this tool for any specific change ideas to understand the function of the Kirk Session to:

- *Consider proposed change initiatives for approval.*
- *Ensure that approved change initiative are implemented.*
- *Delegate responsibilities for making sure the change happens.*

The Steps Model

Use this tool to evaluate what will help or hinder any sort of change, large or small. For large scale and complex change this tool is useful but it is recommended it is used in conjunction with other tools.

The Stakeholder Grid

Use this tool for change that is likely to meet some resistance. It enables you to evaluate who might be for or against the change and suggests how to get everyone on board.

Eight steps to change the 'way we do things'

Use this tool for major/complex change that will alter the way things have normally been done. Research has shown that organisations that neglect these practical steps are not successful in implementing this sort of change. The same is true of the church as a human organisation because human nature is the same. The differences for the church in terms of the mission and work of God are highlighted in this tool.

Tool One: The Role of the Kirk Session in the Change Process

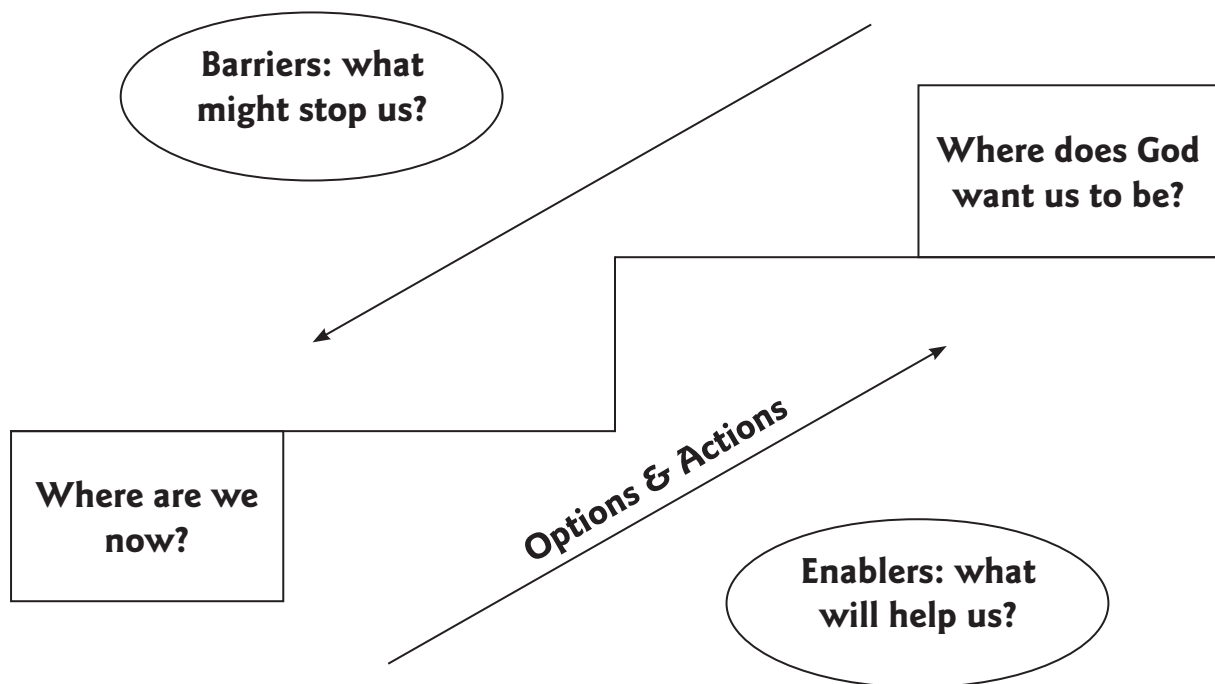
Use this table to as a means of putting names of allocating people to the essential tasks for implementing change (two examples are given). This tool can be used for simple or complex changes. Larger and more complex changes will require more people to be involved.

Leading the Process of Putting an Idea into Practice		
Task	Description of the process	Who is involved?
1. Thinking of an idea	Someone needs to have an idea in the first place! It could be for a new group, a new way to offer pastoral care, a new way to reach out in mission, etc.	Any enthusiastic member of the congregation (not all ideas come from the Elders!)
2. Allowing it to happen	The Kirk Session and Minister (and in some cases the church committee) have authority to allow initiatives to happen and have control of resources (finances, rooms, allocating people, etc.). They must have a clear vision for the congregation's mission and see how the initiative fits into the vision. They must set goals and measurable outcomes (what they expect to happen). Even if they did not think of the idea themselves they must never be cynical about it but 'own' it with full responsibility .	Kirk Session and Minister
3. Getting it done	Someone or a group of people needs to be requested by the Kirk Session to lead the implementation of the initiative otherwise it won't happen. They should report back to the Kirk Session and give feedback to say if it is going well or if there are challenges to overcome.	Minister or sub-committee of Elders or working group of Elders and other members of the congregation who can contribute their experience/gifts/etc.
4. Helping it happen	For a large scale initiative , people are needed to be facilitators of the change involved – they act to inform and train people under their influence and gather information on progress. An example of this sort of initiative could be encouraging pastoral care to happen in small groups.	Individual Elders, organisation leaders or anyone involved in the initiative.

Example – ‘Meals for those in need’		
Task	Description of the process	Who is involved?
1. Thinking of an idea	Someone thinks of an idea for providing meals for those are bereaved or going through a difficult time.	A member of the congregation suggests this to their Elder or the Minister.
2. Allowing it to happen	The Kirk Session agrees this idea is good in principle and should be implemented because it ties in with their vision for providing pastoral care in practical ways. They agree to have this up and running in two months’ time.	The Kirk Session.
3. Getting it done	The Kirk Session appoint a small group of people, ‘the meals team’, (perhaps including the person who suggested the idea) to put this in place.	Some Elders and some people from the congregation who can provide meals. One or two people to coordinate.
4. Helping it happen	The Kirk Session request that all Elders and the Minister, when they become aware of someone who would benefit from this practical help should notify the coordinator of the meals team. They should also notify the coordinator of how long the help would be appreciated for. The congregation are also told (on several occasions and by a leaflet through their door) of this service.	Elders, Minister, members of the congregation.

Tool Two: The Steps Model

The Kirk Session can ask the following questions concerning the change. Barriers might be financial but they can often be people's attitudes too! Enablers can also be people – hence the need for a change coalition as one of the key steps.



Timing and process as an enabler

Change does not have to happen all at once! In fact, change over a period of time using a well-considered process is often preferable and more readily accepted. Timing and planning the process of change is not the only enabler for change but it is a very important one. Some specific enablers for this could be:

- Run a small scale 'pilot' of the change, e.g. start a small team of pastoral visitors to gain experience rather than a large scale change in approach to pastoral care.
- Phase the change in over a longer time period, e.g. introduce a change in the Sunday service worship style once a month rather than all at once.
- Don't plan two major changes at once! Decide which to do first.

Other examples of enablers for change:

- Get a key person on board (see the next tool on 'stakeholders').
- A release of finances that makes resourcing the change possible.
- The natural ending of a congregational organisation creating a vacuum in which a new organisation can begin.
- And of course, pray!

Tool Three: The Stakeholder Grid

Often the reason people are unwilling to change has very little to do with a rational or practical reaction. It is often down to unwillingness to change a habit or belief that has strong emotional ties. Taking time with people as 'stakeholders' to seek their perspective, their concerns and recognising emotional reaction to the change may take time initially but can save months of struggle and conflict down the line. This will require you to listen more than you talk!

You can map stakeholders (people impacted by the change) individually by name or as a collective group using the grid below. **Note it is better to discuss this in confidence as a Kirk Session rather than commit it to paper.** Let's take an example, proposed change: removing pews to allow more space for the worship band. Begin this process by listing all the key stakeholders. Who will be impacted by the proposed change? Families who sit in pews, worship leader, worship band, church committee, who else?

High			
Level of Influence			
	Not supportive	Neutral	Supportive
Low	Level of Support		High

Using this example assess where each person or group may be for this proposed change. Who are supporters, neutrals and who is not supportive?

Who is influencing who on the grid? It is useful to draw a line connecting people or groups on the grid and to see visually who is influencing who. This will give you a clearer perspective and help create your plan to communicate (see Chapter Four: Communicating Change). The next step is to create a strategy to communicate and influence

accordingly. Appropriate roles identified in connecting, communicating and influencing to engage these stakeholders and move them towards being supportive. In some instances the best case outcome will be to move those who are not supportive to neutral. They may not be fully supportive of the change but they will not become or remain unsupportive.

Listening

The most commonly heard statement where stakeholders become disengaged is “They are just not listening to me” or “I can’t make myself heard”. If people feel they have been listened to, really listened to and their voice and opinion heard, they are more likely to shift to neutral or even supporter, even though the proposed change still occurs.

Engaging and Mobilising Stakeholders

- Ensure you understand who are for and against the change.
- Force yourself to the front line, be visible.
- Spend time with people who are not supportive – listen to understand, do not become defensive.
- Seek perspectives – understand how others see it.
- Invite people to talk openly to you, this builds your credibility.
- Spend time on the ‘me’ issues exploring fears, feelings and reactions.
- Engage other ‘people people’ if this is not your strength.

Tool Four: Steps to Change ‘the way we do things’

Please note that the steps to change described in this chapter apply particularly to the type of change that alters ‘the way we normally do things’ and is also a major/complex change. Insights for other sorts of change may be gleaned from these steps but applying them too rigorously to other sorts of change may be counterproductive. Therefore, make sure you have determined what sort of change it is you are proposing (see Chapter Two: Considering Change).

Step One: Motivation for Change – Establish a Burning Platform

Let’s face it, this sort of change is hard work and often painful. There may be great rewards to be gained in terms of church health and church growth but change of this sort is like climbing a mountain. Some people will climb because they are internally motivated – they know the view will be great. Others can’t imagine the view and therefore can’t see the point. Others know the view might be good but they would rather stay in the comfort and ease of the flatlands than even think about walking uphill. Therefore, while step three outlines what the view from the top of the mountain will be like in terms of casting a vision, the first step requires something more to get the momentum going. The first step is to provide a compelling reason for change, a burning platform where we can no longer stay as we are. The comfort zone has to become uncomfortable!

There is one **compelling reason that is always valid when it comes to change and that is obedience to God**. There are many biblical commands the Kirk Session should consider but perhaps the most obvious is Jesus’ directive to make disciples in Matthew 28:18-20. However, it requires deeper reflection than simply taking stock of what we are doing in obedience to God to make us get out of our comfort zones. It could easily be said, “We have our Sunday services, our midweek or Bible studies, our various organisations, etc., what more do we need to do to be doing what God requires?” It could also be said, “We are doing so much already, we can’t do the extra things this proposed change requires.” These sorts of statement might all too readily put out the fire on the burning platform. So what will make the fire unquenchable? What will make people see that the comfort zone is actually the danger zone and get them climbing the mountain of change?

Some obvious examples might be:

- Falling numbers in the congregation – empty pews are a visual reminder of a need for change.
- Financial struggles – nothing like a financial report to highlight a problem.
- Key people leaving – perhaps young people who were leaders in children’s work going off to university (and unlikely to return) or key leaders in other organisations moving on.

However, for many congregations, there might not be such obvious signs (in PCI this is particularly true of larger suburban congregations). Dig a bit deeper and you may find plenty of flammable material for the burning platform like:

- Our numbers are steady but what are they like relative to the local demographics – local population growth through housing developments may show that in real terms the congregation has shrunk massively!
- How many people in our local area actually go to a church? Finding out through a survey might show that we need to get more serious about the Great Commission.
- Are people growing spiritually in the church? Are members of the congregation actively involved in evangelism? Are they praying together? Are they studying the Bible together? Or are most of them just turning up on a Sunday morning and no more than that?
- Are we producing leaders who can take Bible studies, lead home groups, mentor young people, become missionaries overseas or become Accredited Preachers or even Ordained Ministers?
- What are the demographics of our congregation? Conduct a survey to find out if there actually is a huge missing gap of people in their late teens and twenties (there often is). What about the male/female gap? Should we not be worried if women outnumber men by nearly two to one?

The important thing in digging deeper is not to rely on anecdotal evidence or mere opinions like “I look around church on Sunday and it seems we have plenty of children”. Concrete evidence is the only way to see the situation as it really is. It may be helpful to bring someone in from outside to help facilitate this process.

If we left it with this step then all that would happen would be a sense of panic and helplessness but there are seven further steps to follow and underlying all of this should be the indisputable reality that nothing is too difficult for God and he is with us! At this stage it is also worth adding that change doesn't necessarily mean adding an extra burden on overworked people. It may mean, however, the difficult step of stopping doing some things for the sake of doing things that really make a difference.

Question: What is our compelling reason for change? (What is our burning platform?) Is it compelling enough or does it need more work?

Step Two: Get Key People on Board – Create a Coalition for Change

One or two convinced (even if one is the Teaching Elder) is unlikely to be enough to sustain the effort require for the change to work. **Most of the Kirk Session, including the Teaching Elder, convinced of the need for change is an effective starting point.**

However, for the change to gather momentum, the need for the change must be grasped by key people beyond the Kirk Session. There may be key organisation leaders or others who must become part of this change coalition. Think about people who can be part of this who have strong reputations, useful skills and well-connected relationships in the congregation. Building this coalition is a vital step that should not be skipped over.¹

Question: Is the Kirk Session firmly behind the change? Who are the other key leaders and how can we get them on board?

Step Three: Create an Aspirational Vision – A Picture of the Future

Successful change rests on a picture of the future that is relatively easy to communicate and appeals to all ages. A vision helps clarify the direction in which the congregation needs to move. We do not need to start from scratch in producing the vision because it is already right there in the Bible. However, while the whole Bible outlines God's vision for his people, it may be helpful to have one or two key verses to accompany a vision for specific change. What the Kirk Session needs to do is create a vision for the outworking of the biblical vision for church in the local context of the congregation. Therefore the vision needs to be specific enough to show what fulfilling God mission will look like for you.

The vision functions in many different ways: it helps spark interest, it helps keep all activities and changes aligned and it provides a way to evaluate progress. It also provides a powerful reason for keeping going when staying the same looks easier than making a change.

A vision is not a detailed programme nor is it a strategy – it is a compelling picture of a future reality. Confusing the vision with another aspect of the change process will lessen its impact. If you can't communicate the vision to someone in less than two minutes and get a reaction that signifies both understanding and interest, you are not yet clear enough and need to refine the message.

Question: What is our biblically rooted but specific to us vision for our congregation? Are we each able to explain it to someone else in less than two minutes?

1. Note that this is not the same as identifying the stakeholders as shown in the stakeholder's grid tool – this is more about those who will lead the change rather than those who will be affected by it.

Step Four: Over Communicate the Vision – Information Saturation

It is nearly always true that we estimate how much communication is needed. Whatever you think is required – multiply that effort by a factor of ten. Do not limit it to one congregational meeting, a sermon, or a couple of emails. See Chapter Four: Communicating Change for more ideas on channels of communication. Communicating the vision is not just words, all Elders must be seen ‘walking the talk’ if the congregation are going to perceive the effort as important. The bottom line is that a change effort will fail unless people understand, appreciate, commit and try to make the effort happen consistently. The guiding principle is simple: use every existing communication channel and opportunity.

Question: Have we a plan for communicating the vision (see next chapter for more details)? Are we personally matching our actions with the vision or are we still doing things the old way while promoting the new?

Step Five: Empower the Congregation – Delegate, Delegate, Delegate

This entails several different actions. Allow people in the church to start living out the new ways and to make changes in their areas of involvement. Allocate resources to the new initiative. Carve out time on every Kirk Session agenda to talk about it. Change the way your congregation is organised to put people where the effort needs to be.

Look at every event or organisation within the church. Do you need to free up key people from existing responsibilities so they can concentrate on the change? Do you need to stop doing some things or scale them back? In short, remove any obstacles there may be to getting on with the change. Nothing is more frustrating than believing in the change but then not having the time, money, help, or support needed to do it. You can’t get rid of all the obstacles, but the biggest ones need to be dealt with.

Question: Who needs to be involved? What needs to stop or be scaled down?

Step Six: Celebrate Success Often – Testimonies of Lives Touched

Since real transformation takes time, the loss of momentum and the onset of disappointment are real threats to the change effort. Most people won’t go on a long march for change unless they begin to see compelling evidence that their efforts are bearing fruit.

Be thankful through focused prayer time for the evidence of change and the fruit of God’s work through you at this time. In successful transformation, leaders actively plan and achieve some short term gains which people will be able to see and celebrate. A great way to share this is through people giving testimonies of how God has used the change to touch and bless their lives.

Short term ‘wins’ provide proof to the church that their efforts are working, and adds to the motivation to keep the effort going. It is normal for energy and effort to wane after a few months when people realise the change will take some time. Tangible encouragements along the way can make all the difference.

Question: What might our short term wins be and how can we celebrate them?

Step Seven: Keep Moving Forward – Mark the Milestones

We are creatures of habit. Until changes sink deeply into a congregation’s culture – a process that can take five to ten years – new approaches are fragile and subject to regression. We want to go back to our comfort zones! The people of Israel even wanted to go back to Egypt and God spoke through Moses and then Joshua to lead them on to the Promised Land (note the physical milestone in Joshua 4:20 for example or Moses’s speech relating the events of the Exodus in Deuteronomy 1 to 3 and 8).

Keep people motivated to continue moving forward by reminding them of how far you have come on the journey. “It’s just around the corner” is not as motivating as “Look at how far we have come already!” Move your most committed change leaders into change roles and don’t be afraid to keep getting new perspectives. You can keep a

long journey of change fresh and exciting if you continue to see things through fresh eyes. Leaders of change must go into the process believing that their efforts will take years.

Question: Have we produced a 'timeline' for this change? How will we communicate milestones as they happen?

Step Eight: Established Change – ‘This is just how we do it’

In the final analysis, change sticks when it becomes “the way we do things around here”, when it seeps into the bloodstream of the body of believers. When you think about it, the most established things in traditional church culture are all the result of huge change. So when the change becomes a new tradition you know it has been successful (although by that stage it might be time to change again!)

Two factors are particularly important for establishing change. First, a conscious attempt to show people how the new approaches, behaviours, and attitudes have helped improve the life of the congregation. People have to be helped to make the connections between the effort and the outcome. The second is to ensure that the next generation of congregational leaders believe in and embody the new ways. That's a crucial role of a leader – to create other leaders.

Question: How will we know when we have 'arrived' and how will we communicate this success to the congregation and acknowledge the faithfulness of God in the process?

A Caveat: The Difference Between ‘Mission Creep’ and ‘Course Correction’

Change is a journey that requires careful navigation. It is wise to map out the route beforehand and use the steps above as a guide but the reality may be that the journey to the intended goal is not quite as smooth as the planning suggests. Course correction may be required as unforeseen circumstances arise or the change produces unexpected results. Sometimes this can be positive – the change may be more successful than you think as God blesses it. Other times it may require more effort than ever envisaged. The grand vision set out at the beginning may need to be 'trimmed' in light of a limit on resources. Course corrections are to be expected but beware the danger of 'mission creep'. Mission creep is when adverse circumstances gradually result in a loss of sight on the original goal. The path is lost and the change ultimately can fail unless it is brought back on course. The above steps can help avoid mission creep. Keeping an eye on the big picture and being intentional about leading rather than only reactive will allow you to tell the difference between a course correction and mission creep.

Chapter Four:

Giving Route Directions: Communicating Change

Use this chapter to work out a coherent strategy for communicating a change. This chapter can also be used to equip the Kirk Session in good communication practice.

Leaders in the church need to maintain integrity by **over** communicating the change plans and reassuring the congregation that they are continuing to make progress.

When we think of communicating change we have to understand that people like to be communicated with in different ways. Let's look at communicating change under three headings:

1. The Leadership Responsibility to Communicate Change.
2. Personality and Communicating Change.
3. Platforms and Channels for Communicating Change.

In 2 Corinthians 1, Paul needed to change his plans and some of the Corinthians used it against him accusing him of weakness and indecision, Paul openly communicated his change to the church and understood that **when plans change you need to communicate more, not less.**

I. The Leadership Responsibility to Communicate Change

How do people know our character? By what we do and what we say. One thing you can be sure of when leading change is that you will make mistakes and you will get it wrong. **Be prepared to communicate your successes and your mistakes with absolute transparency and clarity.** It may sound strange to our ears but, in reality, leaders need to be vulnerable, to admit when they make mistakes and to be open and transparent in all communication, especially when they get it wrong. If the planned change needs to change again because it is not working – communicate that quickly reassuring that you are still making progress.

It is essential in communicating change to create clarity regarding what is happening. In doing this **there is no such thing as too much communication.** Once the Kirk Session has agreed the changes and agreed with absolute clarity their message around this change, their role is to **communicate, communicate, communicate.**

Clarity is communicated and reinforced not just in what we say but in what we do. As leaders of your church everything you do and say has to be aligned with the change. We are sending messages all the time about what we really believe and think. Research states that around 90% of what we interpret from communication comes directly from our body language and our behaviour not simply our words. **Any behaviour from leaders at the top of the church that is contrary to the vision for change overwhelms all other forms of communication.**

For example if an announcement is made by someone who appears apologetic or unconvinced then no matter what words are used the congregation may believe that the issue is unimportant. Finally, don't forget, the biggest mistake leaders make is thinking that communicating the change is the change! Simply communicating does not make the change happen but nevertheless communication is essential for effective change.

Lessons in the Need for Openness in Communicating from a PCI Congregation:

“Our church had to make a major decision over a building scheme that, with recessionary forces worsening, would commit its members to being in debt for some considerable time. As the congregation voted on the scheme elders were disappointed to find a substantial minority were not in favour. We believed it was right before God to stand back from the scheme for a year even though we had a majority in favour.

“In that year we did two things. Firstly we called upon people to pray, and specifically organised and encouraged a couple of times of prayer and fasting. Secondly, we offered to meet during that year with those who had voted against the scheme to listen, and to understand the objections. A small number took up this offer after which some stayed with us, and some left for other churches, where several have gone on to play a significant role in leadership.

“At the end of the year Session, by a large majority, decided to recommend going ahead. Sadly a few elders resigned but they remain in fellowship and leadership with us which we deeply appreciate. We decided as an eldership to apologise to the church for leadership that might have been perceived as not being as good and effective as it could have been. Session worked out a statement and gathered around the communion table with me as their minister. I read the statement and we committed ourselves to better and clearer leadership under God for the future.

“Personally I have never heard of a Presbyterian Kirk Session apologising to the congregation before! All I can say is that it assisted in a healing process (though we still lost members), and since we went ahead with our scheme God has blessed us with many professions of faith and new members.

“Change is never easy, but we have sought as leaders to be real and honest about the issues, and engaged as best we could with those who disagreed. It was messy, but worth it all.”

2. Personality and Communicating Change

To speak we first need to earn the right to be heard. Leaders must first be listeners. Particularly when communicating change we must resist the need to be heard and focus on listening to what people want to tell us. If we want their buy in and agreement for change we must let them know they can trust us to listen. This should have happened right from the start of the change process but it needs to continue as we communicate the change. If it didn't happen from the start then there will be much catching up to do.

Most of us know that listening to others is a good thing although we may vary in how skilled and committed we are at doing it. But it may not immediately occur to us that **different people will want you to communicate change differently**. We need to be aware that people are influenced by facts **and** feelings. What is important to understand is that, for some people, factual data and evidence are most important and for others, feelings in terms emotional response to the change will be more important.

Your congregation will be no different to what is true of people generally. There will be those who want to focus on the facts of the change and there will be those want to focus on how the change makes them feel. As a general rule of thumb, when it comes to communicating change your words, whether spoken or written, need to contain an equal combination of both facts and impact on feelings.

For a major change, it may be worth testing out the way you plan to communicate your changes on some focus groups (e.g. the congregational committee or a meeting of the home group leaders) before communicating to the full congregation. Deliberately chose people with different communication styles. Ask for their feedback on the actual words, phrasing and overall message of the communication. From this you may well discover there are better

Lesson on use of words

“As the Christian Training Development Officer for PCI, I was asked to give some training on being a trainer. This was a change in practice for those being trained and some of them reacted by saying they didn't like the word 'training' because it sounded too secular (like training in sales or in First Aid but not in being a Christian!). The next time round I used the word 'equipping' (Ephesians 4:11-12) and it went down better. The word 'training' is in the Bible too but perceptions are important and I've learned to choose my words carefully so that nothing hinders the essential message I'm trying to communicate.”

ways of expressing the same message so that it is well received and understood. If the message contains within it barriers to communication then it will have failed in its purpose.

However, one thing we know for sure is that it is difficult to please everyone so be realistic – you are not going to! Some people will oppose any change no matter how it is communicated or how much they are consulted and involved.

In planning how to communicate it is useful to consider different personality traits and how they respond to change. Much is written on this and through Google you can access some of the tools to assess personality traits. This is not a surefire rule for effective communication but it is helpful to be aware of some basic principles about personality traits.² Broadly speaking there are four personality traits³ that require different styles of communication (bearing in mind that traits are a spectrum and not an absolute). Often you can tell by the things people say or do which personality trait they have as the table below shows.

Personality trait:	Reflective and realistic	Reflective and creative	Action orientated and realistic	Action oriented and creative
Concerned especially with:	Practicalities and details.	Thinking about ideas.	What will we be doing and when!	New ways of doing things.
Responds to change efforts by:	Deciding what should be kept and what needs changing.	Generating new ideas.	Making things better.	Putting new ideas into practice.
Most likely to say:	“If it ain’t broke don’t fix it.”	“Let’s think ahead.”	“Let’s just do it!.”	“Let’s change it.”
Challenges that may arise in response to change:	Will keep asking practical questions. May seem inflexible and even stubborn.	Will want to spend time thinking of options. May seem to be trying to delay the change.	Will want to results to show that change is happening. May seem demanding.	Will want to move quickly to action. May seem to be taking too many risks.

Bear in mind that you too will need to assess which personality trait you are closest to – that way you can understand the responses of others better to what you are saying and avoid unnecessary frustration. This is true of the leadership team (the Kirk Session). An effective team is made up of people with different personality traits who work together. You need people who ask difficult questions and for concrete evidence. You need people who are enthusiastic and full of energy and those who are creative and innovative together with those who want to consider all the options. With the input of people with all these traits, the effectiveness of what you communicate will be greater because:

- The difficult questions will be answered.
- There will be solid evidence to support the need for change.
- The reason for choosing this option will be clear.
- There will be enthusiasm about the change.
- The change will come across as exciting, new and innovative.

2. This is explored further in the resource on 'Implementing Change'.

3. The Myers Briggs model is used as a basis for the explanation here but other methods are useful too.

3. Platforms and Channels For Communicating Change

Everyone communicates – few connect! In the world of marketing there is a well-known rule that each message needs to be heard seven times before we acknowledge we have heard it. **SEVEN times!** We often communicate the change once or maybe twice and then wonder why people aren't getting it.

The function of communication is part of everyday activity. Effective communication means making sure every channel of communication is consistent and that there are no conflicting messages. We now lead diverse, multi-generational churches and there is no 'one style fits all' for our methods of communication. Whatever methods you chose to use, the important thing is that all information and communication is consistent with your change message. This means making each method of communication:

- Uses similar language about the change.
- Has the same consistent theme to describe the change.
- Expresses the message in a way that is not diluted or confused.
- Is easily accessible and repeated daily or weekly – continually.

Channels of communication:

- The pulpit.
- Printed announcements.
- Printed leaflets distributed to every family by Elders or committee members.
- Kirk Session meetings.
- Committee meetings.
- Congregational meetings.
- Prayer meetings.
- Small group meetings.
- Youth activities.
- Pastoral visits by Minister and Elders.
- One to one meetings.
- Church website.
- Facebook.
- Twitter.

Make sure the task of communicating through each of these channels is specifically delegated. Communication will not happen just because we wish it to – someone needs to be responsible for it.

Communicating change road map

In planning to communicate change, it is necessary not just to consider the methods of communicating but also to work out a 'road map' or strategy for communication so that the change will be effective (remembering that communication is a key part of bringing about change but is not the change itself).

- Create the biblical case for the change and the sense of urgency to do it – promise change, do not promise a return to normality.
- Create a change story that goes beyond the "me" level to spell out a vision of the desired future state when the change has been completed.

- Don't pour scorn on what has happened in the past, but clearly mark the ending.
- Clearly communicate what is not changing and what needs to change.
- Identify the behaviours that will run against what we are trying to communicate and which will sabotage the change effort if not addressed (remembering that actions speak louder than words).
- Identify the behaviours that will communicate our support for the change which we need to start and continue.
- Ensure key people involved in the change understand and can communicate why this change and why now.
- Give Kirk Session a part to play in communicating the change (because as the leadership they agreed the change and therefore should voice their support for it).
- Look for and communicate early signs of success to maintain momentum.
- Longer term, communicate what the change has brought about in order to reinforce the change.

Communicate clearly by explaining:	Communicate well by:	Match actions with words by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the change and how does it help the life and witness of the congregation? • What is not changing? • Who is involved? • When will it happen? • Who do I speak to about the change? • What will help it succeed? • How will we know it is working? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be enthusiastic! • Repeat the message. • Keep it simple. • Use diagrams, pictures, stories/testimony etc. as well as factual statements in order to relate to the way different people like to receive a message. • Say what it means to you personally. • Communicate in different places and at different times (pulpit – more than once!, leaflet, website, via organisation leaders, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show appreciation to those who help the change succeed. • Leadership should be first to adopt the change. • Don't act in ways that give the message you prefer the old way over the new way.



Board of Christian Training, Assembly Buildings, Belfast BT1 6DW
www.presbyterianireland.org