CULTURE CHANGE

by Luke Kuepfer

A Case Study of Salem Christian Fellowship

1967 - 1998

INTRODUCTION

In 1967 three families left traditional Conservative Amish Mennonite churches in Southern Ontario, Canada to form Salem Christian Fellowship. By 1975 this congregation's membership had grown to 22 and by 1985 to 36.[1] Salem went on to experience further growth in the next decade before closing it's doors in 1998.

At least two reasons existed for this new church startup. First, there was a real desire for a higher level of spirituality in which new life was experienced in the context of assurance of salvation and victory over sin. Some younger people from the older traditional churches in Southern Ontario attended youth fellowship meetings in the USA and returned with a new spiritual hunger. Bible studies were started in their homes and people were "born again."[2] Second, there was a concern for English to be used in church services rather than the traditional and poorly understood dialect of German; families were seeking an environment in which their children could understand God's word and be discipled in their heart language. Berea Christian Fellowship—a church from the United States that had emerged from similar circumstances—sent a pastor up to Canada to help further catalyze and develop the vision of this new group. Salem Christian Fellowship adapted much of Berea's confessional statement for their church constitution and aligned

themselves with a conference known as the Beachy Amish.

The people at Salem retained a number of practices and values held by the older traditional churches from which they had left. They continued the practice of wearing head coverings, beards, suits with hooks and eyes, and they maintained the standard 18 articles of the Mennonite Confession of Faith.[3] Outwardly the changes were minimal, inwardly more significant. All services were held in English, Sunday school was introduced for both children and adults, and a midweek prayer meeting was added to the schedule. English hymns replaced the slow German songs sung from the *Ausbund* and the topic of "assurance of salvation" featured in the preaching. Lay persons helped lead the worship services in contrast to the traditional churches where everything was conducted by the clergy. Whereas in the past people placed their offerings in a stationary basket at the front of the church when a special need became known, now the plate was passed for tithes and offerings on a consistent basis; new perspectives regarding the missional nature of church elevated this form of worship to a priority.

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1. Marlene Epp and Sam Steiner, "Salem Mennonite Fellowship (Atwood, Ontario, Canada)" Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, 2002.

2. Interviewee B, Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.

3. Interviewee C, Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.

During its formation and early years, Salem Christian Fellowship was comprised mostly of three families, their relatives, and close friends. Over time more people joined, some out of curiosity to see "that little church up in Alma that was on fire,"[4] others out of dissatisfaction elsewhere, and still others as a result of the hospitable nature of Salem Fellowship's members.[5] At one point Salem transitioned from one conference to another, adapting to a slightly more progressive movement—Midwest Mennonite Fellowship —that provided more fellowship to their growing youth group. With that change came new Bishop oversight and some slight changes in practice and doctrinal application.

Although at one time Salem Christian Fellowship had a vibrant youth group, very few young couples remained to build the church after they married and began their families. Membership numbers continued to dwindle as a new church—New Covenant Mennonite—emerged in the community and some key youth leaders left to support this fresh movement. With the assistance of outside leadership, a decision was made to close the doors at Salem and disperse to neighboring churches with similar values. Most members transferred their membership to Zion Mennonite Fellowship and the building was sold to another church group in 2000.[6]

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4. *Interviewee C, Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.*

5. *Interviewee D, Phone Interview, November 15, 2013.*

6. *Marlene Epp and Sam Steiner, "Salem Mennonite Fellowship (Atwood, Ontario, Canada)" Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, 2002.*

ANALYSIS

Salem Christian Fellowship is an example of an innovation that diffused within a certain social system and maintained both stable and dynamic periods of equilibrium until unanticipated consequences effectuated its demise.[7] At the beginning, dynamic changes occurred at a rate consistent with the system's ability to cope with modifications in worship and practice that produced new life. These changes were easy to adopt because of the vision driving them; members were inspired by what they saw in other churches and excited about reaching new heights in their walk with God.[8] As time went on, Salem matured and settled into a more stable period of growth that was marked more by maintaining the status quo than the introduction of changes in format or function. The format of the service consisted of three hymns of worship at the beginning, a devotional, Sunday school, announcements, an offering, and lastly a message. Practices and ordinances were meaningful for those who had experienced renewal when emerging from a more traditional background; future generations were expected to adopt them as normative Christian values and encounter similar significance. Changes that were introduced when joining another conference were minimal and largely in alignment with the wishes of the younger generation and hence easily embraced. Other changes that were introduced by the youth—especially those pertaining to worship service format—posed a larger challenge and separated them from some in the older generation. It was feared that the praise and worship time introduced after Sunday school would shorten the time allotted for preaching. Breaking into small groups for special times of connection throughout the week were also desired by the youth and young married couples but firmly rejected by the overseer from the Midwest Mennonite Fellowship.[9] Some people simply did not like change and pushed against it. Young people left, the praise and worship time was discontinued, and small groups never materialized. Worship practice and fellowship at Salem continued much the same as it always had until too few people were left to carry on.

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7. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations,* (New York: Free, 2003) 470-471.

8. *Interviewee B, Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.*

9. *Interviewee A, Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.*

In one sense it appears that the initial positive changes in spiritual vitality at Salem Fellowship erected barriers to future ongoing changes; an unanticipated consequence that was "neither intended nor recognized by the members of the system."[10] The first generation at Salem expected their innovation to be sufficient for succeeding generations, closing them off to the consideration that future changes may be necessary. Furthermore, their adaptation to change was forgotten as they resisted the innovations desired by their would-be successors. When leaving the traditional churches they too had experienced opposition from both their leaders and parents; history was now repeating itself. The younger generation desired new innovations to deepen their spirituality similar to their parents. They were not rejecting their parents' innovations as wrong or devaluing the established traditions at Salem; they simply needed fresh expressions that were valid for them and helped them experience truth at a deeper level. Erwin McManus captures the important role traditions can play in either catalyzing or extinguishing ongoing innovation and dreams: "Traditions are not only roadblocks for change; they can become roadblocks for dreams. Traditions that become treasured memories can be the catalyst for new dreams and new experiences. But when they trap us in the past, they stifle the imagination, bring an end to creativity, and make innovation impossible. Where there are no dreams, there is no hope. And when there is no hope, there is no future."[11]

It is important to note that cultural contexts and social environments are always evolving; within them each generation seeks to appropriately apply the unchanging truth. History clearly shows that truth has been expressed and experienced in a variety of forms and styles across cultures and time. While innovative at their inception and meaningful to those with vested interests, expressions and experiences generally have a limited lifespan requiring reinvention at some future point. For Salem Fellowship, even the innovation of praise and worship times with periods of silence introduced by the younger generation would eventually become rote and need upgrading by future generations.[12]
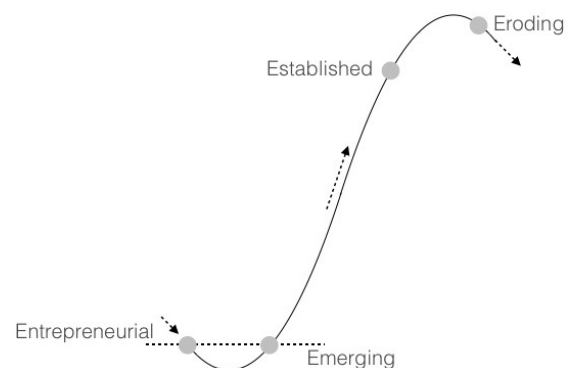

Figure 1

First popularized by British educator Charles Handy, the sigmoid curve (see Figure 1) is an analytical tool that helps us understand change.[13] Any organization, movement, or business begins at the entrepreneurial stage. Marked by vision, creativity, risk, and innovation, this stage involves high energy,

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10. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations,* (New York: Free, 2003) 470.

11. Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind,* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2001) 90.

12. *Interviewee D, Phone Interview, November 15, 2013.*

13. Tim Elmore, *Mick Jagger was Right, Part I,* Handout, 2010.

sacrifice and commitment, and aims to establish viability for the organization.[14] If it can push through the dip it will begin to emerge as creditable and gain traction in the market or social sphere. Eventually it matures, becoming well-established with systems in place to insure stability. If change does not occur as products and services cease to meet the needs of changing environments and contexts, a plateau is achieved and the movement begins to decline. This is particularly true of organizations that "take the path of least resistance...[moving] from establishment to erosion" with their season of stability quickly turning to vulnerability.[15]
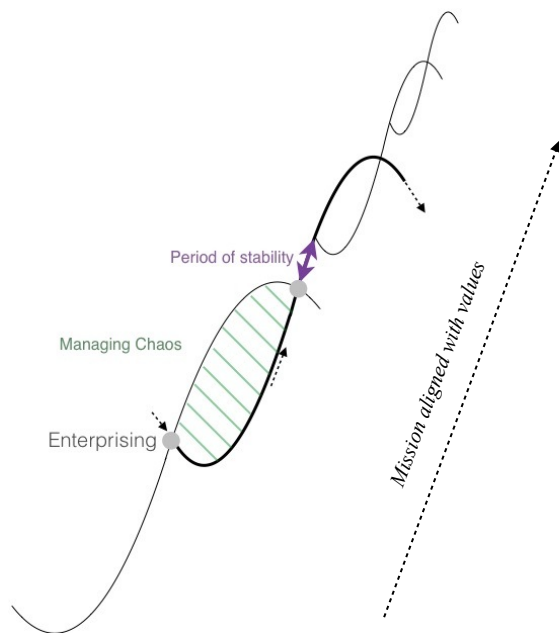
Surviving change and avoiding erosion requires an enterprising phase marked by a "second sigmoid" (see Figure 2). Marked by adaptability and driven by visionary leadership, movements can recapture the essence of the entrepreneurial stage by pioneering new paradigms and developing new methods and products without violating their overall mission or undermining their organizational identity.[16] Launching a second movement that simultaneously runs parallel to the first one will require an adequate dose of innovation, risk, and creativity, but can increase the chances of survival and prevent the death of a vision. Critical to survival is embracing change and launching this "second sigmoid curve" before nearing the plateau stage. If one waits too long the momentum is gone to energize new movement. Those invested deeply at the first entrepreneurial stage will often resist a "second sigmoid"; the innovation already cost them something, was well-intentioned and designed, and they most likely did not entertain the idea of upgrading at it's inauguration. Furthermore, everything appears to be working fine and there's no obvious reason for disrupting the preferred climate of stability. Hence, managing the chaos by running two co-existing systems is the challenge for a leader who understands what Jim Collins refers to as clock building rather than time telling: "Build an organization that can endure and adapt through multiple generations of leaders and multiple product life cycles; the exact opposite of being built around a single great leader or a single great idea."[17]

Figure 2

Period of stability

Managing Chaos

Enterprising

Mission aligned with values

14. Tim Elmore, *Mick Jagger was Right, Part II,* Handout, 2010.

15. Tim Elmore, *Mick Jagger was Right, Part II,* Handout, 2010.

16. Tim Elmore, *Mick Jagger was Right, Part II,* Handout, 2010.

17. James Charles Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001) 197.

Empowering new leaders and visionaries to begin a second movement alongside the existing one is a serious challenge since critics of anything new will push against change up until the second movement crosses the declining curve of the first. If managed properly, a short period of stability ensues before more change is required to sustain the movement. The upside of managing chaos is that it fosters a leadership culture and focuses the movement on it's original purpose. Keeping everyone's eyes on the overall mission of the organization rather than its methods will insure that the movement remains aligned with its unchanging values and pointed in the right direction. Jim Collins captures this idea in his book, Good to Great: "Enduring great companies preserve their core values and purpose while their... strategies and operating practices endlessly adapt to a changing world. This is the magical combination of 'preserve the core and stimulate progress.'"[18]

As an organization, Salem Fellowship succeeded with an initial innovation but then failed to launch a "second sigmoid" and manage the chaos between the preferred methodologies of two different generations. This was only one of the factors at work however, that brought about Salem's closure; other unintentional forces from it's very inception militated against it's ability to survive and expand its influence.

Interviewee D believes that one of the greatest issues was the relatedness of Salem's members; no one used their family connections intentionally but those power dynamics were at work below the surface.[19] The innovation of new spiritual life at Salem Christian Fellowship diffused through very specific channels over time to particular members in a social system. This diffusion process can be graphed on a bell curve (see Figure 3), and, in Everett Rogers' terms, breaks down into the following categories of adoption: innovators (2.5% of the population), early adopters (13.5%), early majority (34%), late majority (34%), and laggards (16%).[20] The innovators at Salem were two couples, both uncles and aunts to myself. My parents were early adopters, recruited in part by a brother and sister to join this new movement. The early majority were made up of those who had close ties to the others and simply waited to see what would become of Salem before making their move.[21] The late majority came in as a result of the next generation's influence on single youth either through hospitality or dating relationships.

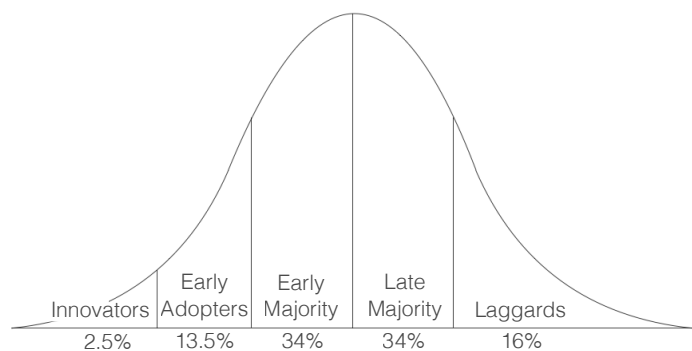| Innovators	Early Adopters	Early Majority	Late Majority	Laggards
2.5%	13.5%	34%	34%	16%

Figure 3

18. James Charles Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2001) 195.

19. Interviewee D, *Phone Interview, November 15, 2013.*

20. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, (New York: Free, 2003) 281.

21. Interviewee C, *Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.*

Laggards were those who showed up in the later years having been dissatisfied elsewhere and seeking a new start and acceptance at Salem. During the first three stages of adoption the family connections became well established and are easily understood in terms of Rogers' perceived attributes of innovations.[22] Besides the basic relative advantage of deeper spirituality there was the additional benefit for those joining this new movement to not have to sort out their values and preferred practices. With strong family connections, homogeneity made for easier adoption. In that sense everyone shared compatibility in idea-sharing and application. The innovation was also not complex with the aid of an outside American church pointing the way and sharing it's doctrinal statement. The pastor from Berea Christian Fellowship was only there for a short time and the overseer from the Midwest Mennonite Fellowship only showed up on occasion; family connections remained strong and intact. The overseer was also from a strong "one-family-oriented" movement and thus oblivious to the potential drawbacks this may have had on Salem's ongoing sustainability; if anything, he would have most likely perceived this in a favorable light. In light of this case study, it is interesting to note that in 2013 this overseer's church also closed its doors as a result of his continued attempt to control the leadership where he and his family had held power for so long.

Two other characteristics of an innovation that explains the rate of adoption or diffusion are trialability and observability. In one case, a family not related to the three original families was approached with an invitation to bring their girls to Sunday School.[23] This allowed an outsider to experience and observe what was going on at Salem and as a result the entire family became members. Winter Bible School featuring speakers from America held at Salem was also a real drawing card for many; some came out of curiosity and ended up sticking around.[24] Salem Fellowship also attracted some people with strange ideas. Since Salem always remained relatively small with a strong family atmosphere, people could engage in the informal atmosphere comfortably and express their ideas. One story is told, however, of the short-lived attendance of a man whose last name was *Wolf*. The pastor assisting from America preached a message in which he mentioned "prowling wolves in sheep's clothing"; Mr. Wolf never returned after that.[25] The preacher unfortunately did not know the man's last name and thus had no knowledge of his insensitivity to an outsider who was not part of the majority at Salem made up mostly of related family members.

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22. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations,* (New York: Free, 2003) 15.

23. Interviewee B, Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.

24. Interviewee C, Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.

25. Interviewee C, Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.

Another reason for the successful diffusion of innovation at Salem Fellowship was the homophily of it's members in terms of "beliefs, education, socioeconomic status, and the like."[26] Those who stuck around to become strong members of the church shared a similar church background, language, ethnicity, and livelihood connected to agriculture. Most persons at Salem were from the same social system and thus had little difficulty in adapting to changes together. Ironically, however, it was also family relatedness that formed the basis for some of the largest conflicts at Salem Fellowship. Personality clashes caused a lot of stress for those in leadership and even resulted in some eventually leaving Salem to start something elsewhere. Fortunately, at a recent reunion, many of these members reunited to express their appreciation for Salem's influence; a nasty split never occurred and everyone apparently loves each other today.[27]

Although homophily improves the effectiveness of communication within a social system it also creates a barrier to greater diffusion.[28] On one hand homogeneity can contribute towards a semblance of unity based on uniformity. Everyone thinks uniformly, believes in the same values, shares identical practices, and has experienced a similar history; moving the group toward a preferred comfort zone. Homogeneity, however, can tend toward an inward focus that values and protects that comfort zone above all else, resulting in stagnation and loss of vision. At Salem Fellowship, the decline was marked by loss of missions vision and lack of purpose; people were just showing up to do church.[29] Family relatedness at Salem Fellowship unintentionally generated homophilous thinking that prevented greater growth and expansion.

26. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations,* (New York: Free, 2003) 19.

27. *Interviewee B, Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.*

28. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations,* (New York: Free, 2003) 306.

29. *Interviewee A, Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.*

In contrast to homophily is a social system where unity in diversity is embraced. Though much more difficult to achieve, the payoff for a church is significant in terms of synergistic results, greater beauty, and more glory to God. An organization that unites the strengths of different people from various backgrounds and giftings builds the body of Christ described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. Just as diversity in nature allows us to experience tremendous beauty in a vast array of colors, functions, and forms, so in the body of Christ is a beauty observed and subsequent joy experienced when a variety of worship styles, practices, and applications are expressed and celebrated. Ultimately God gets the greatest glory when He unites all diversity in His Kingdom, portrayed in the grand climax of "time" (see Revelation 5:9 & 7:9).

Since homophily is ultimately a barrier to ongoing diffusion, replacing it via heterophilous network links can span the dissimilar elements in a system and serve as bridges to outliers.[30] Leaders equipped with effective communication skills, long-range vision, and a commitment to the unchangeable values and mission of an organization can serve as these links or bridges. Empathic listening skills combined with an ability to facilitate true dialogue will foster environments where thoughtful conversations can lead to positive change. Visionaries that clearly understand the path from past to present can aptly build movement toward a positive future if their purpose is aligned with the foundational values of the social group.

Many times the termination of any social organization is more complex than what may appear as obvious to many. Factors such as spiritual warfare or lack of commitment on the part of some members may have also precipitated Salem's closure. Often it is easier to focus on these elements outside one's control and sidestep deeper issues that are either systemic or socially unhealthy. Some Christians often "spiritualize all social problems" and hold to the idea that "social transformation will occur only when Christ returns and establishes his earthly kingdom."[31] Likewise, anything negative that occurs in a Christian organization can be attributed to spiritual attack and the solution is to simply prayer harder or commit more.

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30. Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations,* (New York: Free, 2003) 306.

31. Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement.* (Berkeley: University of California, 2007) 127.

At Salem Christian Fellowship a combination of family relatedness and a preference for the status quo played key roles in bringing about its discontinuation. Overlaying the sigmoid curve diagram with Rogers' diffusion model (see Figure 4) highlights this point. The point of decline and erosion came shortly before Salem diffused among the laggards. Had Salem clearly observed a need for reinvention during their greatest growth period in the middle of the early majority phase, perhaps closure could have been avoided. Reinvention of structure may have involved strategically placing non-family members in positions of influence. It may also have generated an inquiry into best spiritual formation practices and developed an evaluation team who could continuously align the environment with the overall mission and values of Salem. Discerning how the family-relatedness factor coupled together with an acceptance of the status quo would ultimately lead to decline may have saved the day. Typically however, one's vision is 20/20 only in hindsight.
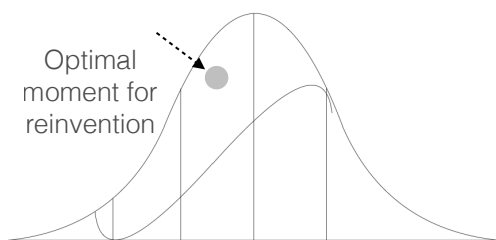

Figure 4

CONCLUSION

An innovation is typically designed for a certain context or time. It may possibly be the best solution for that environment or era but that does not necessarily mean it will always be relevant. Changes in technology and social movements can easily affect environments; something the Gospel has always transcended and adapted to with transformative impact. Erwin McManus correctly observes that "the church was designed to thrive in our radically changing environments."[32] One might contend that if new innovations are not introduced, relevance is lost and the Gospel becomes "changed" as its adherents cling to outmoded systems of sharing it. The proper concern for the preservation of truth is legitimate and noteworthy, especially to those who love change for change's sake and risk losing the foundation on which they stand. Similar concern must also be expressed however, to those bent on maintaining the status quo that has unfortunately often led to an unintentional concealment of the truth through the use of outdated methods, language, or systems. Shane Hipps proposes that the "medium is the message" and states that "the ever-changing message never changes." Jesus talks about new wine and new wineskins (Matthew 9:17); a direct challenge to "the prevailing notion that 'the methods change but the message stays the same.'"[33] Although the themes connected to Christ's

forgiveness through His death on the cross will never change, "With each new context the gospel must grow to address challenges and issues that never existed before."[34] Otherwise the core tenets of the Gospel risk being replaced by a lifeless, legalistic orthodoxy embraced by those similar to the Pharisees of Christ's day.

It is interesting to note that back in 1967 when the first three families left the traditional churches they had a difficult time explaining to their parents and the leadership why they were leaving. Interviewee B attempted to explain to another member why he left and later that member—who could not entirely grasp Interviewee B's reasoning—found himself in similar shoes when attempting to explain his reasons for departure to the ministers.[35] An objectifying process called reification had happened without the knowledge of those within the system: Reification occurs when social institutions become bigger than and gain control over the people who created them. The creators lose their freedom and their moral agency, becoming subjugated to their own creations instead of nurtured by them.[36] Neither Interviewee B nor the other member wished to disparage the system that no longer produced life despite the fact that certain core truths and the power of the Gospel had been lost. They both felt compelled to not accept the status quo of

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32. Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind,* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2001) 17.

33. Shane Hipps, *Ever Changing, Never Changing,* Shane Hipps Blog, 10 Oct. 2009.

34. Shane Hipps, *Ever Changing, Never Changing,* Shane Hipps Blog, 10 Oct. 2009.

35. Interviewee B, Phone Interview, November 14, 2013.

36. Bruce Bradshaw, *Change across Cultures: A Narrative Approach to Social Transformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002) 76.

that culture and hence supported the new innovation at Salem Fellowship. For them it was an attempt to "prevent the reification of social structures by discerning how [their new] church [could] participate in their transformation."[37] Additionally, close friends and family remained at these traditional churches and in that sense, change had also become quite personal.

Perhaps one common misconception of change for those resisting it is the perception that innovators are rejecting everything as insufficient. Some aspects may be affirmed for the past era but no longer deemed applicable to the current context. Each generation needs to experience new life or revival for themselves and cannot simply rely on the systems, applications, or cultural understandings of past generations. By grappling with language, design, and culture's ever-changing nuances, innovators build something that works for them that will also eventually need upgrading, tweaking or complete revamping by future generations.

John Maxwell once said that "everything rises and falls on leadership."[38] Enterprising leaders who resist complacency, foster creativity, foresee the need for change, sustain continuity, and maintain consistency are needed for enduring movements.[39] Pleased with maturity, they are never happy with the status quo and thus are always evaluating, improving, and pushing for greater productivity or fruit-bearing. Enterprising leaders are unafraid of failure and cultivate environments where "outside-the-box" thinkers can process and try out their new ideas, provided they align with the mission and values of the organization. They are intuitive and visionary, knowledgeable of when an idea has found its time and willing to launch it. Enterprising leaders are focused; "they do not seek change as an end in itself" but "know how to preserve a sense of progression so people don't become unsettled."[40] As innovators they love an upward movement of growth and ultimately understand the cycles of birth, maturity, and re-birth.

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37. Bruce Bradshaw, *Change across Cultures: A Narrative Approach to Social Transformation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002) 141.

38. *John C. Maxwell, The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership. (Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson, 1998) 225.*

39. Tim Elmore, *Mick Jagger was Right, Part II,* Handout, 2010.

40. Tim Elmore, *Mick Jagger was Right, Part II,* Handout, 2010.

Unfortunately, when the leaders of an existing system are products of it or have deeply invested in its creation or structure, they generally have difficulty in transitioning to an enterprising role to bring about the needed changes. Their plight is commonplace: Churches rarely ask themselves the question, "Who can change us?" The commission given to the pastoral church committee rarely centers around a prophetic ministry but around a pastoral ministry. So the longer we serve a congregation and leave things the same, the more we confirm the status quo we were called to maintain.[41]

A transition might take place however, if a Participatory Action Research (PAR) process facilitated by a professional researcher was initiated by the members of the community. An action researcher could assist with "problem identification, information gathering, mobilization of community members who are affected, collaborative analysis and critical reflection, collaborative planning, action, and new reflection."[42] An outside expert would begin with listening rather than offering advice or solutions since prognosis without diagnosis leads to malpractice. They realize that local knowledge—an analysis of problems and priorities by the community itself—is not "uniform, static, or invalid," but rather "[provides] an adequate foundation for development."[43] By playing the role of a coach and asking stimulating questions, an action researcher could partner with the community in self-diagnosis and ownership of a solution. This self-discovery process of "Conscientization...[takes] action against the oppressive elements of reality" when "people discover the experiences that have structured their world."[44] Had the founders of Salem Fellowship utilized the PAR process to consider it's origins more seriously in light of the youths' vision, development of a future congregation may have been possible.

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41. Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind,* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2001) 187.

42. *John Van Willigen, Applied Anthropology: An Introduction, (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2002) 80.*

43. *John Van Willigen, Applied Anthropology: An Introduction, (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2002) 69.*

44. *John Van Willigen, Applied Anthropology: An Introduction, (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2002) 95.*

Furthermore, an action researcher could have played the role of mediator and insured that every group member's perspective was equally valued.[45] At some churches the voice of the older generation tends to have more influence given their seniority or economic power. When the future of the church is only formed by those living in the past however, it should come as no surprise that ownership and commitment will remain lacking among the youth.

Neutral consultants brought in from the outside can assist with the reinvention process that combines existing values shared by all with ongoing modifications to the innovation and possibly circumvent a church's ultimate closure. This occurs through a policy process that involves the following stages: 1) Awareness of need, 2) Formulation of alternative solutions, 3) Evaluation of alternative solutions, 4) Formulation of policy, 5) Implementation of policy, and 6) Evaluation of implementation.[46] The process of careful researching, evaluating, and implementing can be tedious but rewarding. Conducting evaluation at each step of the process insures that the reinvention stays on track with the overall mission and values of the organization.

A church should always be moving forward, changing to adapt to life's new challenges, and being constantly remade in the image of Christ's bride. We can certainly remember and value the past; but we should not remain there. The present is a stepping stone toward the future that God has for us; "Our memories of God's activity in our lives are to move us into the future."[47] Our eschatological destiny features a transformed bride from all nations united in one grand family forever in the presence of the Unchanging One.

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45. John Van Willigen, *Applied Anthropology: An Introduction*, (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2002) 96.

46. John Van Willigen, *Applied Anthropology: An Introduction*, (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2002) 162.

47. Erwin Raphael McManus, *An Unstoppable Force: Daring to Become the Church God Had in Mind*, (Loveland, CO: Group, 2001) 65.

About the Author

Luke Kuepfer is founder and former Field Director of Global Tribes Outreach (GTO), a non-profit organization in Southeast Asia. He taught school for three years in Western Canada before serving with GTO for ten years. His extensive experience in missions mobilization, leadership training, and team development has taken him to four continents over the last 20 years. Luke has a Masters in Christian leadership from Asbury Theological Seminary and is the President of the Reverb Network—a non-profit dedicated to developing leaders around the world. He speaks, trains, and coaches in both business and non-profit spheres. Luke is flexible and easily adaptable to change, committed to personal growth and a lifetime of learning. He is dedicated to motivating everyone toward missional thinking and practice in all areas of life. Luke firmly believes that having our thinking challenged is not enough; it must be translated into change. He is married to Amy and has three children—Brittany, Courtney, and Jamin. Having climbed 20 of Colorado's 14-ers; Luke's family hopes to summit all 53 before his energy runs out.