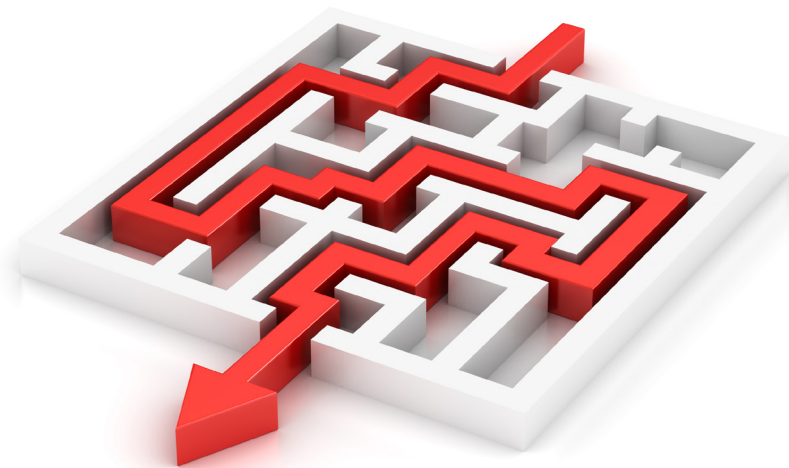


Navigating to New Places



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

Quick Start Guide

This 'quick start' guide covers the essentials of a longer and more detailed version of this resource on leading change. Suggested questions are given for each stage of the change process. It is recommended that the person leading the discussion on change (normally the Teaching Elder) be familiar with the longer resource but it is also available to any Elder who is interested to read more.

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. 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 as paper or electronic copies.

'Quick start' Guide One

Mapping the Territory: Considering Change

Starting point: a proposed change is being considered

End point: to have worked out what sort of change this is, how people might react, what the implications of the change are and as a result, whether it should go ahead.

Change comes in different shapes and sizes. Considering what sort of change is being proposed is a crucial first step.

Proactive or reactive change?

Is this change arising in response to a problem or issue or is it a proactive initiative of the Kirk Session (perhaps in light of the question in the box on the right)? If it is **reactive** the reason for the change should be obvious. If it is **proactive** people will need to be persuaded of the need for change.

Why change? Because God has involved us as Christian leaders in fulfilling his mission to bring Christ centred salvation and transformation to people. If the church is failing to do this because its familiar patterns only suit a select few, then it needs to change. General question: to what extent is our congregation about making new disciples and being transformed together as disciples of Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20)?

What is the outcome of the change?

Which of the following four categories does the proposed change come under – this will help us decide our approach for this change.

1. **A planned project with clear goals**, e.g. building a new church hall. Even a change like this is rarely 100% smooth but it normally has a fairly clear path to follow.
2. **A change that requires disturbing the 'way we normally do things'**, e.g. having two Sunday morning services instead of one. Most of this resource is to do with this sort of change and making sure the change 'sticks' and does not revert back to the old way of doing things.
3. **Change that is about re-shaping church culture**, e.g. every Christian rather than just a few using their gifts. This requires an intentional commitment to put in place a new vision of church.
4. **Change that comes from the 'grass roots' and not the 'top down'**, e.g. some of the congregation start a prayer group to support each other to witness in the workplace. Not all change starts with the Kirk Session – God is bigger than us! But we must lead well to support it.

How big is this change for us?

It can help to think of the degree of change as follows:

Personal change. Change that affects only the individual (although there is often a knock on affect on others) and requires a different way of seeing things and changed behavior.

Incremental change. With some changes it is possible to take it in 'bite size chunks' rather than swallowing it whole. Not every change can happen this way especially if the change is urgent.

Major/complex change. Requires coordination of people and complex decision making. It will change the way people think and behave and may require extra volunteers and/or finances.

Transformational change. This is change to a completely new way of doing church. It is somewhere you have not been before and there are few examples to follow.

How will people react to this change?

Most people agree that change is good if they can see the benefits for themselves and the life and witness of the congregation. They just don't want to go through the pain of giving up something they hold dear. Reaction to change can often take the form of the following process:

1. **Denial:** 'It will never happen'. You need to persuade people it will happen and help them see what things will look like after the change. Make sure you don't make promises you can't fulfil.
2. **Anger:** 'I am opposed to this change'. Consulting with people early on by sincerely seeking their input can help as well as enabling them see how they will fit into the new way of doing things.
3. **Bargaining:** 'I'll let you make that change if we can keep this'. You will need to be careful that the change is not undermined by making too many concessions.
4. **Depression:** 'I'm unhappy with this change now that it is here'. Be prepared for this stage and for the pastoral care that will be necessary to help people through.
5. **Acceptance:** 'I can't understand why we didn't do it this way before'. Hopefully everyone will come to accept the change once it becomes familiar but it takes real leadership to get there!

What are the implications of this change?

To assess the benefits of the change we can ask what will we keep, what will we lose and what will we gain? Change is often about 'losing'. It is part of our willingness to humble ourselves and think of the interests of others. There are also some things that must not change, for example, the gospel message or the biblical norms for being church. For the change being considered use the following table:

	Keep	Lose	Gain
Change			

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?	

‘Quick start’ Guide Two

Preparing for Obstacles: Handling Potential and Actual Conflict

Conflict is almost inevitable when leading change.

Some people will resist change because they are strongly emotionally attached to the old way of doing things. Well managed change using the tools in this resource can minimise conflict but it may well still arise. It is important to be prepared for conflict and handle it well to create a better situation than existed before.

Conflict arising from change can be a good thing!

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 also be avoiding addressing the underlying issues. The benefits of conflict can be:

- **It is useful for challenging our own viewpoints.** 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 a 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.
- **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 rather than something being taken away if dealt with in a creative and imaginative way.
- **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.

Handling conflict involves dealing with the root causes.

Conflict can initially appear to be a mystery. ‘Where did that come from?’ might be our initial reaction. We need to ask the deeper question ‘why is this person resisting this change in this way?’ Some possibilities are:

- **A ‘clash of personalities’** where two or more people have very fixed but different points of view arising out of their personalities. Neither may be wrong or sinful in their outlook but sin can result in the way they deal with the conflict – do they seek to understand each other or oppose each other? It is important when this sort of conflict happens that the focus is kept on the change and not on the personalities. It is also necessary not to allow previous disagreements to cloud the present discussions. Two common causes of personality clashes are:
 - **Task/people focus.** Some people are more focused on the task (perhaps the change itself) and others on people (what they are feeling). Resolution comes when both can see that the people **and** the task are important.
 - **Flexible/organised.** Some people like to ‘fly by the seat of their pants’ and others like everything to be carefully planned and are uncomfortable when it is not. Resolution comes when both can see a plan is necessary but it may need adjusted along the way.
- A tendency to have **exaggerated feelings of rejection** or a tendency to be **rebellious**. These are often the result of negative experiences people 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 seems they are being told what to do. For those who feel rejected, as leaders, we need to show them how they can be included and accepted in the proposed change. For those who tend to rebel against a change we can involve them so that they see they have a say in what happens.

- When change undermines people's **sense of security**. If the change makes them feel out of their comfort zone they may oppose it. It may help to show that the change will ultimately result in a more secure situation but it may be necessary to deal with people being so attached to the old way that it has become an idol – more important in their eyes than obeying God.
- **Blocked goals** can cause conflict. If someone has a particular thing they want to happen and the change prevents it then conflict can arise. If the goal is something godly, for example, to worship God or to care for others, the conflict can be resolved by showing them how they and others can continue to do this better as a result of the change (if you can't show this the change may not be valid!). When there is real opposition because of less than honourable goals, it is all the more necessary to show the need for change so that false motives do not win the day.

From the above examples, it is obvious that a key aspect of resolving or preventing conflict is good communication! See section four of this guide for more on communicating well.

Conflict shows itself in different ways in different people.

Addressing conflict would be easy if everyone was calm and rational and willing to talk about the root causes. The reality is people have different ways of showing conflict that are sinful and it is first necessary to identify them and then apply biblical principles. Three different ways people react in a conflict situation are:

- **Aggression** – for example, angry words and raised voices.
- **Passive aggression** – a tendency to say nothing but 'simmer inside'. It is expressed indirectly, for example, complaining behind someone's back or resisting the change by a lack of cooperation.
- **Emotional overload** – this is where emotions become out of control as a result of conflict. It may be tears or just an inability to speak for fear of the emotion showing in our voice.

None of these are helpful. Anger or becoming emotional may be a human response but the Bible tells us not to allow our anger to lead us to sin (Ephesians 4:26). The biblical response is to have the courage and wisdom to speak the truth in love face to face (Ephesians 4:15, Matthew 18:15)

How can we practically prevent and handle conflict?

- Do we know how we personally react to conflict and how to respond in a biblical way?
- Have we asked for God's help to remain calm and separate the issue from emotion?
- 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?
- Can we find ways to listen well? (E.g. 'listening groups' in the congregation led by Elders)
- Are we focussed on generating solutions? (rather than seeking to blame)

'Quick start' Guide Three

Making the Journey: Implementing Change

Change requires leadership to successfully implement it. Change is not an event; it is a process. It is important the process is followed otherwise things will revert back to the way they were before. Change also does not always turn out quite as we expected. It is important to be able to make course corrections while at the same time being careful not to lose sight of the original goal.

Understanding the Role of the Kirk Session in Leading Change

Task	Description of the process	Who is involved?
Thinking of an idea	For example, a new way to offer pastoral care, a new way to reach out in mission, etc.	Anyone! (not all ideas come from the Kirk Session)
Allowing it to happen	The Kirk Session and Minister have authority to allow changes to happen. They can see if this change is in line with the vision for the congregation and what resources are required. They carry overall responsibility for the change.	Kirk Session and Minister
Getting it done	The Kirk Session requests a group or individual to implement the change and report on progress.	Minister, Elders, members of the congregation working in a team.
Helping it happen	For a large scale change, key people are needed inform/train and influence others.	Elders, organisation leaders or anyone involved in the change.

The Steps Tool

Use this tool to see what can help or hinder the change.



Think creatively about enablers, for example:

- Running a small scale 'pilot' of the change could build confidence and experience first
- Phase the change in (perhaps a new style evening service once a month rather than every week)
- Releasing finances from somewhere else
- A congregational organisation ready to come to an end releasing people to serve elsewhere
- Another major initiative happening at the same time might be a barrier – do one at a time
- Get key people on board – see the next tool on 'stakeholders'
- And of course, pray!

The Stakeholder Grid

Taking time with people as 'stakeholders' (people impacted by the change) to seek their views and concerns may take time but can save months of struggle down the line. For example: a change is proposed to removing pews to allow more space for the worship band – key stakeholders might be families who sit in pews, worship leader, worship band, church committee, etc. Use the grid below as guide (it is better to discuss this in confidence as a Kirk Session rather than commit it to paper).

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

It can also be useful to connect people or groups on the grid and to see who is influencing who. The next step is to think about how to move people from being not supportive to supportive (or at least neutral) with a particular focus on those who are more influential. This can only happen by meeting them to listen to their concerns and then helping them see the need for the change.

Eight Steps to Change the ‘Way we do Things’

This tool is especially relevant for major/complex change that involves changing ‘the way we normally do things’.

1. Motivation for Change – Establish a Burning Platform

People won’t want to leave their comfort zone without a compelling reason to change. This is fundamentally about obeying God in his plans for his church but should be stated in specific ways, for example, falling numbers (or steady numbers despite an increasing local population), an unreached group of people, only a few interested in prayer/Bible study or a lack of new leaders.

Question: What is our compelling reason? Is it compelling enough or does it need more work?

2. Get Key People on Board – Create a Coalition for Change

One or two convinced people are unlikely to be enough to sustain the effort require for the change to work. The need for change must be grasped by a group of key people (Elders, Minister and congregation organisation leaders affected by the change)

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

3. Create an Aspirational Vision – A Picture of the Future

A vision helps clarify the direction in which the congregation needs to move. The Bible gives us the overall vision for the church but we must seek God to see how that looks specifically for us. A vision sparks interest, keeps all activities aligned and helps us evaluate progress and keep going. It needs to be simple and easily explained to any member of the congregation.

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?

4. Over Communicate the Vision – Information Saturation

It is all too easy to communicate once and think it is enough. Communication must be continual and it must be consistently matched by actions – Elders must ‘walk their talk’.

Question: Have we a plan for communicating the vision (see next section 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?

5. Empower the Congregation: Delegate, Delegate, Delegate

Carve out time on the Kirk Session agenda to talk about it. Allocate people to the change – free them from other responsibilities. Stop doing things that are less of a priority.

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

6. Celebrate Success Often: Testimonies of Lives Touched

Real transformation takes time but if people don’t see results as they go on the journey of change, they will become discouraged. Therefore, look for short term ‘wins’ – stories of success to share.

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

7. Keep Moving Forward: Mark the Milestones

People will tend to want to go back unless they can see how far they have come. Talk about the significant stages in the journey as they are completed so that they can see real progress.

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

8. Established Change: 'This is just how we do it'

Change sticks when it becomes "the way we do things around here". When you think about it, the most established things in traditional church culture are all the result of huge change.

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?

‘Quick start’ Guide Four

Giving Route Directions: Communicating Change

Leaders have a responsibility to communicate change.

We often tend to communicate too little and if the change is not going as smoothly as anticipated (which is normal!) we communicate even less. This does not help the change effort. We need to openly and honestly communicate what is happening so that people are not kept in the dark and are unsure of what to do. We need to notify them when plans are changed and assure them of progress. Leading change is more than communication but without communication the change will almost certainly fail. Remember communication is a task that needs planned and delegated – it won't happen otherwise.

Leaders must communicate the change in multiple ways.

Not only must there be different channels of communication but different ways of presenting the message.

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.

Leaders must see communication as a two way process.

Make room for people to ask the difficult questions. People will ask, what does this mean for me, what about the practicalities, can I have time to think about it, where is the evidence this is working, why don't we do this sooner, is this biblical? These questions can shape the change so that it is more effective as any weaknesses are exposed. The answers to these questions can be incorporated into the communication about the change so that the reasons for it are made even clearer to the congregation. Elders should ask these questions in Kirk Session in the planning stages. Opportunity should then also be given to congregation members to ask these sorts of questions too perhaps via 'listening groups' or one-to-one conversations at a fairly early stage in the change process.

Question: have we as a Kirk Session engaged with these difficult questions and allowed them to shape the change process?



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