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LEADING ADAPTIVE CHANGE
IN A KOREAN CULTURAL CONTEXT

By

JOSEPH KUKHUN LEE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

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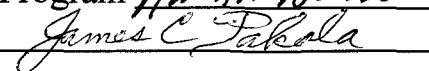
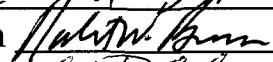
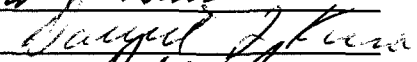
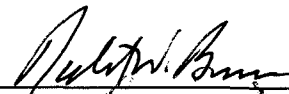
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to show that the Korean cultural context was an important factor in understanding how Korean pastors led adaptive change. The author used the qualitative research method for this research. An analysis of the interviews with eight Korean pastors who led adaptive change concluded that Korean cultural traits did influence how congregations reacted to adaptive challenges and as a result, affected how pastors led the change. Korean pastors still were able to lead successful adaptive changes by using various necessary tools to navigate the web of enduring social relationship, even though it took considerable time.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Korean churches are increasingly facing challenges for which there are no readily available technical remedies and problems for which it won't help to look to an authority for answers. They are adaptive challenges that require congregation themselves to change in values, entrenched habits, and priorities.¹ These new challenges have been brought by changes in ministry environment-- aging congregation, English speaking second generation, changing neighborhood, demand for new worship style, need for bilingual service, and competing demands for a limited budget.

Adaptive work brings loss and pain, which stimulate resistance from the congregation. And since the pastor is in an authority position, there is “a strong pressure to focus on the technical aspects of the problem.”² There are also temptations to make decisions that pander to those whose influence can affect the pastor’s position and reputation in the organization.³

When an adaptive challenge is treated as a technical problem, or adaptive work is thwarted through resistance by the people, the pastor loses effectiveness, the church stagnates, and the name of Christ is dishonored. While seminaries train future pastors in theology and gospel preaching, there is inadequate attention paid to practical leadership

¹ Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Martin Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business Press, 2009). 19

² Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line : Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2002). 28

³ Ibid. 14

skills,⁴ and much less to aspects of adaptive leadership. Pastors who understand how to navigate and intervene effectively in adaptive challenges will lead the congregation to thrive in a changing environment. And churches that embrace change and confront adaptive issues head-on would help “transform people into God’s image.”⁵

Peter Steinke offers biblical support for the concept of adaptive change saying,

As we look at how Jesus taught, we recognize that much of what he was saying involved adaptive change. He appealed to the right hemisphere, inviting brainstorming and encouraging imagination...when the Gospel writers told the story of Jesus’ encounter with the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-22),....he shocked him with the challenge to sell all the possessed and give the profits to the poor...He openly challenged the fixed law, because he could imagine that love superseded code—“The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27)...Jesus challenged the routine and regimentation of the established order. Prophets deal with “adaptive work.”⁶

Perceived loss due to adaptive change, as well as the ensuing conflict that surfaces among stakeholders, invariably cause emotional distress for the pastor as well as the congregation. Therefore in order for adaptive work to be successful in the midst of conflict and emotional distress, there must be leadership that uses relational skills and emotional maturity.

Further, characteristics of Korean culture – authoritarianism, respect for order, harmony, and consciousness of status – bring those who engage in adaptive leadership in a Korean cultural context unique challenges as well as opportunities. P. Christopher Earley asserts in *Developing Cultural Intelligence at Work*, that “leadership behaviors that are effective in one culture are not necessarily effective in others. While some

⁴ Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Waterbrook Press, 2006). p.17.

⁵ Kevin Graham Ford, *Transforming Church : Bringing out the Good to Get to Great* (Carol Stream, Ill.: SaltRiver, 2007). xv

⁶ Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times : Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What* (Herndon, Va.: Alban Institute, 2006). 133

leadership qualities or practices may be universal, other leadership qualities, styles, and principles are situational or cultural specific.”⁷

Thus pastors who lead adaptive change in a Korean cultural context should be aware of opportunities as well as hindrances unique to Korean culture, in order to exercise effective adaptive leadership, but there no research has been done in this area. The purpose of this study is to understand how pastors lead adaptive change in Korean cultural contexts. What can be learned from pastors in Korean churches who have successfully led adaptive change, and also from those who did it with mixed results? What can be gained from the studies of others who have examined the dynamics that occur in adaptive work which are different from technical solutions? How can understanding the practice of adaptive leadership in a Korean cultural setting lead to an effective ministry that guides churches to thrive in a changing environment so that Christ is honored?

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

Because pastors will have to face adaptive challenges in their ministry as internal, external, and environmental changes, this research seeks to discover what kind of leadership skills must be learned so that pastors can be better prepared to serve as effective change leaders in Korean cultural contexts. Unlike technical problems, adaptive challenges require the congregation itself to change and accept pertinent losses. But pastors, as authority figures, get intense pressure to treat challenges as technical problems, and there are attempts to neutralize adaptive leadership by stakeholders in the system. Pastors also face temptation to pander to those who have influence in conferring

⁷ P. Christopher Earley, Soon Ang, and Joo-Seng Tan, *Cq : Developing Cultural Intelligence at Work* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Business Books, 2006). 175

authority to them. This problem is more pronounced in Korean churches, because Korean culture is authoritarian, status conscious, honors obedience, and values harmony and order.⁸ The purpose of this study is to explore how native Korean pastors lead adaptive change in Korean immigrant churches in America.

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Four main areas that are central to adaptive work have been identified. These areas include adaptive leadership, conflict management, emotional intelligence, and cultural intelligence. To that end, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How do native Korean pastors describe their leadership roles and behaviors during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
2. How do native Korean pastors deal with conflicts that arise during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
3. How do native Korean pastors respond to emotional situations during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
4. How do native Korean pastors describe the cultural issues that impact their leadership during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has significance because there is a gap between the general understanding of adaptive leadership and its practical application in a Korean cultural setting. The assumption of this study was that the Korean cultural context is an important factor in understanding how Korean pastors lead adaptive change. This study intended to

⁸ Won Moo Hurh, *The Korean Americans*, The New Americans, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998). 15

shed light on the degree to which the cultural context affects the way pastors lead adaptive change.

Significance for the pastors who serve and lead adaptive change in Korean churches:

Most church conflicts are adaptive challenges that require new learning and changes in value and behavior. Still due to the pressure from the congregation, pastors may choose to treat adaptive challenges as technical problems and delay the consequences of their decisions. But if the adaptive challenges cannot persistently be avoided, the pastors, by continuing to collude with the expectations of the congregation, will pay for the consequences of having failed to prepare their congregations for the upcoming crisis. They will take the blame.⁹

On the other hand, even if the pastor treats the situation as an adaptive challenge, if the pastor has not learned the skills that are needed to lead adaptive change, then they may find themselves to be the target of attack and “assassination.” People do want to change as long as they remain unchallenged and comfortable. The issue is how to live with those expectations and still lead change. When people don’t want to grow for fear of loss and pain, how pastors lead them to grow?

It is crucial for pastors to know the difference between technical problems and adaptive challenges, and what tools are needed to lead adaptive change. They also need to know what modifications are necessary to apply adaptive leadership in a Korean cultural context. This study will seek to discern some of the culture-specific ministry skills that need to be learned, in order that those who plan to lead adaptive change in Korean churches will be able to identify them and take the necessary action.

⁹ Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*. 237

Significance for non-Korean Pastors Who Minister to Churches that Face Adaptive Challenges

There is also significance for pastors who minister to non-Korean congregations that face adaptive challenges. Since every church has its own cultural signature, this study will help pastors to recognize its cultural context and modify their adaptive leadership strategies accordingly, by shedding light on how to design strategies to lead adaptive change in light of the cultural particularities, what disciplines and tools are more important in leading successful adaptive changes in a given culture.

Furthermore, this study will have added significance for non-Korean pastors who plan to lead adaptive change in churches with authoritarian cultures. There is an unfortunate trend toward authoritarian tendencies observed in some evangelical churches. Steve Martin notes, “While standing against the lawlessness and anti-authority mood of this generation, some conservative, Bible-believing churches have drifted into deadly authoritarian tendencies. This sad phenomenon is increasingly becoming publicized and well-documented.”¹⁰

Since this study focused in part on how authoritarian Korean church culture affects the way pastors lead adaptive change, this research will help those who exercise adaptive leadership in an authoritarian church culture, be it Korean church or not, by providing guidance in how to navigate the maze of an authoritarian church culture when leading change.

Significance for the Church

Just as this study will have an impact on the adaptive leadership of pastors in non-Korean congregations, it also has significance for churches that face adaptive

¹⁰ Steve Martin. “Authoritarianism in the Church,” *The Founders Journal* Vol.15, Winter 1994. <http://www.founders.org/journal/fj15/article3.html> (25 February 2010)

challenges, by helping them to survive and thrive in a rapidly changing environment.

Misdiagnosis or refusal to face adaptive challenges will result in stagnation of the church.

Kevin Ford claims, “Every church needs transformation. Those that don’t change die...Like any organization, church can become stagnant, complacent, irrelevant, or ineffective without transformational change to keep them focused on their mission.”¹¹

When the pastor fails to exercise effective adaptive leadership, the congregation suffers from that failure of leadership. But by keeping what is essential and discarding what is not essential in the congregational values and traditions, through adaptive leadership, the church will be able to maintain its transformational presence in a changing environment, for the furtherance of the gospel and to the glory of the Lord.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Adaptive Challenge – The gap between the values people stand for (that constitute thriving) and the reality that they face (their current lack of capacity to realize those values in their environment). It requires change of values, behaviors, priorities, and new learning.

Adaptive Work – The learning process through which people in a system achieve a successful adaption. In this process, people move from familiar but inadequate problems, through disequilibrium, to a more adequate equilibrium. The process is both conservative and progressive in that it enables the living system to take the best from its traditions, identity, and history into the future.

Adaptive Leadership – The activity of mobilizing adaptive work.

Conflict – A difference in opinion of purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires.

Cultural Intelligence – The capacity to interpret and respond to unfamiliar cultural signals in an appropriate manner.

Emotional Intelligence/Differentiation of Self – A person’s capacity to remain true to his or her principles, to be thoughtful rather than reactive, while remaining emotionally connected to others who are important to him or her.

¹¹ Ford, *Transforming Church : Bringing out the Good to Get to Great.*, xv

Holding Environment – The cohesive properties of a relationship or social system that serve to keep people engaged with one another in spite of the divisive forces generated by adaptive work.

In-Jung – A feeling of affection that occurs spontaneously between people, not from formal obligations. It occurs primarily based on mutual dependence and naturally renders favorable treatment.

Orchestrating conflict – Designing and leading the process of getting parties with differences to work through them productively, as distinguished from resolving the differences for them.

Technical problem – Problems that can be diagnosed and solved by authoritative expertise and management of routine processes.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore how native Korean pastors lead adaptive change in Korean immigrant churches in America. The purpose of understanding the experience of those who had engaged in adaptive change in Korean churches was to obtain guidance to facilitate effective adaptive change in local Korean congregations. Little has been written that specifically addresses adaptive challenges in churches, and still less has been written to address such challenges in Korean immigrant churches. However, there is a burgeoning body of literature on the topic of adaptive challenges in secular organizations. A large body of literature also addresses the leadership qualities that are required of those who would lead adaptive change. Before reviewing the literature, the researcher will trace the biblical foundations of leadership that frame this research.

BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The inspired Word of God provides the principles of leadership, especially pastoral leadership. Therefore, pastoral leadership should be guided by following principles as they lead congregations in the process of adaptive change.

Christian leadership is Christ-centered leadership

“You have only one Master,” ¹²Jesus said. He promised, “I will build my church”¹³ Jesus also assured his disciples in giving the Great Commission, “surely I am

¹² Matthew 23:8b

¹³ Matthew 16:18

with you always, to the very end of the age.”¹⁴ In Matthew 18:20 he reiterated, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” Clearly, this indicates that he is present not only in the church as a whole but also in every local church. Jesus, therefore, is the ultimate authority within every congregation.

Christian Leadership is Servant Leadership

Jesus said, “Those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you.”¹⁵ He went on to say that rather than being lords, disciples are to serve each other, and that the greatest among them is the one who is servant of all. Dan Allender calls Christian leaders to follow in Jesus’ footsteps: “The true king takes the servant’s towel and washes the feet of the strangers who are guests in his home. Not only is he the host, but he also lowers himself to the place of a bondservant in order to follow the great King who has already washed his feet and forgiven him.”¹⁶

Warning against the temptation to be relevant, popular, and powerful, Henry Nouwen also calls for biblical leadership which is communal, and for mutual ministry with a servant attitude:

We are sinful, broken, vulnerable people who need as much care as anyone we care for. The mystery of ministry is that we have been chosen to make our own limited and very conditional love the gateway for the unlimited and unconditional love of God. Therefore, true ministry must be mutual...It is a servant leadership...in which the leader is a vulnerable servant who needs the people as much as they need him or her.¹⁷

¹⁴ Matthew 28:20b

¹⁵ Mark 10:42b-43a

¹⁶ Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Waterbrook Press, 2006).45

¹⁷ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus : Reflections on Christian Leadership with Study Guide for Groups and Individuals* (New York: Crossroad Pub. Co., 2002). 45

Christian Leadership is empowered by grace

Christ responded to Paul's plea for a cure from his disease by telling him "My grace is sufficient for you."¹⁸ Jesus promises Paul that he will provide sufficient grace to meet the leadership challenges of the moment, just as God provided the manna for each day to His people in the wilderness. It is, therefore, only through grace that pastors are meant to lead.¹⁹ They are the strongest when they are weak, and they are the most courageous when they are broken.²⁰ This grace-empowered leadership invariably demonstrates both "humility based on the mercy of God and conviction based on Kingdom values."²¹

Summary of the Biblical/Theological Framework

The Bible has much to say about how pastors should lead the church today. Pastors must understand that biblical leadership is Christ-centered, grace-empowered, and reflects a servant attitude. The purpose of this study was to explore how native Korean pastors lead adaptive change in Korean immigrant churches. In order to accomplish this study there were three contexts that needed to be considered.

First there is a political context. In *Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, Ronald Heifetz says, "Understanding the political relationships in your organization is key to seeing how your organization works as a system. And this activity, what we call thinking politically, can help you design more effective strategies for leading adaptive change."²²

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 12:8

¹⁹ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 107

²⁰ Ibid. 77

²¹ 2008 Covenant Seminary. Center for ministry leadership-rightpath-intersect, 7

²² Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Martin Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business Press, 2009). 90

In the political context, the issue is how to acquire the practical leadership skills to effectively lead adaptive change.

Secondly, there is a relational context. Allender asserts that leadership is “a profoundly relational enterprise that seeks to motivate people toward a vision that will require significant change and risk on everyone’s part.”²³ In this relational context, the issue is how to stay in the work of adaptive change in the face of opposition from people while remaining connected to those people.

Thirdly, there is a cultural context. In *Developing Cultural Intelligence at Work*, P. Christopher Earley explained:

Leadership behaviors that are effective in one culture are not necessarily effective in others. While some leadership qualities or practices may be universal, other leadership qualities, styles, and principles are situational or cultural specific. So if a manager leads others from different cultures, then cultural intelligence becomes indispensable for leadership success.²⁴

In this study, cultural context means that the pastor needs to understand how to take into account the aspects of Korean culture that impact the way Korean pastors lead adaptive change in Korean congregations. In considering those three contexts, four areas of literature have emerged. The first area of literature deals with the practical skills necessary to navigate the system of enduring social relationships and lead the adaptive change. These works examine adaptive leadership skills in the political context. The second area of literature deals with the issue of conflict in a political context. Since conflict usually occurs in the midst of adaptive change, the issue of conflict management will be addressed separately as the focus of this area of literature.

²³ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 14

²⁴ P. Christopher Earley, Soon Ang, and Joo-Seng Tan, *Cq : Developing Cultural Intelligence at Work* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Business Books, 2006). 175

The third area of literature deals with the adaptive leader's ability to do the right things in the midst of pressure to do the opposite. These writings examine the issue of the leader's emotional maturity in a relational context. The fourth area of literature examines cultural elements involved in leading adaptive change in a Korean cultural context.

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP SKILLS

The first area of literature focuses on leadership as a solution to adaptive challenges. The issue in this area is what practical skills pastors need in real ministry situations to motivate their congregations through disequilibrium toward significant change in spite of the risk. What skills does a pastor need to navigate through this complex set of goals, values, desires, concerns, and motivations in order to lead people to change in the context of enduring social relationships? Since adaptive leadership exceeds authority conferred, managerial skills alone will not work in the face of adaptive challenge.

Leaders need to learn how to negotiate conflicting interests, expectations, values, concerns, and motivations. Bob Burns explains:

Since ministry practice involves working with people, it is embedded in a set of social dynamics. Therefore, ministry must be considered in terms of "enduring social relationships." Power is the "dynamic" – the capacity to act – coming from enduring social relationships that allows people to do or not do something.²⁵

Many books address the challenges of leadership. Traditionally, research in this area focused on the leader's ability to develop and communicate a vision for change, to "align people to the vision," to motivate and inspire.²⁶ However, a burgeoning area of literature highlights the nature of adaptive challenge and suggests a different kind of leadership called adaptive leadership. These authors find a solution to adaptive challenge

²⁵ Class Note. 2009 Summer. Art and Practice of Leadership Class given by Dr. Bob Burns

²⁶ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 1996). 21

in the willingness and readiness of stakeholders to change their behavior, assumptions and attitudes, rather than in popular notion of the personality, authority, power of leadership to influence congregation to follow the leader's vision.²⁷ In other words, adaptive leadership is a "verb" focusing on activity, not a "noun" focusing on a leader.²⁸ The job of an adaptive leader is to mobilize people to face their problems and solve them on their own.

Ronald Heifetz, who teaches leadership courses at Harvard University, emphasizes three points in understanding adaptive leadership. First, he notes the difference between a technical problem and an adaptive change. Second, he addresses the need to reframe the issue of resistance to change, from fear of change itself to fear of loss and pain. Finally, he talks about the constraints and advantages of an authority figure/pastor in exercising adaptive leadership.

Technical Problems and Adaptive Challenges

Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky emphasize the importance of distinguishing technical problems from adaptive challenges. They believe that technical problems are:

...resolved through the application of authoritative expertise and through the organization's current structures, procedures, and ways of doing things. Adaptive challenges can only be addressed through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties. Making progress requires going beyond any authoritative expertise to mobilize discovery, shedding entrenched ways, tolerating losses, and generating the new capacity to thrive anew.²⁹

Therefore it is crucial to diagnose whether an issue is a technical problem for a manager or an adaptive challenge for an adaptive leader. Confusing these two situations

²⁷ Dean Williams, *Real Leadership : Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2005). 5

²⁸ Kevin Graham Ford, *Transforming Church : Bringing out the Good to Get to Great* (Carol Stream, Ill.: SaltRiver, 2007). 105

²⁹ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 19

will result in either dereliction of the responsibility of a pastor as a manager to provide direction, protection and order, or continuing failure with no change or progress, due to wrongful application of technical expertise to an adaptive challenge – managing rather than exercising leadership.³⁰ Dean Williams calls treating an adaptive challenge as a technical problem “counterfeit leadership.” He explains that this is a “set of actions and strategies used by an authority figure that thwarts progress.”³¹

But problems don’t always come neatly packaged for easy diagnosis, as seen in the following chart:

Figure 1³²

Kind of challenge	Problem definition	Solution	Locus of work
Technical	Clear	Clear	Authority
Technical and Adaptive	Clear(?)	Requires learning	Authority and stakeholders
Adaptive	Requires learning	Requires learning	Stakeholders

Since most problems in congregational life come mixed both with “technical” and “adaptive” components, the pastor needs to figure out which elements of the problem are “technical” and which are “adaptive,” and then deal with them accordingly. Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky give the following illustration on the intertwined nature of adaptive issues and technical problems that face organizations and personal relationships.³³

Heifetz’s coauthor Marty Linsky noticed that the car that driven by his ninety-five year-old, healthy and independent mom suffered scratches more frequently. The issue

³⁰ Ibid. 71

³¹ Williams, *Real Leadership : Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges*. xv

³² Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 20

³³ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 20

here is not just technical but also adaptive. The technical part of the problem would be solved by continuing to have the scratches repaired, allowing her to drive herself and cause scratches on her car. Alternatively, he would have to stop her from driving and find somebody else to give her rides. The adaptive part of this process involves the question of how to help her to process “the loss this change would represent, a loss of an important part of the story she tells herself about who she is as a human being, namely, that she is the only ninety-five-year-old person she knows who still drives at night.”³⁴ The new limitation would devastate and deprive her of an important part of her self-identify as an independent person.

The key question to be addressed is what part of her identity is essential and must be kept, and what part needs to be given up in order to allow her to survive and thrive into the future.³⁵ Here, the adaptive element is how to help her to “refashion her identity” and find ways to thrive within her new limitations.³⁶ If she treats this challenge as a technical problem, she can get the car fixed, but she will continue to have same problem. Even if she hires a chauffeur, without honestly confronting the adaptive challenge in the issue, she will continue to have other problems like loss of identity and feelings of helplessness.

Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky list two characteristic signals that an organization is facing an adaptive challenge: “a cycle of failure and a persistent dependence on authority.”³⁷ Since people prefer the quick fix of a technical solution over the messy process of adaptive work, a congregation is prone to treat the pastor as a manager rather

³⁴ Ibid. 20

³⁵ Ibid. 23

³⁶ Ibid. 20

³⁷ Ibid. 71

than as a leader. The results will be continuing failure, for adaptive challenges require new attitudes and coordination of the people with the problem itself.

To respond to an adaptive challenge effectively, the pastor must first identify and tackle the adaptive dimensions of the challenge, asking himself who needs to learn what in order to respond effectively. He needs to identify the adaptive work and involve the people who have to change, “because the problem lies in people, the solution lies in them, too.”³⁸

There are four basic types of adaptive challenges that arise in organizations.³⁹ The first type is a contradiction between values and practice. This contradiction comes to the attention of the organization when the contradiction no longer can be ignored. The second type is competing commitments.⁴⁰ When there are competing commitments, a situation that can occur when the organization has limited resources, the problem can only be resolved by making decisions that favor some groups over other groups. In such a case, some people in the organization will have to bear the loss. The third type of adaptive challenge is “speaking unspeakable.”⁴¹ Since an adaptive challenge is by nature hard to define, the pastor needs to encourage and foster a culture of open discussion on the matters that are off-limits to review. This way, the adaptive challenge can be identified, defined, framed, and then explored for the purpose of developing an adaptive solution. The final type of adaptive challenge is “work avoidance.”⁴² When a congregation faces an adaptive challenge, each interest group tends to push its own interpretation of the challenge, and each of those interpretations is inherently limited, biased, and incomplete.

³⁸ Ibid. 74

³⁹ Ibid. 78

⁴⁰ Ibid. 80

⁴¹ Ibid. 82

⁴² Ibid. 84

The members of these groups avoid participating in the change work that negatively affects their interest. Therefore, those aspects of reality that the people avoid will be “a piece of the puzzle that needs to be faced if progress is to unfold.”⁴³

People avoid adaptive work by focusing on the technical parts of the challenge, which include defining the problem to fit one’s current capacity, denying the existence of the problem, postponing the moment where one faces the problem, “shooting the messenger,” scapegoating somebody, attacking authority, and externalizing the enemy.⁴⁴ While Heifetz, Linsky and Grashow categorize adaptive challenges according to common patterns, Williams distinguishes leadership challenges according to “the condition of the system,” dividing them into six categories. He argues that each of these poses a specific problem – and thus requires a specific solution – for an organization. These challenges include the following: activist challenges, development challenges, transition challenges, maintenance challenges, creative challenges, and crisis challenges.⁴⁵

An activist challenge forces the congregation to confront a contradiction in values and to change the thinking and behavior that trap them in their present inadequate equilibrium.⁴⁶ A development challenge requires the leader to lead the congregation to develop their potential and utilize new opportunities so that they thrive at higher level.⁴⁷ A leader of a transition challenge must help the congregation to adapt and thrive in a changed environment by adopting new values, loyalties, and mind-sets.⁴⁸ Maintenance challenges, on the other hand, require the leader to protect essential resources, preserve

⁴³ Williams, *Real Leadership : Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges*. 47

⁴⁴ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 85

⁴⁵ Williams, *Real Leadership : Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges*. 34

⁴⁶ Ibid. 59

⁴⁷ Ibid. 89

⁴⁸ Ibid. 115

core values, and keep the congregation from disintegrating during hard times.⁴⁹ A creative challenge is a problem or opportunity that no known knowledge or practice can successfully address. This type of issue requires a significant departure from the past, and new learning must occur before progress can be made.⁵⁰ Finally, a crisis challenge is a potentially volatile situation where people are anxious and afraid. This type of situation requires new learning and a focus on deeper underlying issues in order to prevent a reappearance of the crisis in the future.⁵¹

In the congregational journey, each church facing an adaptive challenge finds itself in a different terrain, with various mixes of the four basic types of adaptive challenge that Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky mentioned. Thus, the pastor should learn to diagnose and identify the type of terrain, and to choose an adequate solution process for each challenge.

Resistance Due to Fear of Loss and Pain

Heifetz and Linsky reframe the issue of resistance during change, from resistance to change itself to resistance to the possibility of loss. They elaborate,

Adaptive change stimulates resistance because it challenges people's habits, beliefs, and values. It asks them to take a loss, experience uncertainty, and even express disloyalty to people and cultures. Because adaptive change forces people to question and perhaps redefine aspects of their identity, it also challenges their sense of competence. Loss, disloyalty, and feeling incompetent: that's a lot to ask. No wonder people resist.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid. 141

⁵⁰ Ibid. 165

⁵¹ Ibid. 191

⁵² Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line : Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2002). 30

He continues, “People love change, when they know it is a good thing...what people resist is not change per se, but loss. When change involves real or potential loss, people hold on to what they have and resist the change.”⁵³

Because people resist adaptive change out of fear of loss and pain, adaptive leaders need to find out what kind of losses and pain are involved in a changing situation: relationship, wealth, status, relevance, community, loyalty, identity, and competence. The leader should then “...assess, manage, distribute and provide contexts for losses that move people through those losses to a new place.”⁵⁴

In order to find out the nature of loss that people fear, a pastor needs to learn to “listen to the song beneath the words,”⁵⁵ because people don’t normally express their fears in the context of the change that is suggested. A pastor needs to pay attention to what is not being said rather than simply to what is said, including body language, eye contact, emotion, and energy. Sometimes that loss and fear might escape the consciousness of the congregants themselves. Robert Kegan found that even when people hold a sincere commitment to change, they often unwittingly apply productive energy toward a hidden competing commitment. What delays the change in those situations was not their resistance to change but rather their “personal immunity to change” that resulted from “effective internal anxiety management systems.”⁵⁶ This immunity stems from “big assumptions” – deeply rooted beliefs about themselves and the world around them.

Competing commitments arise from these assumptions, driving behaviors unwittingly

⁵³ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 22

⁵⁴ Ibid. 23

⁵⁵ Ibid. 76

⁵⁶ Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey, *Immunity to Change : How to Overcome It and Unlock Potential in Yourself and Your Organization*, Leadership for the Common Good (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business Press, 2009). 49

designed to keep the picture intact.⁵⁷ When these assumptions come to light, fear of the unknown and chaos will follow. The adaptive leader's job is to understand the complexities of people's behavior, guiding them through a process to bring their competing commitments to the surface, and helping them to manage the inner conflict that is preventing them from engaging adaptive work.

Constraints and Resources for Pastoral Leadership in Dealing with Adaptive Challenges

While there is a need for new understanding of the nature of adaptive challenge, and the reasons for resistance to change, there are also limitations and resources that come with pastoral authority. The pastor as an authority figure can create a holding environment, draw attention to the issue, and manage the pace of adaptive work. However, there is inherent danger associated with leading adaptive change from a position of authority.

Constraint on the Authority of a Pastor

The nature of adaptive challenges sheds new light on our understanding of pastoral authority – its nature, function, and constraints. It raises the question of who authorizes a pastor to assume pastoral authority.

In the Episcopalian form of government, pastors are appointed by higher authority, but in other protestant churches, pastors are chosen by the congregation.⁵⁸ Therefore, understanding whether pastors are installed through calling process or by appointment from the higher authority would shed light on where their authority come from.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 58

⁵⁸ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology : An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press ; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994). 921

As a proponent of congregational form of government, Millard Erickson implies that the immediate authorization of pastoral authority comes from the individual members of a local church. He explains the origin of pastoral authority in *Christian Theology*:

The authority of Christ is to be understood as dispensed to individual believers and delegated by them to the elders who represent them. Once elected or appointed, the elders function on behalf of or in place of the individual believers. It is therefore at the level of the elders that divine authority actually functions within the church.⁵⁹

In other words, the authority of a pastor is “conferred authority” – that is, conferred by the individual members of the local church.

On the other hand, in Presbyterian system of government, pastor’s authority comes from both the presbyteries who are responsible for ordination and installation of the pastors and preparing candidates for that office⁶⁰ and also from the congregation who participates in the selection and recognition of the new pastor⁶¹. Therefore, the authority of the pastor in non-Episcopalian form of government is at least partially conferred by the congregation itself through calling process.

Reflecting on the nature of the authority that is conferred in secular organizations, Heifetz and Linsky highlight the limitations of the authority conferred, noting that “People will confer authority or volunteer to follow you because they are looking to you to provide a service, be a champion, a representative, and expert, a doer who can provide solutions within the terms that they understand the situation.”⁶²

⁵⁹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983). 1076

⁶⁰ PCA BCO, Chapter 21

⁶¹ PCA BCO, Chapter 20

⁶² Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 24

As seen in Figure 3, the position of the pastor as an authority figure sits at the nodes of a congregational system and is sensitive to any disturbance in the congregational system. The more authority he wields, the more pressure he feels to restore the equilibrium and not to confront and disturb the congregation with difficult questions and choices. The position of authority by nature favors “togetherness forces” over “individualness forces.”⁶³ He would feel a responsibility to keep the system intact and that unity trumps anything else.

In dealing with this pressure, the pastor faces the temptation to make the decision that is the least offensive to people, especially to “those who have the most power to sustain [the pastor’s] position and reputation in the organization,”⁶⁴ since the function of authority is to meet the expectation of the authorizers, who are the individual congregation members.

Even in Episcopalian form of government, pastoral position comes with job description, which will prompt the corresponding expectation from the congregation that they perform the described service. Their authority is “conferred as part of an exchange.” And “failure to meet the terms of exchange means the risk of losing one’s authority.”⁶⁵ It is likely then that they too will face the pressure, if lesser in intensity, to meet their expectation. Further, as shall be seen later, because they are appointed instead of being called by the congregation itself, they will have to take extra pain in sympathizing with the possible loss of the congregation that is generated during the adaptive process.

Another temptation is to succumb to the strong internal pressure to focus on the technical

⁶³ Peter L. Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times : Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What* (Herndon, Va.: Alban Institute, 2006). 76

⁶⁴ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 14

⁶⁵ Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994). 57

aspects of problems.⁶⁶ Since people don't want to experience the loss that accompanies adaptive change, they influence their authority figure to use proven technical means to solve problems. As they persistently rely on authority, the authority figure tries to meet their expectations by treating adaptive challenges as technical problems, resulting in a continuing cycle of failure.

Peter Steinke laments the tendency of local congregations to treat adaptive challenges as technical problems as they face church conflict. He asserts that most church conflict involves adaptive challenge, requiring adaptive change:

They interpret the problem as a technical one, and I am the expert who knows how to remedy it. No matter how many times I reiterate that my role is to conduct a process to assist the congregation in formulating choices for itself, a good number still adhere to the notion that I am there to tell them what to do, to make it right, to make it like it was before, or to make them feel better. I can never challenge enough the idea that church conflict is a technical problem. In anxious times, a good number of people fall into "functional helplessness" –that is, while they want to be rescued by my recommendations, I want them to be empowered by their own choices.⁶⁷

Challenge of Adaptive Leadership

As has been seen, adaptive work mobilizes people to move "from familiar but inadequate equilibrium, through disequilibrium, to a more adequate equilibrium."⁶⁸ This creates conflict and chaos, disturbing deep and entrenched norms that people don't want to face, which in turn provokes people's pushback. Heifetz and Linsky warn of the perils that adaptive leadership faces: "That is why the initial challenge, and risk, of exercising

⁶⁶ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line : Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. 18

⁶⁷ Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times : Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*. 136

⁶⁸ Sharon Daloz Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught : A Bold Approach for a Complex World* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2005). 9

leadership is to go beyond your authority-to put your credibility and position on the line in order to get people to tackle the problems at hand.”⁶⁹

Therefore, it is important to understand the messy reality of the problem that adaptive leadership faces. Authority is conferred, but adaptive leadership is exercised beyond the scope of authority. That is why exercising adaptive leadership is dangerous. Since there are limitations on the level at which formal authority can do adaptive work, it is important to expand the leader’s informal authority.⁷⁰ The more informal authority leaders hold, the less they will violate the expectations of the people when leading adaptive change. In order to increase informal authority, leaders must build up their relationships, especially with people who have a big interests in the challenge, track records of success, and who model dependability.⁷¹ Also, leaders need to support the initiatives of the members of the congregation whose help they might need in case of conflict, perhaps yielding some small pieces of their ideas and scoring some early small wins.⁷²

Forms of Danger

Adaptive leadership faces pushback from those who stand to lose if the change is made. People resort to various forms of push-backs – seduction, marginalization, diversion, attack, character assassination, or scapegoating – in order to stop adaptive leadership so that they can “preserve what they have,” protecting themselves from experiencing pain and loss.⁷³ These tactics are employed as attempts to reduce the

⁶⁹ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line : Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. 20

⁷⁰ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 133

⁷¹ Ibid. 217

⁷² Ibid. 135

⁷³ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line : Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. 131

disequilibrium that would result from the adaptive process. That way the system will be able to maintain the status quo.

Adaptive leadership, therefore, needs to understand not only the kinds of loss caused by adaptive work, but also the forms of pushback that the pain of change generates. This will help them to acquire the necessary skills to respond to each form of danger, while surviving and remaining true to their principles.

As seen in Figure 4, adaptive leadership is exercised at the margin of the authority circle. Heifetz and Linksy describe it as a “walk on the razor’s edge.” Falling into the circle is collusion; falling out of it is suicide. The pastor needs, on one hand, to challenge the congregation (the authorizers) “at the rate they can stand” so that they make difficult choices and adjustments. Yet on the other hand, they should be able to stay alive in order to help the congregation make adaptive changes.⁷⁴ Walking on the razor’s edge, the leader must skillfully manage the stress caused by disequilibrium so that it does not get out of hand, and allows people to work through the issues.⁷⁵

Aside from the danger that comes from the resistance of people, without understanding the nature of adaptive challenge, and without tools to navigate the adaptive process, a pastor with good will risk falling into authoritarianism or burnout.⁷⁶ When pastors with strong vision lead congregations that highly value the status quo, they are subject to frustration and the temptation to resort to crusade-like authoritarianism because he is convinced the rightness of his cause warrants forgoing “the exercise of real

⁷⁴ Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught : A Bold Approach for a Complex World*. 161

⁷⁵ Ibid. 64

⁷⁶ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 105

leadership.”⁷⁷ Pastor may also succumb to burnout from the frustration that comes from the inability to cope with the anxiety and messiness of the adaptive process.

Resources Available to Pastors as Authority Figures

Because of the inherent limitations on the nature of adaptive change and authority, adaptive leaders need to go beyond their authority. But a position of authority itself provides important resources in leading change. There are several ways that pastors can effectively exercise their authority as a resource in leading adaptive change, according to Heifetz and Linsky’s work.⁷⁸

First, a pastoral relationship with the congregation provides “a holding environment,” that includes bonds of affiliations and love, agreed-upon rules, shared purposes and values, traditions, language, rituals, and trust in authority.⁷⁹ It is a relationship with “enough cohesion to offset the centrifugal forces” that result from adaptive work.⁸⁰ It provides safety and structure for people to explore and discuss the particular perspectives and ideas they have regarding the challenges they face.⁸¹ Pastors need to continuously assess how much change people can handle, and then to pace the process accordingly.

In the short run, pastors have to lead within the system’s current capacity to stand the stress that results from adaptive work. But in the long run, they must work to strengthen the holding environment by fostering an adaptive culture in the congregation.

⁷⁷ Williams, *Real Leadership : Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges*. 253

⁷⁸ Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*. 103

⁷⁹ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 155

⁸⁰ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line : Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. 102

⁸¹ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 155

This includes building greater trust in the leadership and organizational structure, strengthening shared values, and fostering learning and creativity.⁸²

In addition, pastors can command and direct attention to difficult adaptive issues. Power that follows formal pastoral authority and influence that comes with informal authority can make people pay attention. Yet, becoming the object of attention also brings the danger of being the target of attack.⁸³ Every church has “its zoo of unacknowledged elephants,”⁸⁴ or, in other words, adaptive challenges. And if these are not named and confronted, they will foster a culture of hiding, game playing, and manipulation, which would violate the integrity of the gospel.⁸⁵ The question is how does the pastor expose the truth about the condition of the congregation, which will upset many of its members, and still retain their respect?

Third, by virtue of their authority, pastors are given a special vantage point from which to diagnose and understand the situation. But when communicating the information gathered, they must carefully consider the degree to which the congregation can handle bad news.⁸⁶

Fourth, since they have control over the flow of information, pastors can sequence the release of data. They must decide which issues are “ripe” enough to confront. People are more likely to pay attention when they feel some urgency.⁸⁷ Therefore they should wait until the issues are ready to be addressed. Otherwise, they are in danger of being sidelined or “assassinated.” The primary question is whether the congregation is

⁸² Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*. 128

⁸³ Ibid. 113

⁸⁴ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 119

⁸⁵ Ibid. 119

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⁸⁷ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line : Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. 146

“psychologically” ready to weigh priorities and take losses.⁸⁸ In *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times*, Peter Steinke argues that issues usually become ripe when “the community hits bottom; real events open eyes and sharpen awareness; a sudden, shattering experience occurs; the congregation is in a learning mode and someone excites their attention.”⁸⁹

Fifth, by virtue of the pastoral position, people expect their pastor to frame the issues as they emerge. Pastors have some power to determine which issues are ripe and ready and frame those issues. This power allows the leader to influence the terms of the discussion and the direction of the process.⁹⁰ Sixth, pastors have the power to guide the decision-making process itself, making it consultative, autocratic, consensual, or some variation of these. Adaptive situations tend to lend themselves to a consensual mode, but autocratic modes may be used when the organization does not have enough resilience to handle the stress of the adaptive work, when adaptive change might be too severe even for a resilient organization, or in a crisis situation.⁹¹

Seventh, pastors can orchestrate conflict and contain disorder. By its nature, an adaptive challenge seldom appears on the radar of an established organizational structure. Rather, the information about the challenge is scattered in the hands of stakeholders, across the interest groups and factions.⁹² Also, solutions to the challenge depend on whether the stakeholders are willing and ready to change their behavior, assumptions, and attitudes. Thus, the important task of the adaptive leadership is to orchestrate the competing views they have stirred up so that the conflict does not get out of hand but

⁸⁸ Ibid. 146

⁸⁹ Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times : Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*. 74

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⁹¹ Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*. 122

⁹² Williams, *Real Leadership : Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges*. 31

provides an opportunity for the factions to learn from each other. Leaders must control the temperature of the stress that the disequilibrium causes so that people start to work on the issues.⁹³

Leaders can raise the temperature by directing attention to the tough questions, giving people more responsibility than makes them comfortable, surfacing conflicts, and protecting dissenters⁹⁴. They can lower the temperature by engaging in the technical part of the problem, breaking the problem into manageable pieces, temporarily taking responsibility for problems, and slowing down the process of change.⁹⁵

In order to orchestrate the conflict effectively, a leader has to “think politically”, which means looking at the adaptive challenge as “systemic rather than personal.”⁹⁶ This includes mapping “the issue’s stakeholders”, spotting “opportunities to build unusual alliances”, determining “what is at risk for each stakeholder group”,⁹⁷ expending informal authority, staying connected to the opposition, managing authority figures, taking responsibility for casualties, and protecting and engaging the voices of dissent⁹⁸.

One of the most important skills to learn is the ability to “step onto the balcony,” which allows the leader to gain perspective while remaining fiercely engaged on the dance floor.⁹⁹ If leaders stay in the balcony, they will lose resonance with the people. On the other hand, if they stay on the dance floor, they will lose sight of how the system changes.

⁹³ Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught : A Bold Approach for a Complex World*. 64

⁹⁴ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 160

⁹⁵ Ibid. 160

⁹⁶ Ibid. 115

⁹⁷ Ibid. 115

⁹⁸ Ibid. 133

⁹⁹ Ibid. 7

One of the things to do on the balcony is a stakeholder analysis. This involves looking at the organization as a web of stakeholders,¹⁰⁰ including the effect the resolution of the challenge will have on people, the type of resources the stakeholders control and who wants those resources, their desired outcome, their commitments and beliefs, their loyalties and obligations to those outside the immediate group, the kinds of loss that the change will engender, and the hidden alliances that might be present.¹⁰¹ Allender notes that there are organizational politics, gossip, and potential harm involved in the decision making process. In order to manage the change, therefore, he suggests that the following questions should be addressed:

Whose voice predominates?...Who dominates before the process begins?...It is crucial not only to know and understand the organizational chart but also to know the players whose presence is felt even when they are absent...Can they be named or is the proverbial elephant in the room too big and dangerous to be acknowledged?¹⁰²

In order to understand more clearly the position of each stakeholder, Marty Linsky suggests using a peer consultation exercise¹⁰³. First he suggests drawing a circle and putting inside it the adaptive work that needs to be done. The circle is then divided like a pie, with each piece assigned to key parties. This allows the stakeholders to figure out their conflicting views on the adaptive challenge, how the challenge appears to each party, where the pastor stands on the issue, and who needs to learn what in order for progress to be made. Also, they can ascertain the real stakes and interests of the pastor, as well as other interest groups, whether there are any underlying or hidden issues, which options are off the table and why, what the pastor has contributed to the problem. This

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 90

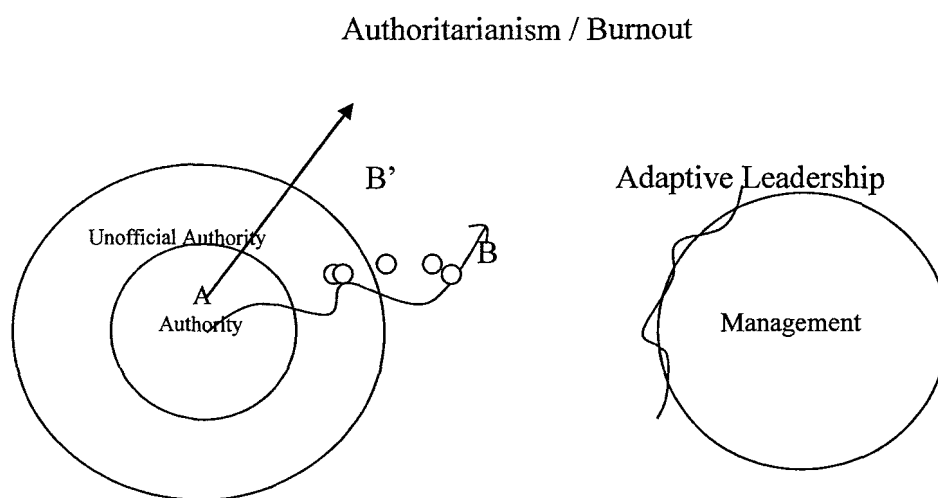
¹⁰¹ Ibid. 91

¹⁰² Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 168

¹⁰³ Class Handout. 2009 Summer. The Art and Practice of Leadership Class given by Dr. Sean Lucas

allows them to see what possible interpretations the pastor has been understandably unwilling to consider and what success would look like to the parties.¹⁰⁴

Adaptive leadership is exercised beyond the scope of the leader's authorization to act. As seen in Figure 4, it can be portrayed as "dancing on the edge of the scope of the authority."¹⁰⁵ But in reality, there is no clearly specified boundary on what the leader can and cannot do. The only way to know where that boundary lies is to dance on the edge of the leader's scope of authority and to feel the level of pushback that is encountered when making a move.¹⁰⁶ And without dancing on the edge of the scope of authority and risking this resistance, it may not be possible to move the organization forward from good to great, from status quo to progress.



¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 282

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 283

¹⁰⁷ Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line : Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*; Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 282

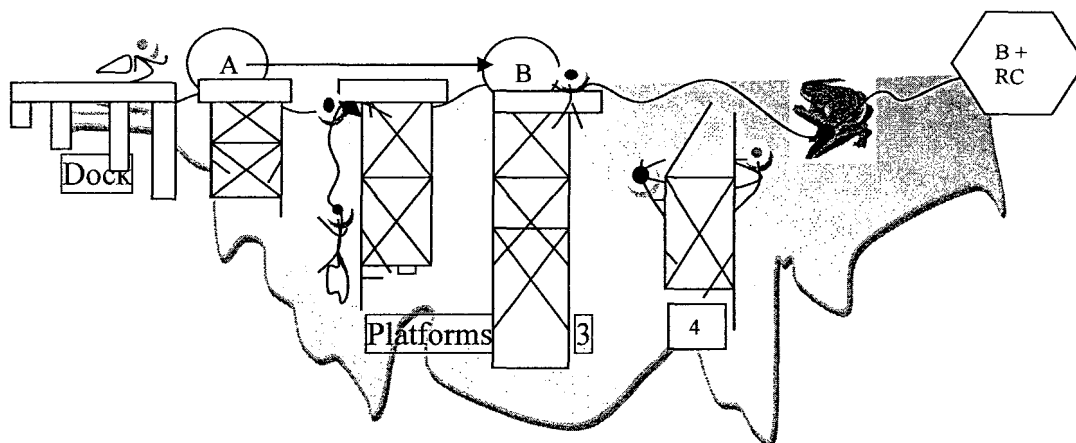
As seen Figure 3, adaptive leadership moves from A to B. Every single point along the wavy line of progress beyond the domain of authority represents adaptive leadership exercised by the leader. Straight arrow ($A \rightarrow B'$) indicates the traditional model of the leader as a hero with power who “shows the way” and single-handedly moves the congregation to a predetermined goal (B'). In adaptive change, the line is not straight, but rather wavy, and the goal is not predetermined, but flexible. This occurs because in adaptive challenge, real solutions are rarely obvious. They must be “explored in a murky, uncharted territory” which people resist due to fear of loss, and the condition of the system continually changes.¹⁰⁸ Adaptive leadership values relational capital as much results, because it requires due regard for the ingrained values and habits of the group, which members of the group protect by daily striving and sacrifice.¹⁰⁹ Authentic progress is therefore measured, not by the predetermined goal, but by the degree to which people are engaging the real problem.¹¹⁰

This becomes clearer when we look at the swamp metaphor seen in Figure 5.

¹⁰⁸ 2008 Covenant Theological Seminary Center for Ministry Leadership. Leadership Foundations – Intersect. 46

¹⁰⁹ Williams, *Real Leadership : Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges*. 5

¹¹⁰ 2008, Covenant Theological Seminary, Center for Ministry Leadership. Leadership Foundation-Intersect. 48

Figure 5¹¹¹

Moving from A to B, each point – 1, 2, 3, 4 – of progress represents the adaptive leadership exercised by the pastor, who stands on the dock to observe the congregational system, and at the same time jumps back to the swamp. The leader is in both places simultaneously. When observing from the dock, pastors see themselves as well as the other participants in the swamp.¹¹² Dock skills include leadership inventories, system diagnostics, genograms, EQ self-work, evaluating “togetherness” factors, and reflection in action.¹¹³

The alligators in the swamp are impediments that try to thwart the progress of the church. Without aid, people in the swamp will give up, losing their sense of direction, purpose, and hope. The job of the adaptive leaders in the swamp is to build platforms together so that other leaders and people in the system survive, regain strength, and continue to participate in the adaptive work of making progress. The platform is

¹¹¹ Ibid. 49

¹¹² Heifetz and Linsky, *Leadership on the Line : Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. 119

¹¹³ 2008, Covenant Theological Seminary, Center for Ministry Leadership. Leadership Foundation-Intersect, 47

comprised of leading in grace, leading with questions, teaching spiritual discipline, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and cultural intelligence.¹¹⁴

Since adaptive leadership does not have ready answers and still has to “work on the razor’s edge,” it is important for leaders to approach the work with humility as fellow sinners who have faced their own weaknesses and failures. There will be setbacks and retreats, and slowing of the pace, due to the impediments symbolized by the alligators in the swamp. These setbacks result from the fallenness of creation, and God uses them to produce endurance, character, and hope in His people.¹¹⁵

Allender proposes a type of leadership that leads “with a limp” – leaders that are able to face, name, and bear their own weaknesses and recognize that they are chief sinners. They lead as “living portrayal[s] of the very gospel”¹¹⁶ who demonstrate brokenness, humility and love of God and His people. This grace-oriented leadership will earn more respect and relational credit in the face of resistance that the adaptive work generates.

Leading with a limp will also foster honesty among people they face their problems. In *The Ascent of a Leader*, Bill Thrall explains:

Another fruit of grace community is “honesty.” When people experience grace despite their failures, they gain the strength to face the truth without fear. Those who live amid ungracious relationships learn to hide the truth. This is why capacity-ladder leaders tend to focus on the appearance of performance rather than on authentic performance. In such situations, other people can easily become scapegoats when things go wrong. Mistakes get concealed. Blame abounds.¹¹⁷

Henry Nouwen comments on the need of mutual ministry based on grace:

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 47

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 48

¹¹⁶ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 143

¹¹⁷ Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and Ken McElrath, *The Ascent of a Leader : How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence / Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, Ken McElrath ; Foreword by Ken Blanchard*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999). 56

How can anyone lay down his life for those with whom he is not even allowed to enter into a deep personal relationship? Laying down your life means making your own faith and doubt, hope and despair, joy and sadness, courage and fear available to others as ways of getting in touch with the Lord of life... We are not the healers; we are not the reconcilers, we are not the givers of life. We are sinful, broken, vulnerable people who need as much care as anyone we care for. The mystery of ministry is that we have been chosen to make our own limited and very conditional love the gateway for the unlimited and unconditional love of God. Therefore, true ministry must be mutual... It is a servant leadership... in which the leader is a vulnerable servant who needs the people as much as they need him or her.¹¹⁸

Jim Collins lists two characteristics of the good-to-great leader – humility combined with fierce resolve.¹¹⁹ This kind of leadership contradicts conventional wisdom that we need a larger-than-life savior with a big personality to transform an organization. It is even clearer in the social sector that authority does not come from power but rather from genuine leadership.

A team leader's willingness to be vulnerable also engenders trust among team members, and that trust lays the foundation for a functioning, cohesive team. Patrick Lencioni asserts in *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* that the root of team dysfunction is a lack of trust. He notes that the most important action a leader can take to encourage the formation of trust on the team is to demonstrate vulnerability first. Furthermore, the leader must create an environment where genuine vulnerability is not punished, but rather encouraged.¹²⁰

Learning takes place when the team is led with questions rather than when they are given ready-made answers. People will feel that they are given an opportunity to participate, and they feel the shared responsibility. Leading-with-questions leaders will

¹¹⁸ Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus : Reflections on Christian Leadership with Study Guide for Groups and Individuals*. 45

¹¹⁹ James C. Collins, *Good to Great : Why Some Companies Make the Leap--and Others Don't*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: HarperBusiness, 2001). 220

¹²⁰ Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team : A Leadership Fable*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002). 201

gain a new understanding of different perceptions that people have on the specific issues. This practice will also help those who are involved in adaptive work to develop “a tolerance for the ambiguity” that informs them that there are no easy answers.¹²¹

Jesus modeled the work of leading change by asking questions when he asked: “Why do you worry about clothes?”¹²² “Who do you say I am?”¹²³ “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?”¹²⁴ “Who of you by worrying can add one single hour to his life?”¹²⁵ “For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves?”¹²⁶ “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?”¹²⁷

In *Leading With Questions*, Michael Marquardt presents a leadership style that begins with questioning. The strength of questioning leadership is that it helps people to focus on their positive contributions to the change process, rather than on the loss they might suffer.

When faced with change, people focus on what they are going to lose. The more people feel that they make a difference, the better they will feel about what they are doing...By posing the right questions and engaging staff in the pursuit of a response, effective leaders gain more than just buy-in to the change. Effective leaders serve as the catalyst for change and give their followers the opportunity to exert some control in determining their future.¹²⁸

In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins also observes that adaptive leaders lead with questions, not answers:

Leading from good to great does not mean coming up with answers and then motivating everyone to follow your messianic vision. It means having the

¹²¹ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 169

¹²² Mt. 6:28

¹²³ Mt. 16:15

¹²⁴ Mt. 18:1

¹²⁵ Luk. 12:25

¹²⁶ Luk. 22:27

¹²⁷ Mt. 16:26

¹²⁸ Michael J. Marquardt, *Leading with Questions : How Leaders Find the Right Solutions by Knowing What to Ask*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005). 35

humility to grasp the fact that you do not yet understand enough to have the answers and then to ask the questions that lead to the best possible insights.¹²⁹

In the process of diagnosing the problem, good listening is as important as asking good questions. Williams suggests listening to people's stories in order to understand how they define their goals, how they believe that they got into their current predicament, what their dreams are, what they see as the hindrances to the fulfillment of their hopes, what are their fears, and what conflicts exist among them.¹³⁰

As the emphases of these authors demonstrate, adaptive leaders need to distinguish adaptive challenges from technical problems. Adaptive leaders can utilize their authority to facilitate necessary changes, but they must go beyond their scope of authority to make meaningful change. Since people resist the type of change that requires loss and pain, adaptive leaders need the tools that are necessary to navigate, manage, and survive the change process. Metaphors that describe the process of adaptive change include the following: walking the razor's edge, assassination, getting on the balcony, stakeholder analysis, regulating the heat/orchestrating the conflict, work avoidance, loss and grief, taking the heat and holding steady, giving the work back to the group, personal tuning, and living with ambiguity.¹³¹

Biblical Examples of Adaptive Leadership

We have examined an extensive body of literature dealing with adaptive leadership. But it is also important to note that the Bible itself addresses the topic in an indirect manner. While it doesn't set forth a fully developed theology of adaptive

¹²⁹ Collins, *Good to Great : Why Some Companies Make the Leap--and Others Don't*. 75

¹³⁰ Williams, *Real Leadership : Helping People and Organizations Face Their Toughest Challenges*. 45

¹³¹ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 303-308

leadership or a clear model for leading adaptive change, the Bible does provide several examples in which a spiritual leader responds to an adaptive challenge.

An Adaptive Challenge in Moses' Ministry

The people of Israel were disappointed with both God and with Moses. Having come out of the slavery in Egypt by the miracles of God, they crossed the Red Sea and found themselves travelling in circles rather than marching straight to the Promised Land. They had already failed the test of the first adaptive challenge they faced when Moses sent out twelve spies to the land that God had promised them. The news that the spies brought back terrified the people. They feared that they would suffer loss if they followed Moses, since the spies reported that the occupants of the land were giants. They were not ready to learn, to change, or to trust God and their leader in this new environment. Now, after God's miraculous rescue had become a distant memory, they grew tired of the manna that came from heaven. The fear and awe of God that they had was dissipating. They couldn't wait for their leader, Moses, who gone up the mountain and had not returned for forty days. They demanded that Aaron make a god for them to lead them to the promised land.¹³²

When Moses came down the mountain with the Ten Commandments, he faced a challenge – the impatience of people who wanted to go straight to the Promised land with or without Moses' God. Moses had two options. He could either to treat this as technical problem or as an adaptive challenge. God tested Moses to see which option he would choose, offering the following words:

Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, saying, "I will give it to your descendants." I will send an angel before you and drive out the Cannanites,

¹³² Ex. 32:10

Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.¹³³

God offers Moses a technical solution, which required no change in people's values, priorities, or behavior in order to enter the Promised Land. But Moses knew that this technical approach would not solve the adaptive problem. By selecting the technical solution he would be able to take them out of Egypt, but he would not be able to take Egypt out of them. The problem facing the people of Israel at this juncture was not going to be solved by the quick-fix of having an angel lead them to the Promised Land. This was especially true since they would face the same problems repeatedly after they entered the Land if they were not changed.

Moses chose to exercise adaptive leadership and risk the people's resistance. He plead to God, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of earth?"¹³⁴ Moses wanted God's presence to change the people: their values, behavior, priorities, and entrenched habits through His Word and disciplines. They needed to learn to trust God in the midst of the wilderness, and change their values and priorities according to the values of the Kingdom.

In this text there is a clear contrast between the leadership of Moses and that of Aaron. The people of Israel looked to their leaders for relief from the struggle and threat of the desert, expecting their authority figures to deliver what they wanted. Under the intense pressure of the moment, Aaron reacted with a quick fix approach, making a

¹³³ Ex. 33:1-3

¹³⁴ Ex. 33: 15-16

golden calf to satisfy the people's need for tangible assurance. He failed to exercise adaptive leadership, instead opting to treat it as a technical problem. He was not able to stand the pressure of people who were going through disorientation, not allowing them to "understand what has happened and challenge themselves to take steps to shift the system."¹³⁵

An Adaptive leadership in Jesus Ministry

The gospel of Mark shows how Jesus exercised adaptive leadership among his disciples. Jesus' teaching and actions were building up a level of resistance among them, and their hearts were "hardened".¹³⁶ They faced a crisis – the imprisonment and impending death of John the Baptist. Followers looked to Jesus to solve the problem. It was a technical problem as far as they were concerned, for they had already witnessed the powerful miracles that Jesus could perform. When Jesus did not satisfy the expectation of his disciples, they grieved over the terrible loss – the brutal, violent death of John – provoking questions that built resentment and resistance.

They were confused. How could Jesus perform a miracle to feed five thousand people, yet leave John to languish in jail and then get beheaded? John was, after all, the one of whom Jesus himself said, "among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist."¹³⁷ Perhaps to them, a miracle was supposed to be used to prevent the pain and loss due to John's death, not to feed people a meal that wasn't really necessary.¹³⁸ The people could have gone to the surrounding countryside and villages and

¹³⁵ Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times : Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*. 149

¹³⁶ Mk. 6:52

¹³⁷ Mt. 11:11

¹³⁸ Bruce Manning Metzger, David Allan Hubbard, and Glenn W. Barker, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1982). 34A. by Robert Guelich, 341

“buy themselves something to eat.”¹³⁹ So it seems the disciples wanted Jesus to treat the matter as a technical problem – to perform the miracle for John and send hungry people away to buy their own food. But Jesus, not yielding to the pressure, rightly treats it as an adaptive challenge that required new learning. Miracles in the gospel were not intended so much to meet human needs as they were to reveal Christ’s glory¹⁴⁰ – the reality of a God who is with us. New learning had to take place in order to meet the challenge.

Adaptive Challenges in the Early Church

Acts 6 describes a significant problem facing the early church – conflict between Grecian Jews and Hebraic Jews in the Jerusalem church. The daily food distribution did not sufficiently care for the Grecian widows. The solution was to elect seven men who were of Grecian heritage to solve the problem. This situation was treated as a technical problem that required a technical solution: organizational restructuring.

In another example, Act 15 describes a problem that faced Gentile churches: conflict between Jews and Gentiles concerning Moses’ law. It was clearly a theological problem that required a theological response. The Jerusalem council responded by writing a letter in which they said that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised in order to be saved. This was a technical problem, in which James provided a technical solution, “a practical Modus Vivendi for two groups of people drawn from such different ways of life.”¹⁴¹ But Paul’s letters to the Gentile churches imply that disputes over cultural prejudice and theological confusion were not mere technical problems, but rather

¹³⁹ Mk. 6:36

¹⁴⁰ Colin Smith ‘s Sermon on Mark 6, “Jesus overcomes resistance in his people.”

¹⁴¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988). 295

adaptive challenges that require adaptive responses. They needed more than organizational restructuring and theological clarification.

Paul reiterated the universal nature of the gospel, which saves people regardless of their culture, language, or ethnicity. Paul drove this point home again and again. This problem occurred repeatedly throughout Gentile churches. Paul's prayers for the early churches recorded in his epistles focused on the adaptive nature of the challenges that early churches faced. He prayed that the "eyes of your hearts may be enlightened,"¹⁴² and that "they may be strengthened in their inner being."¹⁴³ Paul knew that there were issues in these churches that could not be resolved through technical solutions, but required an adaptive process that could only be addressed through the power of the Holy Spirit. One of the issues that confronted the early church was the issue of unity in the body of Christ.

Paul affirmed the nature of the church and her members as God's family, admonishing them, "You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and cornerstone."¹⁴⁴ He also said, "In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord."¹⁴⁵ But his letter presupposes the gap between the truth and the reality of their lives. While God demolished the barrier between the Jews and Gentiles, a wall continued to exist between their cultures, languages, and ethnicities. In other words, the problems described in Acts 6 and Acts 15 required not just technical solutions, but also adaptive work. They could not be completely solved with simple organizational restructuring and theological clarification. Instead, they required continual

¹⁴² Ephesian 1:18

¹⁴³ Ephesian 3:16

¹⁴⁴ Ephesian 2:19

¹⁴⁵ Ephesian 2:21

adaptive work, building platforms to survive and continue the adaptive work among God's people. They needed to close the gap between the values they espoused and the practices they observed in their daily lives.

The biblical examples above do not provide a fully developed concept of adaptive leadership. However, they do provide illustrations of how problems can be addressed in either a technical or adaptive manner. In order to probe deeper into adaptive leadership, the topic of conflict management will be addressed in the next section.

Conflict management

The second area of literature focuses on conflict management skills as an essential element of adaptive leadership. Adaptive work mobilizes people to move “from familiar but inadequate equilibrium, through disequilibrium, to a more adequate equilibrium.”¹⁴⁶ It invariably surfaces conflict because addressing the issues underlying adaptive problems usually involves disturbing deep and entrenched norms, often resulting in loss, grief, stress, and pain. According to Steinke, “There is hardly a church conflict that doesn't require an adaptive change.”¹⁴⁷ Surfacing the relevant conflicts is essential in the process of adaptive change. It draws out the unacknowledged differences in perspective on the issues that may be preventing the congregation from reaching its goals.

Unfortunately, pastors tend to view conflict as something to be eliminated or neutralized. They try to avoid, accommodate, and compromise in the name of peace when dealing with church conflict. Steinke relates, “In conflict management analyses, clergy score high in avoidance, accommodation, and compromise. Clergy score quite low

¹⁴⁶ Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught : A Bold Approach for a Complex World*. 9

¹⁴⁷ Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times : Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*.

compared to the general population in preference for assertiveness and collaboration, more proactive styles to engage conflict.”¹⁴⁸

But Jesus himself provoked conflict when dealing with people, especially with the Pharisees, as seen, for example in Mark 3:1-6. Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus created conflict. Peter says in Act 2:23 that this occurred because God “ordained” that conflict “by his set purpose and foreknowledge.”¹⁴⁹ Steinke challenges pastors to face conflict in a biblical manner:

Nowhere in the Bible is tranquility preferred to truth, or harmony to justice. Certainly reconciliation is the goal of the gospel, yet seldom is reconciliation an immediate result. If people believe the Holy Spirit is directing the congregation into the truth, wouldn't this alone encourage Christians who have differing notions to grapple with issues respectfully, lovingly, and responsively? If the potent issues are avoided because they might divide the community, what type of witness is the congregation to the pursuit of truth?¹⁵⁰

Scripture sets forth some key theological principles that guide the church's approach to conflict. The first principle is God's sovereignty over all things.¹⁵¹ The second principle is that conflict management is “founded on the reality of God, his moral law, and the gospel of Christ.”¹⁵² The third principle is that God's people grow through the trials of their faith. Conflict becomes the testing furnace to try our theology. As author Alfred Poirier asserts, “It tests us and sifts our hearts, revealing what we truly believe and hold fast to.” He continues, “If we truly confess and believe that God ordains conflict – we can consecrate it – we can welcome it as an opportunity to minister.”¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 103

¹⁴⁹ Act 2:23

¹⁵⁰ Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times : Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*. 108

¹⁵¹ Ephesian 1:11

¹⁵² Alfred Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006). 163

¹⁵³ Ibid. 76

When handled properly, disagreement and conflict can also “stimulate productive dialogue, encourage creativity, promote helpful change.”¹⁵⁴ It is a necessary resource in achieving genuine, as opposed to false, harmony. Ken Sande recognizes the opportunity in conflict, “Conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, to serve others, and to grow to be like Christ. As you live out the gospel and make the Lord’s priorities your priorities, you can turn every conflict into a stepping-stone to a closer relationship with God and a more fulfilling and fruitful Christian life.”¹⁵⁵

The first step in ministering to conflicting parties is for pastors to willingly confess their sins and failures and speak clearly the promise and power of the gospel of Christ. It is the gospel of grace that makes pastors confess that they are saved sinners. Only when pastors as leaders confess their sins and weaknesses, seeking to live by the grace given in the gospel, can they lead their congregations to do the same.¹⁵⁶

But if adaptive work is to be effective, pastors should not yield to the expectations of their congregations that they fix the problems and make the decisions. Rather, they need to be tolerant of the rising disequilibrium caused by the conflict, and without themselves being the issue, they must be able to orchestrate and give the work of resolution of the conflict back to the people so that new learning takes place.¹⁵⁷

Conflict is one of the primary reasons why pastors leave local church ministries, according to the study by Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger.¹⁵⁸ To help pastors who are involved in conflict negotiation, Sande suggests some basic steps called PAUSE,

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 30

¹⁵⁵ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2004). 41

¹⁵⁶ Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict*. 46

¹⁵⁷ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 149

¹⁵⁸ Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times : Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*. 17

which incorporate biblical principles and truths in the face of conflict. The acronym stands for the following: Prepare, Affirm relationships, Understand interests, Search for creative solutions, and Evaluate options objectively and reasonably according to God's standards of justice.¹⁵⁹ This principle serves as a map to navigate through the relational maze of stakeholders, helping conflicting parties to be "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry."^{160,161}

The first step, "Prepare," involves the following actions: pray, get all the facts, identify the issues and concerns of each of the parties, identify the desires of the heart, seek godly counsel, develop options that might be agreeable to the other party, anticipate the reactions and objections of the other party, and seek to preclude them by biblical and reasonable answers.¹⁶² The second step is to direct concerned parties to remember their unity in Christ. Leaders must point the parties to biblical themes that will help them to see afresh who God is as their father,¹⁶³ and what they share in the Holy Spirit¹⁶⁴ – a common identity, a common destination, common struggles,¹⁶⁵ common provision and wisdom in Christ.^{166,167} This step will strengthen the holding environment so that adaptive work can proceed.

The third step is to understand the interest of others. Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves," and not to only look to "your own interest, but also to the

¹⁵⁹ Sande, *The Peacemaker : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. 227

¹⁶⁰ James 1:19

¹⁶¹ Sande, *The Peacemaker : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. 175

¹⁶² Ibid. 228

¹⁶³ Matthew 7:7-12

¹⁶⁴ Ephesians 4:1-6

¹⁶⁵ Colossians 3:8-17

¹⁶⁶ James 1:5

¹⁶⁷ Sande, *The Peacemaker : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. 231

interest of others.”¹⁶⁸ Sande distinguishes three levels of disputes: issues, positions, and interests.¹⁶⁹

An issue is something tangible and measurable, but it is “the tip of the iceberg” that people can see. It is the presenting problem or overt reason why the conflict arose. A position is “a desired outcome or a definable perspective on an issue.”¹⁷⁰ If the issue is the tip of the iceberg, the position is the area directly beneath it. While an issue can be framed as a question, the position is the respective answer to the question as given by each of the parties involved.¹⁷¹ An interest is what drives and motives people, including desire, need, limitation, or something of personal value. If issues and positions are the top ten percent of the iceberg, interests are everything below the waterline, hidden from view. Interests may be sinful, righteous, or value neutral.¹⁷²

For adaptive work to proceed, the various interests need to be drawn out and identified. Heifetz describes how participants react to emerging conflicts:

As people begin to appreciate how deeply held the competing values are and how committed each faction is to avoiding taking any losses, the tension will rise. Look for signs that people are seeking to avoid the conflict, such as trying to minimize the differences or change the subject. As orchestrator, keep reminding people of the purpose, why it is that they are going through this hard patch.¹⁷³

Certain questions need to be asked. What is generating the conflict? What are the real factors that must be addressed in order for learning to take place? What are the elements that each party wants to preserve or avoid or achieve?¹⁷⁴ Each party needs time to consider the nature of loss that they would have to accept. Sometimes pastors need to

¹⁶⁸ Phil. 2:3-4

¹⁶⁹ Sande, *The Peacemaker : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. 234

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 234

¹⁷¹ Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict*. 170

¹⁷² Ibid. 171

¹⁷³ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 152

¹⁷⁴ Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict*. 172

“listen to the song beneath the words,”¹⁷⁵ looking for body language, eye contact, emotion, and energy. This means paying as much attention to what is not being said as to what is said, in order to find out the nature of the loss that people fear.

The fourth step is to search for creative solutions through means such as brainstorming. Since an adaptive challenge by nature has no known solution, it is important for concerned parties to come together to engage in new learning. They can generate a consensus regarding several experiments for tackling adaptive challenges, with a shared commitment to evaluate the results of the experiments.¹⁷⁶ The fifth step is to evaluate options based on facts and unbiased assessments, such as scriptural standards of justice, standards that are legitimate and in accord with sound judgment.¹⁷⁷

Adaptive work invariably surfaces conflict among stakeholders. Pastors need to develop good conflict management skills founded on biblical principles so that congregations themselves work on solving their problems, accepting the pain and loss involved, growing in grace, and thriving in a changing environment.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The third area of literature focuses on emotional intelligence as one of the vital ministry skills for responding effectively to adaptive challenges. Emotional intelligence helps leaders keep their spirits alive and do the right thing when leading becomes difficult. Pastors need deeper understanding of the emotional impact of transition and change, because adaptive work will “rock the emotional boat” of the congregation.¹⁷⁸

When a congregation encounters change, there are a series of individual, emotional

¹⁷⁵ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 176

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 153

¹⁷⁷ Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict*. 174

¹⁷⁸ Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times : Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*. 134

responses to be considered and addressed in order for the change process to be successful. Pastors can be powerful preachers and wonderful teachers, but if they do not have enough emotional maturity to call their congregations to “discern and pursue a shared vision, to remain connected with those who differ with the leader or the majority, and to remain a calm presence when the anxiety rises,”¹⁷⁹ they will not be able to “break from the status quo and lead people to new places.”¹⁸⁰

Popularized by Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence is described as the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationship.¹⁸¹ In *The Emotionally Intelligent Manager*, David R. Caruso and Peter Salovey explain that emotional intelligence is absolutely necessary for a leader’s good decision-making, problem-solving and effective change-management.¹⁸² They argue that the emotion centers of the brain are not relegated to a secondary place in our thinking and reasoning. Rather, they are an integral part of what it means to think, to reason, and to be intelligent.¹⁸³

Since adaptive change requires pastors to exceed the margin of their authority, old-fashioned authority figures who lead largely by virtue of the power of their positions don’t fit the adaptive leadership model. In order to succeed, pastors need to cultivate

¹⁷⁹ Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor, *The Leader's Journey : Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).46

¹⁸⁰ Peter Scazzero and Warren Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church : A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2003). 185

¹⁸¹ Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam 10th anniversary hardcover ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 2006). 43

¹⁸² David Caruso and Peter Salovey, *The Emotionally Intelligent Manager : How to Develop and Use the Four Key Emotional Skills of Leadership*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004). 211

¹⁸³ Ibid. 51

resonance with the congregations who will face loss and pain in the midst of adaptive change.¹⁸⁴

John Kotter, who emphasizes the emotional aspects of change in the *Heart of Change*, concluded that “changing behavior is less a matter of giving people analysis to influence their thoughts than helping them to see a truth *to influence their feelings*.”¹⁸⁵ While strategy, structure, culture, and systems are all important, he argues, the core of real change is in the emotions. Therefore, adaptive leaders should find ways to help their congregations see the adaptive problems in ways that influence their emotions, not just their thoughts. Emotional intelligence consists of the following components: self-awareness, which is the ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact while using gut feelings to guide decisions; self-management, which involves controlling one's emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances; social awareness, which is the ability to sense, understand, and respond to others' emotions while comprehending social relationships; and social management, which is the ability to inspire, influence, and develop others while managing conflict.¹⁸⁶

Self Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to look inside oneself and develop an awareness of what one feels and does while leading change. It requires looking “beneath the surface,”¹⁸⁷ and learning to ask “why” or “what’s going on” types of questions.¹⁸⁸ Raising self-awareness will help adaptive leaders cope with the stress that accompanies the

¹⁸⁴ Daniel Goleman, Richard E. Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership : Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2002). 248

¹⁸⁵ John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change : Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2002). 2

¹⁸⁶ Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1998). 318

¹⁸⁷ Scazzero and Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church : A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives*. 75

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 79

adaptive process. In *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman explains how self-awareness pays off in distress:

The more accurately we can monitor our emotional upsets, the sooner we can recover from distress. Consider an experiment in which people watch a graphic anti-drunk-driving film depicting bloody automobile accident. During the half hour after the film, viewers report feeling distressed and depressed, with their thoughts repeatedly going back to the troubling scenes they've just witnessed. The quickest to recover are those with the greatest clarity about their feelings. Emotional clarity, it seems, enables us to manage bad moods.¹⁸⁹

He continues:

In too many organizations, the ground rules that marginalize emotional realities guide our attention away from such emotional static as though it not matter. These blinders propagate endless problems: decisions that demoralize; ...the inability to motivate, let alone inspire; hollow mission statements and empty slogans of the day; ...drudgery instead of spontaneity; a lack of esprit de corps; teams that don't work.¹⁹⁰

Family Systems

Self-awareness of the adaptive leader is further enhanced by looking into the pastor's family background. Borrowing from Bowen's theory, Herrington, Creech and Taylor believe that our usual approach to life and leadership is influenced by our family system and the role we play in that system.¹⁹¹ When pastors look into their upbringing, they gain understanding about how their lives have been shaped by both their experiences and by those who have interacted with them. Understanding how their family relationships and the other critical incidents in their lives, influenced and shaped them helps pastors to diagnose and understand the ways in which they lead the change process. This review of family history helps pastors to "break the power of the past"¹⁹² by

¹⁸⁹ Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. 86

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 287

¹⁹¹ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey : Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. 88

¹⁹² Scazzero and Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church : A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives*. 87

reflecting and modifying their default reactions to recurring incidents during adaptive work. This experience will also help pastors discern their distinct combination of leadership gifts and skills, by which they can devise strategies that decrease anxiety and bring about success in their congregational systems.

Systemic Approach

Adaptive leaders need a deeper understanding of the emotional impact of transition and change on the congregation system. As we have seen, congregations have to go through a stage of disequilibrium in order for adaptive work to take place. However, because of the systemic nature of the change, when pastors lead change there are a series of individual, collective emotional responses which might hinder the adaptive work if they are not addressed.

Since congregations are engaged in long-term, intense, and significant relationships, church members become emotionally connected to one another in a living system. People are wired to connect, and they can catch other people's emotions the same way we catch colds.¹⁹³ Each person who is part of this interaction begins to "affect, and be affected by, the anxiety and behaviors of the others."¹⁹⁴ Therefore, since adaptive challenges bring unknown fear for the future – fear of loss, pain, and the unknown – adaptive work spreads anxiety throughout the system.

In *Creating A Healthier Church*, Ronald Richardson describes two churches that meet a situation within the church from two opposite positions. He explains how anxiety can unbalance the system, which is intensified in proportion to the sense of threat that

¹⁹³ Daniel Goleman, *Social Intelligence : The New Science of Human Relationships* (New York: Bantam Books, 2006). 19

¹⁹⁴ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey : Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. 29

people feel within a given situation. When there is the sense of not having control, the feeling that one does not know what is happening, there is a higher sense of anxiety.¹⁹⁵

Richardson suggests that in order for pastors to be effective, they should be able to:

...help people manage their level of anxiety so they can accomplish these goals. They do this primarily by managing their own anxiety, and then, secondarily, by staying in meaningful contact with other key players in the situation...by staying calm and yet connected to those who are anxious, these people help reduce the level of anxiety.¹⁹⁶

Therefore, pastors who practice adaptive leadership need to learn to recognize during the period of disequilibrium, “how anxiety holds chronic symptoms in place, and how each person in the system has a role to play in keeping things in balance.”¹⁹⁷ And they must take the lead in changing the system by learning to respond to anxiety rather than reacting to it.

Changing a congregational system involves two steps. The first step is to manage one’s emotions by asking two questions that have to do with self-awareness, combined with systemic outlook. The first question is “What is my role in keeping this problem in place?” The second question is “How can I change my role?”¹⁹⁸ The second step is to increase social awareness by learning to clearly see the emotional process in the congregational system as it goes through adaptive change.¹⁹⁹ As she engages in adaptive work, she needs to ask: What am I not seeing in these circumstances? What grid do I use

¹⁹⁵ Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church : Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life*, Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling Series (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996). 24

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 51

¹⁹⁷ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey : Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. 50

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 49

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 50

that keeps me from seeing more fully? What bias of my perspective is blocking me from seeing my situation honestly?²⁰⁰

Empathy – To Be Present

As pastors see the emotional processes in the midst of adaptive work, they invariably see conflict surface and threaten to divide people. They need to build bridges of connection by caring for people's grudges, hurts, and fears of loss in a moment of chaos. To care means, first of all, to be present with others. Scazzero, quoting Nouwen, says that caring means to listen to them with one's whole attention, and to speak to them as if they are the most important person in the world. It provides "a healing presence" in the midst of hurt and chaos, because one accepts them on their own terms and encourages them to take their own lives seriously.²⁰¹

Allender calls this caring ministry "priestly function" and equates it with emotional intelligence, saying "leadership requires stepping into the morass of hurt, accusation, and defenses in order to hear and see the real issues. This ability is often described as emotional intelligence." Pastors can enlarge their capacity to care, to be present, to enter into another's pain by going through it themselves, engaging in the grieving process by dealing honestly with their past losses, angers, and pains, allowing themselves to live in the "confusing in-between,"²⁰² and following "God's leading into new resurrection."²⁰³ This capacity will allow adaptive leaders to more deeply enter into the pain and loss that people experience during adaptive change.

²⁰⁰ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 83

²⁰¹ Scazzero and Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church : A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives*. 59

²⁰² Ibid. 165

²⁰³ Ibid. 169

Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky emphasize the importance of listening with empathy when leading adaptive change:

Leading adaptive change often means distributing gains and losses. And it is the losses that trigger resistance to a change initiative...understanding what those losses will look like is essential for leading adaptive change effectively. Listening from the heart can help you achieve that understanding...Try to “walk in their shoes” to feel something akin to what they are feeling, and then tell them what you have come to understand. At the very least, you have to be able to say with credibility, “I see.”²⁰⁴

In *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, Marshall Goldsmith gives very practical advice on listening:

When someone speaks to you, listen. Don't interrupt, don't finish the other person's sentences, don't say “I knew that”, don't even agree with the other person, don't use the words “no,” “but,” and “however,” don't be distracted, maintain your end of the dialogue by asking intelligent questions that (a) show you're paying attention, (b) move the conversation forward, and (c) require the other person to talk. Eliminate any striving to impress the other person with how smart or funny you are.²⁰⁵

The ability to be present and listen attentively to the fear and longing of the people is an essential leadership competency that will establish, grow, extend, and restore trust²⁰⁶ in the midst of the anxiety and disequilibrium of adaptive work.

As pastors develop the skills of self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness, their capacity to differentiate themselves from others who experience anxiety in the congregation becomes enlarged. “Differentiation of self” is the emotional capacity to “remain connected in relationship to significant people in our lives and yet not have

²⁰⁴ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 266

²⁰⁵ Marshall Goldsmith and Mark Reiter, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There : How Successful People Become Even More Successful*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Hyperion, 2007). 156

²⁰⁶ Stephen M. R. Covey and Rebecca R. Merrill, *The Speed of Trust : The One Thing That Changes Everything* (New York: Free Press, 2006). 323

our reactions and behavior determined by them.”²⁰⁷ During the tumultuous period of disequilibrium in adaptive work, pastors who cultivate higher level of differentiation can anchor their courses “on the life and teaching of Jesus rather than reading everyone else’s emotional chart.”²⁰⁸ They can limit the level of their own anxiety in the midst of others’ anxieties and take responsibility for their own emotions and feelings.

Scazzero notes that holding on to oneself is the most difficult principle to apply when one initiates change: “Without this ability to hold on to yourself, it is not possible to be an imaginative, creative leader who breaks from the status quo and leads people to new places. You end up like a chameleon like Leonard Zelig.”²⁰⁹ In *Generation to Generation*, Edwin Friedman also emphasizes the importance of the leader’s emotional maturity in the midst of anxiety brought by adaptive work:

The overall health and functioning of any organization depend primarily on one or two people at the top, and that is true whether the relationship system is a personal family, a sports team, an orchestra, a congregation, a religious hierarchy, or an entire nation. But the reason for that connection is that the leadership in families...is essentially an organic, perhaps even biological, phenomenon. And an organism tends to function best when its “head” is well differentiated. The key to successful spiritual leadership, therefore,...has more to do with the leader’s capacity for self-definition than with the ability to motivate others.²¹⁰

When a congregational system sees the adaptive challenge as a crisis, the anxiety level rises and automatic processes take over. The congregation will demand either a quick fix or a short-term solution for the comfort of the moment, with no room for learning. But when pastors are able to see their situations as adaptive challenges and act on the courage of conviction rather than simply a matter of their own survival, they can

²⁰⁷ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey : Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. 18

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 18

²⁰⁹ Scazzero and Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church : A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives*. 185

²¹⁰ Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation : Family Process in Church and Synagogue*, The Guilford Family Therapy Series (New York: Guilford Press, 1985). 221

help the congregations to learn during the disorientation period, to understand what has happened, and to take steps to change the system.²¹¹

Steinke continues:

If a congregation doesn't use the disorientation period for understanding what has happened and challenging itself to take steps to shift the system, the chances are great for patterns one (quick fix) and two (short-term fix) to repeat themselves in the future. No emotional system changes unless people change how they function with one another.²¹²

Good leaders must cultivate their principles thoughtfully, over time and through experience, rather than depending on other's acceptance and approval. Effective leaders with emotional maturity will "take thoughtful action, risk goodwill for the sake of truth, stay the course (hold steady), and manage self."²¹³ Thus, despite conflict, criticism, and rejection they can:

...stay calm and clear-headed enough to distinguish thinking rooted in a careful assessment of the facts from thinking clouded by emotion. What they decide and say matches what they do. When they act in the best interests of the congregation, they choose thoughtfully, not because they are caving in to relationship pressures. Confident in their own thinking, they can either support another's view without becoming wishy-washy or reject another's view without becoming hostile.²¹⁴

Jim Collins observes in *Good to Great* that Level Five leaders demonstrate emotional intelligence. Such leaders possess:

...an unwavering resolve to do whatever must be done to produce the best long term results, no matter how difficult, ---while demonstrating--- a compelling modesty, acting with quiet, calm determination---- channels ambition into the company, not herself--- looks out the window, not in the mirror, to apportion credit for the success of the company. ----The great irony is that the animus and personal ambition that often drive people to positions of power stand at odds with the humility required for Level 5 leadership.²¹⁵

²¹¹ Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times : Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*. 148

²¹² Ibid. 148

²¹³ Ibid. 149

²¹⁴ Ibid. 149

²¹⁵ Collins, *Good to Great : Why Some Companies Make the Leap--and Others Don't*. 36

The Example of Jesus

Herrington, Creech and Taylor show from the four gospels how Jesus consistently differentiated himself from the living systems of which he was part. They also show how Jesus discerned and did the right thing despite enormous pressure to do otherwise in an anxious system.²¹⁶ The lesson that one should take from this is to discipline oneself to see the system, not the symptom, as well as to be present and involved while staying calm in an anxious system.

Boundaries

Growing self-awareness helps pastors learn to distinguish their own limitations from people's expectations,²¹⁷ and to see how God works through those limitations. Adaptive work is by nature a responsibility that needs to be distributed to the individuals or factions in the congregation. Thus, it is important for a pastor who leads adaptive change, to set appropriate boundaries in order to contain the anxiety that sweeps the congregational system.

Parker Palmer reflects upon his earlier career, which left him in a state of burnout due to his inability to recognize his limits:

One sign that I am violating my own nature in the name of nobility is a condition called burnout. Though usually regarded as the result of trying to give too much, burnout in my experience results from trying to give what I do not possess-the ultimate in giving too little! Burnout is a state of emptiness, to be sure, but it does not result from giving all I have: it merely reveals the nothingness from which I was trying to give in the first place.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey : Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. 18

²¹⁷ Scazzero and Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church : A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives*. 142

²¹⁸ Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak : Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000). 49

In *Alpha Male Syndrome*, Kate Ludeman and Eddie Earlandson advise how to set boundaries when dealing with alphas (a powerful, authoritative personality type.) They say that leaders should recognize their response to the stress created by the alpha, define the risk to their health and effectiveness, adopt strategies to modulate their stress response in reaction to the alpha, acquire a battery of sustaining and acute reset strategies, don't pander to the alpha's need for control at the cost of their self-respect, learn to set clear boundaries, accept that the problem is not all your fault, and be accountable for their fair share of responsibility.²¹⁹

Adaptive Leadership That Is Gospel-Shaped

By nature, adaptive challenges do not have known answers, thus they require humility in those who search for the solution. When pastors cultivate deeper self-awareness regarding how they react to the opposition to the change, it will bring out in sharp focus their limitations, sinfulness, failures, motives, and emotional reactions. Those weaknesses need to be brought to the cross, named, confessed, and forgiven. Pastors realize that the cross grows larger while their awareness of sinfulness becomes more intense. The adaptive process will then be gospel-shaped – a cycle of repentance, cleansing, and renewal. They will understand that in the fallen world of “already but not yet,” the failure to follow through the change plan due to opposition can work to the good of the congregation and the pastor by forming the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of the congregation as a whole.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Kate Ludeman and Eddie Earlandson, *Alpha Male Syndrome* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2006). 224

²²⁰ Class Note. 2007 Winter. Worship Class given by Dr. Mark Dalbey.

After reflecting on his past behavior of self-destruction, self-serving, and Mr. fix-it-all way that almost destroyed his family and ministry, Peter Scazzero describes his new life of leadership that is operated in a manner of “brokenness and vulnerability.”²²¹

I began to speak freely of my mistakes, vulnerabilities, and failures. I now was able to say “I don’t know what to do.” I talked openly about my insecurities, my disappointments, and my shattered dreams. I shared feelings that, previously, I tended to be ashamed of—anger, jealousy, depression, sadness, despair...not only did I not feel worse as I initially feared, I felt more alive and clean than I had in years. My illusions of pretense and protectiveness were dissipating. And I began to sense God’s love in Christ and the Holy Spirit’s power in an entirely new way.²²²

Allender agrees,

Troubled leaders live with their weakness on their sleeve, and it is through their weakness that grace comes to be magnified...God’s servant leaders are intended to call God’s people to repentance and faith. And what better way for God to do so than to first transform the leaders, who are the people who need grace even more than those they teach, encourage, and guide?²²³

Allender goes on to describe how the gospel-shaped life of a leader experiences transformation from reactive habits into maturity of character. It is by embracing brokenness – naming, acknowledging, and dealing with one’s own failure – that a controlling person turns into confident leader, rigidity is transformed into creativity, self-absorption turns into humility and gratitude, hiding changes into caring, and busy-ness transforms into boldness and rest.²²⁴

²²¹ Scazzero and Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church : A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives*. 110

²²² Ibid. 121

²²³ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 54

²²⁴ Ibid. 78

Three Practices to Become a Calm Leader in the Midst of Adaptive Work

Herrington, Creech and Taylor suggest three practices that help pastors to become calm leaders in the midst of anxiety: a reflective life style, spiritual disciplines, and a community of grace and truth.

The Practice of a Reflective Lifestyle for Resonant Leadership

Pastors need to pay close attention to themselves to make sure they create and sustain resonance²²⁵ so that they stay in tune with those around them. “Creating and sustaining resonance” means engaging in “a dynamic process” where reflective life style restores “positive emotions and healthy relationship that enable leaders to be resilient and function effectively even in the face of challenge.”²²⁶ This in turn helps congregation members work in sync with each other, in tune with each others’ thoughts (what to do) and emotions (why to do it).²²⁷ But when pastors neglect to intentionally engage in a reflective lifestyle, the stress that comes from making intense sacrifices while leading adaptive change compounds. It will sooner or later derail them emotionally. They can then become dissonant—feeling and projecting negative emotions, which in turn impacts the whole system negatively.

Citing examples of leaders who have successfully displayed resonance over the long term, Boyatzis and McKee propose the cultivation of a reflective lifestyle as a practice that is essential to combat the dangers of stress, sustain resonance, avoid dissonance, and manage the sacrifices and stress of one’s leadership role.²²⁸ Herrington agrees, suggesting that pastors understand and practice the following concepts to calm

²²⁵ Richard E. Boyatzis and Annie McKee, *Resonant Leadership : Renewing Yourself and Connecting with Others through Mindfulness, Hope, and Compassion* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2005). 71

²²⁶ Ibid. 71

²²⁷ Ibid. 4

²²⁸ Ibid. 203

themselves: increasing self-awareness (utilizing how the concept of Joharri's window can help them to gain insight into their feelings, attitudes, and behaviors as they contribute to the anxiety in the congregation²²⁹); monitoring their thinking patterns (identifying faulty thinking and asking a trusted friend to help them to change the behavior²³⁰); managing their feelings (taking responsibility in identifying and managing intense feelings appropriately²³¹); and slowing the pace (breathe and count, wait to respond).²³²

Spiritual Disciplines

Differentiation of self is the ability to know and do the right thing. It requires personal transformation to know what is right and to do the right thing. But transformation is a mysterious process that takes place by the power of the Spirit, and it comes "only from the inside out."²³³ However, the use of spiritual disciplines are a God-given means that "carves out the pathways for the Spirit to work," and help us to build "spiritual muscle" so that in the process of highly stressful adaptive work, one can have strength to handle the task.²³⁴ The following spiritual disciplines will help adaptive leaders know and do the right thing in the midst of the chaos and tension that accompany adaptive work: praying, fasting, meditating, retreating, celebrating, journaling, retreat, celebration, study of the Bible, and prayer.²³⁵

Herrington, Creech and Taylor believe that spiritual maturity is closely connected with emotional maturity and that "differentiation of self" involves both emotional intelligence and spiritual maturity:

²²⁹ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey : Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. 73

²³⁰ Ibid. 76

²³¹ Ibid. 79

²³² Ibid. 71

²³³ Ibid. 132

²³⁴ Ibid. 133

²³⁵ Ibid. 138

The emotional and spiritual maturity that we are calling differentiation of self does not happen by accident. It is not enough to want to be mature or to learn a way of appearing mature or others...the ability to do the right thing even when under pressure to do otherwise begins with the ability to separate ourselves from the emotional intensity and chaos of our relationship so that we can make a well-reasoned choice.²³⁶

Scazzero also believes that emotional health and spiritual health are inseparable. He asserts that it is not possible for believers to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.²³⁷ Spiritually mature leaders are also emotionally mature, with a high level of differentiation of self in the midst of anxious congregations.

As noted earlier, pastors are pressured to treat adaptive challenges as technical problems, to take quick-fix approaches. Many pastors assume as a default setting an over-functioning position, with their congregation looking to their pastor for solutions to their problems. Even when a pastor begins to exercise adaptive leadership by stepping back to let the congregation to take over the adaptive work, there is push back, with various anxious behaviors to return the pastor to the previous over-functioning position²³⁸

Herrington, Creech and Taylor give a practical guide that teaches how to be present while managing one's own anxiety. First, one should master basic concepts of emotional intelligence:²³⁹ differentiation of self, forces of togetherness and individuality anxiety, triangling, over-functioning, family of origin awareness, thinking systems, and watching process. Second, one must practice new behaviors within one's relationships,

²³⁶ Ibid. 134

²³⁷ Scazzero and Bird, *The Emotionally Healthy Church : A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives*. 50

²³⁸ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey : Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. 45, 60, 65

²³⁹ Ibid. 145

including family members or friends.²⁴⁰ The goal is for the leader to mature by learning to remain differentiated while increasing connections. Third, one must take time for reflection on what one has learned. This reflection provides feedback so that one can further recalibrate one's relationships and practices. This continuous cycle of mastering concepts, engaging in new behaviors, and reflecting on what they have learned will lead them to create new default settings in relationships in a more consistent way, so that adaptive work can proceed effectively.²⁴¹

These practices will be best fostered in a community of grace and truth. Change comes best when we identify the behavior we want to adjust and ask a community to support us and hold us accountable for making the changes.²⁴² Contrary to the traditional assumption that effective leaders know all the answers and tackle difficult problems by their own charisma and ability, adaptive challenges require leaders that are humble enough to ask for support from other leaders, and to practice transparency and authenticity.²⁴³

Herrington, Creech and Taylor suggest building a community which comprises four sets of relationships in order to foster personal change and to learn how to reflect on the condition of one's leadership qualities:²⁴⁴ find a coach outside the congregation system, establish a peer group of fellow pastors, form a vision community made up of a core group of key leaders in the congregation, and stay connected to Jesus.²⁴⁵ Allender

²⁴⁰ Ibid. 147

²⁴¹ Ibid. 145

²⁴² Ibid. 148

²⁴³ Ibid. 150

²⁴⁴ Ibid. 151

²⁴⁵ Ibid. 154

affirms the pastors' need for communities of mutual care who "suffer and delight in one another,"²⁴⁶ in order to be able to face the truth with honesty:

Why we need community? Because truth is sure and strong, and when it seizes us, we inevitably become vulnerable. The truth ought to surprise us and make us weak in the knees. That's why I can best encounter truth in the context of community. Otherwise, I won't have someone to help me bear the freeing burden of truth.²⁴⁷

The third area of literature focuses on the emotional dimension of adaptive work. Pastors need a deeper understanding of the emotional impact of transition and change on congregations, in order for the change process to be successful. Pastors need to develop enough emotional maturity to stay with the adaptive work by calling their congregations to pursue shared visions, staying connected with those who differ from them, and remaining calm in the midst of rising anxiety.²⁴⁸ In summary, emotional intelligence includes self-management, social management, and self-awareness, as well as understanding family systems, systems thinking, and watching processes.

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

The fourth area of literature focuses on cultural intelligence as an essential element of adaptive leadership. This research focuses on the question of how pastors exercise adaptive leadership in the confines of a Korean cultural context. What are the Korean cultural signatures that affect how pastors lead adaptive change in Korean congregations in America?

P. Christopher Earley believes that there are various cultural signatures that leaders should take into account. There are cultural differences in time horizons, which impact how far into the future a vision should be cast. There are also differences in focus.

²⁴⁶ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 122

²⁴⁷ Ibid. 159

²⁴⁸ 2008 Covenant Theological Seminary. Center for ministry leadership-rightpath-intersect, 46

Some cultures are goal-oriented, while others are people-oriented. These differences will affect the way in which pastors should implement the vision when there is conflict between goals and relationships. Time often plays a less crucial role in a culture where social relationships, order, and harmony are emphasized and valued. On the other hand, punctuality is important in a culture that values speed and efficiency.²⁴⁹

The Korean culture tends to understand social interactions in a long-term context. Their personal, social, and business relationships are maintained and reinforced through continuous and long-term associations. Both current problems and advantages are generally viewed in the context of the outcomes that are expected in the distant future. As such, the Korean culture fosters virtues oriented towards future reward (as opposed to short-term gain). Discrete transactions are generally viewed as part of the larger, more important whole of the on-going relationship.²⁵⁰

The Korean culture is also people-oriented.²⁵¹ Feelings and emotions are more important than reason, and special “human feeling” (“*injung*” in Korean) is the glue which binds traditional Korean human relations together. “*Injung*” refers to a feeling of affection that occurs between people spontaneously, not from formal obligation. Originally denoting feelings between parent and child as well as between siblings, *injung* expands to include social relations between friends and fellow workers in formal organizations and the community, creating a sense of unity and intimacy. Thus, *injung* occurs primarily in relations based on mutual dependence (referred to as “*oongsok*” or

²⁴⁹ Earley, Ang, and Tan, *Cq : Developing Cultural Intelligence at Work*. 186

²⁵⁰ Sungmin Ryu, “The Effect of LTO Culture On International Supply Chain Contracts,” *The Journal of Applied Business Research* (Fall 2005 Volume 21, Number 4). <http://www.cluteinstitute-onlinejournals.com/PDFs/200525258.pdf> (2 July 2010)

²⁵¹ Young Hack Song and Christopher B. Meek, “The Impact of Culture on the Management Values and Beliefs of Korean Firms,” *Journal of Comparative International Management* 1 (June 1998): <http://www.allbusiness.com/management/740137-1.html> (2 July 2010)

“origwang” in Korean) and naturally renders favorable treatment.²⁵² Sometimes such affection prevents rendering justice to the party involved. Once a relationship has begun between individuals through injung, then the Confucian hierarchical mode of relationship takes charge. When a senior member does something improper, a junior member is expected to smooth it over rather than pointing it out. Thinking and speaking outside the box in terms of hierarchical relationship violates the etiquette of the group to which one belongs.²⁵³

People who can bring injung into an organization, on the other hand, tend to be valued higher than people who can logically solve problems. People with injung are sensitive to others’ feelings and quick to support sufferers.²⁵⁴ Leaders, including pastors, are especially obligated to search out their subordinates’ hidden feelings of discontent. When people fail to demonstrate injung appropriately, their humanity and trustworthiness come under suspicion. A group member perceived as lacking injung may be isolated from the group.

In traditional Korean culture, there is no ultimate authority, such as the Christian concept of God.²⁵⁵ Morality refers to codes of behavior in relation first to family relationships, then to those next in close relations, with decreasing responsibility as the group becomes distant. In Korean culture, family ties are the most secure relational ties.²⁵⁶ They not only give initial identification, but they also tie the relationship to

²⁵² Guk Je Han Kook Hak Hoe, *Han guk munhwa wa Han gugin* (Seoul: Sa kye jul, 1998), 164

²⁵³ Jun-Shik Choe, *Han-kuk-ihn-ae-gae-do Mun-wha-gah Itt-mun-gah?* (Seoul: Seoul International Korean Study Society-1998), 121

²⁵⁴ Young Hack Song and Christopher B. Meek, “The Impact of Culture on the Management Values and Beliefs of Korean Firms,” *Journal of Comparative International Management* 1(June 1998): <http://www.allbusiness.com/management/740137-1.html> (2 July 2010)

²⁵⁵ Guk Je Han Kook Hak Hoe, *Han guk munhwa wa Han gugin*, 227

²⁵⁶ *A Handbook of Korea* (Seoul: Korean Overseas Culture and Information Service, 1998), 444

society through familial relationships.²⁵⁷ This long term perspective on time horizon, emphasis on *injung* over reason in relationships, and preoccupation with family relationships create important implications for how Korean pastors lead adaptive change.

Early says that there are also differences in power, distance, and structure in various cultures. In those cultures which prefer high hierarchies, a leader commands great authority and power over the followers and tends to have “adult-child” relationships with them. Leaders and followers tend not to socialize with each other, the followers address their leaders formally, and the status of the leaders is much revered by the followers.²⁵⁸ On the other hand, in a culture which prefers flat hierarchies, leaders rely less on personal power and authority and more on formal rules, standards, and procedures.²⁵⁹

The Korean culture is status-conscious, with high hierarchy. The confucianism that permeates Korean society views all human relationships as duties, and the expectations of each relationship are specified for everyone: between father and son, between sovereign and minister, between husband and wife, between old and young, and between friends. They believe social stability and harmony depend on the proper observance of these relationships. Organizations are structured vertically, mirroring human relationships and attitudes. Outsiders often struggle to navigate this maze of vertical relationships. For example, they must master the nuanced ways of dealing with each relationship in daily discourse.

In the Korean language, the social status of the person with whom one is conversing must be recognized by proper use of a variety of verb suffixes, special honorific verbs and honorific verb inflections. There is even a selection of nouns

²⁵⁷ Young Hack Song and Christopher B. Meek, “The Impact of Culture on the Management Values and Beliefs of Korean Firms,” *Journal of Comparative International Management* 1(June 1998): <http://www.allbusiness.com/management/740137-1.html> (2 July 2010)

²⁵⁸ Earley, Ang, and Tan, *Cq : Developing Cultural Intelligence at Work*. 187

²⁵⁹ Ibid. 191

and pronouns implying different levels of social status as determined by hierarchical rank, class, age, and gender. For example, 13 different pronouns for the word "you" are available, depending on one's status relative to another. Thus, three main forms of speech (e.g., high, middle and low forms) are used on a regular basis, plus six grammatical forms, each communicating a different degree of politeness.²⁶⁰

Failure to use a person's correct title will cause great embarrassment. In this researcher's personal experience as a Korean pastor who serves in a Korean congregation, people refer to each other by the title that tells their position in the church, whether they met inside the church or outside the church. When a person doesn't know the position by which to address someone, they feel uncomfortable.

In the social structure of traditional Korean culture, the father-son relationship is expanded to other institutions of society. Juniors or subordinates have been taught to be obedient and not to question seniors or superiors, especially in public settings, lest seniors or superiors "lose face" in front of others. It is generally assumed that superiors and seniors possess greater knowledge and wisdom than those below and younger than them. Therefore, in traditional Korean culture, pastors and their congregations would not feel comfortable socializing with each other or addressing each other as peers. Lay people would hesitate to question their pastors' directives, and would not expect to offer input or demand decision-making rights with their pastors. Thus, when pastors lead adaptive change, this cultural-hierarchical, status-conscious, shame-prone aspect will have important implications.

Early says that there are also cultural differences in what motivates, drives, and energizes people to perform. Some cultures value harmonious relations, position, and

²⁶⁰ Young Hack Song and Christopher B. Meek, "The Impact of Culture on the Management Values and Beliefs of Korean Firms," *Journal of Comparative International Management* 1(June 1998): <http://www.allbusiness.com/management/740137-1.html> (2 July 2010)

status over personal achievement, self-actualization, or tangible financial rewards.²⁶¹

Traditional Korean small communities are collectivistic and community-centered. They tend to be closed groups, and progress is achieved through the unified efforts of the group members. Those who cannot subordinate personal interests to the collective cause are not well accepted because they “break the harmony of the group.”²⁶² Such people are considered pariahs or outcasts. Furthermore, stability in social relations are an essential value for survival and progress. Maintaining “harmony” triumphs individual-oriented competition. While harmony is not sameness, there are agreed-upon rules of social etiquette and moral behavior to which one must adhere.

Early says there are different modes of communication between leaders and followers in different cultures. Cultures which values self-promotion tend to give positive or negative feedback directly to an individual member in an effort to motivate them. However, in cultures that value self-effacement, positive feedback is not conveyed openly, or, if it is, the feedback is given to a group, not an individual.²⁶³

The Korean culture is a “high-context culture.” Indirect communication tends to be preferred over overt oral or written statements of fact or position.²⁶⁴ People are therefore expected to be sensitive in observing facial and body expressions, as well as physical positioning of individuals in a group or work setting. Disagreement should be carefully and cautiously expressed so as not to damage the “face” of others and hurt their feelings, especially in public settings. “Facial reading” (*nunch'ibogi*), observing facial

²⁶¹ Earley, Ang, and Tan, *Cq : Developing Cultural Intelligence at Work*. 197

²⁶² Young Hack Song and Christopher B. Meek, “The Impact of Culture on the Management Values and Beliefs of Korean Firms,” *Journal of Comparative International Management* 1 (June 1998): <http://www.allbusiness.com/management/740137-1.html> (2 July 2010)

²⁶³ Earley, Ang, and Tan, *Cq : Developing Cultural Intelligence at Work*. 197

²⁶⁴ Young Hack Song and Christopher B. Meek, “The Impact of Culture on the Management Values and Beliefs of Korean Firms,” *Journal of Comparative International Management* 1 (June 1998): <http://www.allbusiness.com/management/740137-1.html> (2 July 2010)

expression to discover unspoken feelings (*kibun*), is necessary for maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships and solving problems effectively.²⁶⁵

Like any culture, Koreans want their pastor to fulfill their expectations as a leader. Korean pastors who lead adaptive change in Korean American congregations, having come from that same culture, must also be aware of the self-image that they hold while they hold the position of leadership.

Many tend to hold the self-image or ego-ideal of being leaders. They appear to want to be leaders, not so much for what it may mean for them to practice leadership, but because the word “leader” acts like a normative magnet within many culture, much like the word “hero.” [People] try to fulfill whatever specific notion of leadership they have absorbed from their cultures.²⁶⁶

A Korean proverb says that “the will of people is the will of Heaven (*min sim yi chon sim*).²⁶⁷” Korean pastors are in danger of falling into the trap of conforming to the cultural self-image of the leader, which pressures him to satisfy the expectations of the people. But this is the quality of a manager, not the work of an adaptive leader. Korean pastors need to keep asking themselves whether their allegiance is to the will of the people or to the will of God.

Heifetz lists five distinguishing characteristics of an adaptive culture.²⁶⁸ First, no issue is too sensitive, and no questions are off-limits. Second, people share responsibility for organization’s future. Third, independent judgment is valued. Fourth, it is necessary to promote people who take a long-term view of the business and feel a personal

²⁶⁵ Chun-sik, Choe, *Han guk munhwa wa Han gugin* (Seoul: Sa ge zul, 1999). 178

²⁶⁶ Ron Heifetz and associates, quoted in RightPath.(2008, Covenant Theological Seminary, Center for Ministry Leadership), 7

²⁶⁷ Chong-hwa Chong, *Han guk chon tong Sahoe ui chongsin munhwa kujo* (Seoul:Korea University, 1995), 106

²⁶⁸ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 101

investment in the organization. Finally, one should foster a culture of openness and commitment to learning.

Compared with the characteristics of adaptive culture that Heifetz listed, traditional Korean culture is not hospitable to adaptive change. The strategic challenge would be how skillfully the pastor can use autocratic action to begin developing adaptive capacity while still keeping their trust.²⁶⁹

What makes matters more complicated is the fact that Korean immigrants in America have adopted American culture in varying degrees. American values and customs have been added to but not fully integrated with traditional Korean cultural characteristics. Thus, contemporary Korean American culture may be best described as a complex mixture of old and new values and attitudes, with the proportions varying by individuals and congregations. The coexistence of the new and old beliefs and values appears to generate feelings of ambivalence in individuals, as well as at the congregational level.²⁷⁰

The work of Ronald Heifetz would suggest following questions as helpful in exploring the cultural dimensions of adaptive change in particular congregation. First, what are the characteristic responses of the congregation to disequilibrium – to the confusion, threats, conflict, and disorientation that accompany adaptive work? Second, when in the past has the distress appeared to reach a breakpoint? Third, what actions by the senior pastor have restored equilibrium? Next, what mechanisms to regulate distress

²⁶⁹ Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*. 121

²⁷⁰ Won Moo Hurh, *The Korean Americans*, The New Americans, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998). 73

are currently within the pastor's control? Finally, what are the work and work avoidance patterns particular to this congregation?²⁷¹

In summary, unique Korean cultural markers that may affect how pastors lead adaptive change in Korean congregation are: emphasis on relationship over goals,²⁷² the promotion of feeling over reason, absence or presence of long-term perspective,²⁷³ emphasis on stability and harmony over results, respect for authority figures,²⁷⁴ status-consciousness, and preference for indirect communication.²⁷⁵ These characteristics present pastors who lead adaptive change in Korean congregations a unique challenge as well as certain advantages.

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

In light of the literature examined, there are four primary themes that Korean pastors must keep in mind when leading adaptive change in Korean immigrant churches. The first theme focuses on the ministry skills needed to lead adaptive change and the leadership qualities that are required for adaptive work: adaptive leadership, compassion, strategy, resoluteness, questioning skills, and humility. The second theme involves conflict that surfaces in adaptive work. This conflict requires proper management in order for adaptive change to proceed successfully. The third theme focuses on emotional intelligence. Pastors need to acquire the ability to name and manage not just their own

²⁷¹ Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*. 260

²⁷² Young Hack Song and Christopher B. Meek, "The Impact of Culture on the Management Values and Beliefs of Korean Firms," *Journal of Comparative International Management* 1(June 1998): <http://www.allbusiness.com/management/740137-1.html> (2 July 2010)

²⁷³ Sungmin Ryu, "The Effect of LTO Culture On International Supply Chain Contracts," *The Journal of Applied Business Research* (Fall 2005 Volume 21, Number 4). <http://www.cluteinstitute-onlinejournals.com/PDFs/200525258.pdf> (2 July 2010)

²⁷⁴ Young Hack Song and Christopher B. Meek, "The Impact of Culture on the Management Values and Beliefs of Korean Firms," *Journal of Comparative International Management* 1(June 1998): <http://www.allbusiness.com/management/740137-1.html> (2 July 2010)

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

feelings, but also the pain and loss of those who go through adaptive change. Because of the pastor's position in the congregational system, it is pastors who can, by staying connected while holding onto themselves, most affect the congregation's susceptibility to adaptive change. The final theme explores cultural implications in the adaptive change process. By identifying cultural signatures that impact the level of pressure that pastors experience during adaptive work in Korean immigrant churches, pastors can effectively manage and overcome the pressure of their congregations to resist change.

Adaptive Leadership as an Iterative Process

Adaptive leadership is an "iterative process" involving three activities: observing events and patterns in the congregation, interpreting what has been observed, and designing interventions that challenge the congregation to embark on adaptive work, based on the observations and interpretations.²⁷⁶ In order for these activities to be fruitful, the pastor must be proficient in adaptive leadership skills, conflict management skills, emotional intelligence, and cultural intelligence.

The iterative process of adaptive leadership by nature requires new learning. The challenge of adaptive leadership, then, is to continue the process of creating, strengthening, disrupting, and recreating, while keeping those "tensions between order and disorder without finding resolution in the prison of regulation or the exile of anarchy."²⁷⁷ The adaptive leadership of the pastor is thus "about making way for that day by prefiguring it in the way we both define maturity and create space for complexity to exist in our organizations."²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 32

²⁷⁷ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 197

²⁷⁸ Ibid. 197

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore how Korean pastors in Korean speaking congregations led adaptive change. The study assumed that the unique Korean cultural context would affect how pastors lead adaptive change. It also assumed that different elements of adaptive leadership would need to be emphasized for effective leadership of change. In light of the review of selected literature, four main areas that are central to adaptive work have been identified. These areas include adaptive leadership, conflict management, emotional intelligence, and cultural intelligence. To examine these areas more closely, the following research questions served as the focus for this study:

1. How do native Korean pastors describe their leadership roles and behaviors during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
2. How do native Korean pastors deal with conflicts that arise during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
3. How do native Korean pastors respond to emotional situations during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
4. How do native Korean pastors describe the cultural issues that arise during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The researcher chose to utilize a qualitative approach to this study, because according to Sharan Merriam, it allows the researcher to better analyze the meaning that

pastors have constructed from their own experiences of leading adaptive change in a Korean cultural context.²⁷⁹ Since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis,²⁸⁰ this approach allows the researcher to inductively conduct cross-case comparisons and analysis, thereby gaining valuable information that will benefit many pastors leading adaptive change in Korean congregations. Furthermore, the “richly descriptive”²⁸¹ data uncovered by this study could provide pastors who lead adaptive change with good insight into how each may approach adaptive challenges in a given situation. Through qualitative data, as revealed in the words and descriptions of the research participants, the researcher hopes to build a theory of how Korean pastors can lead effective adaptive change in light of the observations and intuitive understandings gained from the interviewees.

SAMPLING CRITERIA

For this study, the researcher used samples based on “unique or rare attributes” inherent to a population.²⁸² While most pastors confront a variety of leadership issues during their ministry, this research needed participants to communicate in depth about their experience of adaptive leadership in a Korean cultural context. Therefore, the study sample consisted of a selection of people from the population of Korean church pastors who have effectively led adaptive change in Korean immigrant churches in America, or who have attempted to lead such change with mixed results. Those who experienced difficulty in leading adaptive change will have insights to share from the lessons they learned.

²⁷⁹ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research : A Guide to Design and Implementation*, The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009). 14

²⁸⁰ Ibid. 15

²⁸¹ Ibid. 16

²⁸² Ibid. 25

The researcher has attended Korean American pastors' conferences for several years, where he has had the opportunity to fellowship with pastors who shared their experience of how they handled difficult leadership issues in ministry. The information this researcher gleaned through those meetings, along with the researcher's own experience of burn out in a previous ministry, have been the impetus to pursue this study. Through networking at these conferences, the researcher was able to identify pastors who have had the experience of leading adaptive change. Also, having served as the Rules Committee Chairman of Korean Central Presbytery in the PCA for ten years, the researcher was familiar with the leadership issues and adaptive challenges that have occurred in local churches.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, adaptive challenge cannot be solved by managerial expertise, but only be addressed through "changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties."²⁸³ People have to take certain losses and learning has to take place in order to thrive in new environment.

When this researcher had contacted and had short preliminary talks with those who were known to have gone through difficult leadership issues in their ministry, it became clear to the researcher that most of their issues were related to the adaptive challenge. Among the pool of pastors identified to have had experience leading adaptive change in Korean immigrant churches, eight pastors were selected. These pastors were chosen from several denominations, because the sensitive nature of the subject might make potential interviewees hesitate to share their experiences in depth, especially within same presbytery. Four pastors were known to the researcher at the time of selection. The

²⁸³ Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Martin Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business Press, 2009). 19

other four pastors were selected through referral from other pastors whom researcher had met at the Korean American pastors' conferences. Also, due to time and logistic concerns, only pastors who reside in the Midwestern United States were selected. All of the interviews were conducted in person, in the town where each pastor resided.

While the researcher did not consider the size or age of the church when selecting participants, the churches that the participants serve (or served) resemble the average sized Korean immigrant (organized) churches. Two congregations had more than three hundred members at the time of the adaptive challenge; another two churches had more than two hundred members; and the remaining four congregations had more than one hundred members. All except one congregation were in metropolitan areas. Two of the congregations have been in existence for more than forty years. Three congregations were started more than twenty-five years ago. Two of the congregations had been around for more than fifteen years, and one congregation was planted five years ago.

While the congregation's degree of resilience and ability to tolerate the conflict that surfaced during adaptive work may have impacted the way the pastor led adaptive change, it did not impact the qualifications of those chosen to be interviewed. They all were invited to participate via email, followed by a personal phone call. All expressed interest and gave written informed consent to participate.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

This study utilized semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. The open-ended nature of the interview questions helped the researcher to build upon the participant's initial responses to complex issues and explore more deeply "the emerging

worldview of the respondent, and new ideas on the topic,”²⁸⁴ by asking follow-up questions. Semi-structured interviews, along with a constant comparative method of data analysis, also enabled the researcher to look for common themes, patterns, and concerns, as well as contrasting views among participants.²⁸⁵

For the interviews, the following questions were prepared by the interviewer.

However, during the actual interview, the interviewer felt that it was unnecessary to ask all of the questions in order to find the answer to the research questions. At times, follow-up questions had to be improvised in order to delve into something which the researcher did not originally plan to pursue. The interview questions were as follows:

1. Can you tell me the most difficult leadership issues you have had to address?
2. Can you tell me about your most successful change in leading a congregation?
3. Can you describe the breakdown of stakeholders in the issues, who, where, their interests, and how they promoted their interests directly and indirectly?
4. What kind of loss and pain were involved in the adaptive work?
5. Can you describe how you managed the conflict that surfaced during the adaptive work?
6. What are the things that you wished to do but didn't in that situation because of the nature of Korean culture?
7. What did you do to help other leaders to hang in there with you throughout the process?
8. What kind of self-discipline do you practice to deal with stress related to your leadership role?
9. What aspect of Korean culture made it most difficult for you to manage change?
10. How did your understanding of your Korean speaking congregation – and its authoritarian church culture – affect the way you lead?
11. If a pastor from another culture comes to minister to this church, what major challenges will they have to face in leading adaptive change?

²⁸⁴ Merriam, *Qualitative Research : A Guide to Design and Implementation*. 90

²⁸⁵ Ibid. 30

Eight pastors were interviewed for one and a half hours each in a semi-structured interview. Prior to the interview, each pastor received information on the duration of the interview and the basic nature of the interview. In order to save time, the researcher audio-taped the interviews with a digital recorder, after first gaining the consent of the participants. By conducting two interviews per week, the researcher completed the data gathering over the course of four weeks. After each interview, field notes with descriptive and reflective observations were written.

Since interviews were conducted in Korean, they were transcribed verbatim in Korean by the researcher, for subsequent analysis. The pertinent data were translated into English by the researcher and then translated back into Korean as a check to ensure that the translation was reliable.²⁸⁶ Further, a second person who was fluent both in English and in Korean was asked to read the original transcript and double-check the accuracy of the researcher's translation.

ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

As soon as possible, and always within one week of each meeting, the researcher personally transcribed each interview by playing back the digital recording. It was then coded and analyzed by the constant comparative method, in which the researcher periodically analyzed the data during the whole interview process. This method provided for the continuous revision, clarification, and evaluation of the temporary data categories.²⁸⁷ The analysis focused on discovering and identifying common themes,

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 270

²⁸⁷ Ibid. 171

patterns, and categories across the participants, as well as congruence or discrepancy among the participants.²⁸⁸

Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research “is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner.”²⁸⁹ Qualitative research is tested for trustworthiness through internal and external tests. Internal validity deals with the question, “Are the findings credible given the data presented?”²⁹⁰ External validity is concerned with “the extent to which the findings of one study can be generalized or transferred to other situations.”²⁹¹

Internal validity for this study was provided through triangulation,²⁹² using multiple participants who differed in ministry environment, composition of congregation, church history, family background, denominational affiliation, and geographic area. Credibility of the initial findings was further ensured through “member checks,” after which the analysis was completed and conclusions were drawn. External validity for the study was provided primarily by “rich, thick description,”²⁹³ so that the readers will be able to effectively assess the findings in light of their own concrete situations.

Finally, reliability deals with the question of “whether the results are consistent with the data collected.”²⁹⁴ The researcher has already explained the interview process to ensure consistent results. The researcher’s position which will be declared shortly, and the internal and external validity of the findings as determined above will further ensure the data’s reliability.

²⁸⁸ Ibid. 200

²⁸⁹ Ibid. 209

²⁹⁰ Ibid. 213

²⁹¹ Ibid. 234

²⁹² Ibid. 216

²⁹³ Ibid. 227

²⁹⁴ Ibid. 221

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study will be limited to pastors who have had adaptive leadership experiences in Korean congregations. While lay-members in the congregation who do not possess formal authority may exercise adaptive leadership, this study deals with adaptive leadership of the pastor only. This study focuses on the collective viewpoints of pastors who have led adaptive change in Korean congregations. A separate study of this nature could focus more on the adaptive leadership that was exercised by other authority figures, such as ruling elders. Therefore, viewpoints and responses that pertain to adaptive leadership, conflict management, emotional aspects, and cultural aspects within this study will be limited to those expressed by the pastors.

Readers who desire to generalize some of the particular aspects of these conclusions on adaptive leadership in Korean cultural context should test those aspects in their particular context. The results of this study may also have implications for churches of other cultures that might have an authoritarian cultural bent. It is possible that these findings might not be transferrable to a Korean speaking congregation that is made up of a younger generation with a less authoritarian mindset. It is also possible that the results might be different if informants were female pastors.

Finally, the conclusions of this study will be limited to the adaptive leadership experiences of those who participated in this study, along with input gained from the literature review.

RESEARCHER POSITION

In qualitative study, the primary instrument for data collection and analysis is the researcher. This means that all observations, analyses, and conclusions in the research are

influenced by a particular researcher's values and expectations. Merriam emphasizes the importance of reflecting critically on the self as researcher in order to identify and disclose potential sources of biases, assumptions, worldviews, theoretical orientations, and other relationships to the study that may impact the investigation.²⁹⁵

The author of this research is an evangelical Christian who has served as an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America. While this Christian worldview, role as ordained minister, and cultural background as a native Korean could influence how the researcher handles the topic of adaptive leadership in ministry, the use of systematic data collection procedures and multiple data sources minimizes the potential bias. In addition, the researcher's worldview compels work with the data to be conducted with integrity, encouraging him to arrive at conclusions that will withstand scrutiny. Furthermore, the researcher's emic perspective, with similarities to the interviewees in worldview, leadership experience, and cultural background, will help the researcher to gain deeper understanding of the data.

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT METHODOLOGY

This chapter described the qualitative research approach utilized to study adaptive leadership patterns in a Korean cultural context. Overview of the research interviews was followed by the issues of validity, reliability, and limitations of the study. This qualitative design allowed for deeper, emic analysis of the meaning that pastors have constructed from their own experiences leading adaptive change in Korean cultural contexts. The findings that resulted from the use of the described methodology will be presented in the next chapter.

²⁹⁵ Ibid. 219

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore how native Korean pastors lead adaptive change in Korean immigrant churches in America. This study is based on interviews with pastors from eight Korean congregations in the mid-western United States. Each of the congregations represented had faced adaptive challenges that needed adaptive solutions. The pastors reflected on how they approached their adaptive challenges. The interviews were guided by the following research questions:

1. How do native Korean pastors describe their leadership roles and behaviors during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
2. How do native Korean pastors deal with conflicts that arise during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
3. How do native Korean pastors respond to emotional situations during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
4. How do native Korean pastors describe the cultural issues that arise during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?

Following are the findings collected from the eight sets of interviews. No actual names of churches or individuals are used.

Immanuel Korean Presbyterian Church

Pastor Jung-Sup Lee was called to Immanuel Korean Presbyterian Church (IKPC) twelve years ago. IKPC had initially called another pastor, but due to some problems over

that pastor's legal residence in the state, they had to find a new pastor within a month. This situation resulted in great dispute and infighting among the church members over the calling. As a result, sixty percent of the congregation left the church, which was in turmoil when pastor Lee arrived. With the remaining seventy members, Lee started his ministry, focusing on preaching and Bible study. He recalled:

When I arrived at the church twelve years ago, the congregation was in disarray. I proposed to have only one early morning prayer meeting on Saturday, and on other days focus on the study of the Word in the evening. They all accepted my suggestion. Even though early morning prayer meeting was cherished Korean church tradition, I didn't think it was essential to the spiritual growth of our immigrant churches. And we had other programs that would give as much benefit. Since those who attended early morning prayer meeting were relatively small groups of staff and a few other members, it was not profitable to invest so many spiritual assets to that area. The elders agreed, and we stopped.

Every evening from Monday through Saturday, Pastor Lee led discipleship classes. The congregation "became centered on the Word" after three years of Bible study and exegetical preaching. Eventually, Immanuel Korean Presbyterian Church developed a reputation as a Bible-centered congregation. People from neighboring churches which were going through difficulties started to attend. In four years, the congregation grew from seventy to one hundred fifty. Ninety percent of the members had taken discipleship courses. Pastor Lee believed that through consistent focus on the Word, the church had become healthy.

The congregation continued to grow, with a Sunday adult attendance of 250-300 and Sunday school of one hundred. But the church's educational facility was in a poor condition. The limited educational facility could not accommodate the growing number of Sunday school students. Parents of Sunday school students started voicing the need to expand the facility. A member of the congregation did some research and found out that

their Sunday school facility was one of the worst among Korean churches in the area. He reported that the Korean community's attitude reflected the following thought process: "If your goal is the spiritual growth of adults in your family, go to Immanuel Korean Presbyterian Church, but if your goal is the spiritual growth of your children, do not go to that church, because they don't have enough class rooms for children." The congregation reached a consensus that the focus of the church should be on the second generation. Pastor Lee kept reminding the congregation, whenever opportunities arose, "Since the sanctuary is large, adults are not aware of the problem. However, at this very moment, our children are studying in overcrowded class rooms and even in the lobby."

Church leaders acknowledged the importance of the issue and formed a sub-committee of long-term planning, which spent a year researching whether IKPC should relocate for the long-term growth of the church. The sub-committee reached the conclusion that no building in the area could accommodate this size congregation. They believed that the best option would be to expand the church facility in its current location. Since the lot was small, it was decided after two years of consideration that the pastor's residence and playground should be demolished, and the pastor would move out to a nearby apartment. The education center would then be built in that space. This agenda was approved unanimously, since everyone recognized that the church needed large facilities to accommodate the growing Sunday school, as well as a bigger fellowship space.

A plan was approved for an education center to be built with a budget of 3.7 million dollars. Members were asked to give special offerings over four years. The week of the announcement, an offering commitment of 1.3 million dollars was made by the

congregation. No one complained about the building project, since the goal was to provide space for the education of 120 Sunday school students and a youth group of one hundred members. The leadership of the church was in agreement about the need for the facility. Meanwhile, the congregation continued to grow to four hundred adults in the ninth year. The pastor looks back at this critical period, remembering:

Looking back, it was a critical moment. If we decided to do nothing about the issue, our church would have gone down to decline, because the new generation of parents would not have come to a church with a poor Sunday school facility. That was why we built the gym in the basement of the education center, so that kids could play and participate in Awana programs there.

But the building project revealed a crisis. A conflict which had been under the radar began to surface: four elders started to oppose the project. The Pastor related,

While my relationship with the elders were more or less problem-free, there was division among the session. Four elders among seven who were “known as prayer warriors” formed a faction and began to ignore or oppose any agenda handed in by the other three elders. It was those three elders who played a central role in planning and executing the building project. Two of those three elders were professional architects and naturally were considered good candidates to supervise the building project. But the other four elders opposed the plan submitted by three elders, by counter-proposing another plan which in the opinion of many was not realistic for our financial situation. But they were the majority in the session. And it was not the kind of matter that I could talk about with the congregation.

The seed of the conflict was sown about four years earlier, when after thinking about the dysfunctional state of the church session, Pastor Lee began to suggest that the session introduce a rotation system, in which elders would be subject to a confidential congregational vote every six years after a one-year sabbatical. That way, he believed the elders would regain a sense of responsibility and engage themselves seriously in the matters of the church. This, in turn, would help the members of the congregation to respect their leadership. Pastor Lee believed that the church needed a systemic safety

valve in case the session did not function properly. When the three elders in the minority came up with their building proposal, the other elders opposed them. Pastor Lee and the three elders believed that the reasonable decision-making process had been compromised. Pastor Lee started to actively push his agenda of introducing the rotation system, since he believed the congregation would stand firmly behind him.

I first suggested the rotation system in my fifth year. There were five elders on the session at that time. I mentioned then that elders were given authority and rights and thus needed to take corresponding responsibility, but there was no systemic check and balance to assess whether they were fulfilling their responsibility. They were silent at my suggestion. Later, when I reiterated the need to adopt a rotation system, one elder said, "It is unbiblical." I responded by saying that "it is not unbiblical. It is biblical." But he insisted "It is unbiblical, for eldership is for life time." Even though we were not meeting at the moment as a session, still I realized that this issue might cause a problem, because if later a member of session says it is unbiblical, I would have nothing to say. That would be the end of discussion.

Pastor Lee tried many times to persuade them that eldership is different from session membership. As he understood the situation, the Bible didn't say that session membership should be for a life-time. Pastor Lee pondered how to persuade the four elders on this issue. When newly-ordained elders joined the session, Pastor Lee began a book discussion group with elders. They chose one book at a time and discussed the content of the book. One of the books chosen and discussed was about how to reform a church, about one pastor's testimony on his trial and error of reforming a church. Elders of one faction gave their constructive criticism, talking about what they learned from the book. But elders of the other faction made personal attacks on the author, criticizing the book in a broad manner.

Pastor Lee was at a loss, for this was completely the opposite of what he had expected. He presumed the book was a little radical, but he couldn't understand why

some of them were so angry at the author. Later, he found out that in one chapter, the author talked about a rotation system, which completely turned off the elders of one faction. They complained that it was out of the question. They said “It is unbiblical. It is against our denominational position.” They were in one voice in that matter and indicated that there would be confusion and difficulties in the church if the pastor introduced this system. They protested, “When things are quiet, why does Pastor Lee keep bringing up such a sensitive issue?”

Looking back the incident, Pastor Lee recalled,

But my intention was to teach them the principle of eldership. Since I felt the issue of a rotation system might cause a problem, I wanted to make sure that I knew what I was talking about, and I inquired at our denominational office. It was five years after I arrived at the church that I raised the issue of the rotation system the first time. For another five years after that incident, they did not make waves on this matter since church was growing under my leadership. But in their mind, they did not agree with me on this matter all along. I completely misunderstood them. Since I taught them, and we discussed the issue of biblical church leadership in our Bible study, I thought they accepted my teaching. But actually they did not. They were disappointed with my mentioning the rotation system, but they did not make it into a controversy, since I had not moved to introduce the rotation system yet. It was still at the discussion stage.

Pastor Lee prepared for the battle by inquiring at the denominational office, and he received an answer that supported his position on the matter. He kept the letter private for three or four years before making public that this was the position of the denomination. By this time, tension was growing among the leadership. Pastor Lee finally decided to introduce the rotation system as an agenda in the session. It was his tenth year. He told them “We need to adopt a system that would help our church grow healthy.” Four elders began attacking pastor Lee publically, insisting that it was unbiblical. Pastor Lee responded by saying, “No, I have this formal letter from the denomination supporting my position.” Then, an elder sent a letter to the denominational

office asking them to intervene on this issue, to which denomination office declined to respond. The elder then claimed, “It was fake, because it had no signature. It was a personal opinion, not an official response of our denomination.”

Pastor Lee initially thought rotation system was for the health of the church, not a tool to get rid of undesirable elders. However, he admitted that at that time it looked that way. The problem, Pastor Lee thought, was the lack of a cure mechanism in the church’s bylaws, to guide them in case some elders could not function properly in the role of eldership. Sessions can discipline members of the congregation, but since they were a majority, they themselves could not be disciplined. Furthermore, since there was no specific moral corruption found in them, they could not be touched.

When the agenda was raised in the session, four elders rejected it. Battle lines had been drawn. The conflict between the two factions was fierce. Pastor Lee’s strategy was not to fight directly against the four elders, but “indirectly to fight for the trust of the congregation.” But the minority of three elders, having difficulty bearing the burden of tension and fighting, told the pastor that they would leave the church, since they could not stand to continue to serve with the other four elders. Pastor Lee persuaded them that it was not biblically right to leave just because things got difficult.

I challenged them, “How can we leave just because things are getting difficult? Has not God called us to build a healthy church in spite of suffering and pain?” Since we had good personal relationship, we encouraged one another and agreed to reform the church according to biblical principles and the denominational position on this issue. While we were a minority in the session, we were sure that ninety-five percent of the congregation supported us. I told them “I depend on you. I will leave too if you three leave. But think about this, you know and I know that they are wrong. If we leave now, not wanting to get involved in name calling, the church will be destroyed. Is that what God wants?” They asked what then they should do. I suggested them to forward the issue of the rotation system to the congregation themselves.

Pastor Lee told the three elders that he would support them fully. The three elders then started to collect the signatures of the members so that a congregational meeting could be called to handle this issue. Pastor Lee spoke in the pulpit about the situation, making it clear that he supported the petition of the three elders, while the other four elders opposed the petition. He asked the congregation members to sign the petition if they agreed. "It was a battle for the trust of the people," Pastor Lee explained.

When it was known that the three elders were collecting signatures in order to force the congregational meeting to handle this issue, the other four elders angrily retorted, "Are you trying to circulate yun-pan-jang?" Yun-pan-jang is a Korean legal method used to bring an appeal or request through due process. However, in many cases in Korean history, it was used by a group of subordinates to oppose, or rebel against superiors, ignoring proper due process. The elders branded the signature gathering as rebellion. Pastor Lee rebutted, "It is not yun-pan-jang, but since the session could not handle their responsibility, three elders wanted to ask the opinion of the congregation." The following week, three elders handed in the request to the session, with enough signatures to convene an emergency congregational meeting. Meanwhile, the construction of the building continued.

By that time, the church facility had only limited usage due to construction of the new addition. People could not stay after church to fellowship or have regular fellowship meals after the worship for almost a year. People knew what was going on. 260 out of 280 members signed the petition, which was far more than minimum requirement for calling a congregational meeting. Now the agenda of amendment of the bylaws was in the hands of the congregation, not the session.

During the congregational meeting, the four elders spoke one by one, denouncing the illegality of the proceeding and criticizing the pastor and other minority elders. Pastor Lee recalled,

I was presiding. One elder raised hand and came out to the microphone. He said, "This meeting is illegal. The pastor engineered this scheme in order to take control of the church. When God ordained me as an elder, I became a servant of God. The reason why Pastor Lee wants to change this by vote is that he wants to be a dictator."

Pastor Lee was confounded by this statement, but he was able to keep his emotions under control. He remembered,

What I have been thankful for then, was that I did not react to that accusation emotionally. I didn't say a word and waited until he finished his speech. Then I asked if anyone else wanted to speak. Whoever wanted to speak came out and made their voice heard. Then I pronounced that it was time to vote, asking one elder to pray for the voting. Later people came up to me and said they were impressed by their pastor's quiet, confident composure. "How could you stay calm like that when elders accused you of wanting to be a dictator?" But I replied that our congregation was much more mature than I was. They made their discomfort known by making faces, but quietly watched what was going on and expressed their position on this issue by vote. After the vote, the elders muttered our congregation was extraordinary.

Pastor Lee said that he resorted to parliamentary procedure for amending the bylaws, because he was sure he would win this battle. He believed that the members trusted him, that the rotation system was legal, and that it would benefit the health of the church. He explained,

The reason why we succeeded was because the members were fed with the Word and grew in the area of discernment and their trust of the pastor and respect for the three elders. The fact that one of three elders had already taken a sabbatical and was voted to rejoin the session with ninety-nine percent support proves that the rotation system works.

After that meeting, the four opposing elders left the church, and only one other family left with them. Pastor Lee believes that those elders opposed the rotation system,

“because they were not confident that they would pass the vote of confidence.” He continued,

They insisted that being once an elder, is always an elder. But the congregation did not welcome their attitude of entitlement. Those four elders colluded together all those years and prevented new elders from being added to the session. They didn’t want the balance of the power tipped in favor of the pastor and the other three elders. They equated leadership with power. It was unfortunate for them personally. They were preoccupied with preventing, by any means, their power from being challenged and invisibly played a role of stumbling block. This was the biggest crisis I had faced. But I succeed in riding out the wave, and now our church recovered its health.

Pastor Lee thinks he handled the matter of the decision making process in the church with reason and objectiveness. In decision making, he sent the agenda to the elders one week before, asking them to pray, to think about it, and to participate in discussion in the coming session. He believed that God called the session to be leaders, and God showed his will for the church through the session, giving them wisdom and spiritual discernment. He said,

I think God’s will is not confirmed through the prayer of one person, but rather through the session’s deliberation. In discovering God’s will, God has already given us the Word. God gave each member gifts and thoughts. We have to share *those gifts and thoughts and arrive at a consensus, based on the Word*. While discussing, when a different perspective is given, which sometimes leads to stalemate and confusion, elders usually have a tendency to look at the pastor for direction. They usually say “we like to follow your advice.” When we were discussing whom to call as assistant pastor, there were different opinions. The oldest elder suggested that “since it is our pastor who will spend time with assistant pastor the most, let us ask our pastor first.” The other elders agreed, asking what I thought. I replied, in my opinion, it would be best to call this person first. All concurred. In that sense, a pastor has a little stronger voice in the decision-making process in the session.

Pastor Lee reflects on why the four elders reacted as they did to his initiative of change, and had this to say about impact of the Korean culture on the practice of church leadership:

I ask myself, if I were in their shoes how would I have responded? They grew up in a shame culture. In this rather small Korean community, if I am an elder in a Korean church where a rotation system is introduced, and I am voted out in a vote of confidence, I won't be able to stay in this area, for people will find out immediately what happened to me. It is a shame culture. Second, Korean culture emphasizes positional leadership. According to the Bible, eldership is a gift, but in the Korean church, a deacon is treated as having a lower status than an elder. Sometimes, people look down upon or talked down to deacons, compared with elders. When a situation gets unfavorable to the elders, this negative cultural aspect surfaces more visibly. I found out that it was the culture that influenced them, and they could not overcome it. There are biblical principles, and there is a culture of shame, which creates assumptions about positional leadership. When they were in the Bible study, they appeared to accept biblical principles, but when the rubber met the road, they would not surrender their long-held beliefs about positional leadership. Right now, it is not something that visibly hinders our ministry, but I must admit there is tension in some areas because of that. People who recently came from Korea would still think that way. In that sense, Korean immigrant churches will continue to be exposed to the cultural tension between biblical principles of leadership and traditional positional leadership.

While having dinner with his wife recently, Pastor Lee recalled how much braver he was then than now, in preaching about this subject. Before, there were some areas, he admits, in which he did not fully understand the elders and the congregation. He was a straight shooter when he was convinced on certain matters. Now he finds it surprising, looking back, that he preached on that subject several dozen times in such a straight forward way. But now he preaches less on that subject, since he has been learning more about Korean culture, and he has concluded that Koreans cannot be perfect in this area. He said,

No one can take off cultural clothes completely. Therefore, I do not speak too harshly on this subject any longer. I have to understand to a degree. They lived all their lives in the Korean culture, and it was natural for them as seniors to try to save face. I think I can't ignore that all together. I have realized that cultural impediments must be overcome is a matter of principle, in light of the biblical perspective, but it is a totally different matter whether someone is actually changing. It appears to be a life-long struggle.

Pastor Lee does far less visitation than other pastors. He strongly believes that he has been called to teach the Word, and he spends most of his time on sermon preparation and teaching. He believes that his congregation trusts him because they know he does his best in preaching good sermons and leading bible studies effectively. Second, he labors to establish biblical, reasonable, democratic principles of administration. While many immigrant churches betray ugly behavior in the midst of conflict, he has tried to foster an environment where people can respect each other while disagreeing.

Pastor Lee has not paid much attention to the area of self-care-. His focus of concern is his church, and he takes little time for himself. He thinks he doesn't suffer much stress, primarily because he has personal relationships with elders, and because he is respected and trusted by the congregation. Every two years, Pastor Lee sends out questionnaires to 120 leaders who have served the congregation. The last question in the questionnaire is whether they want their pastor to stay four more years. Since the questionnaires are anonymous, he can sense the pulse of the congregation through their response, judging the level of their confidence in him. He said he didn't want to "become narcissistic about how he was doing in his ministry." Last time, 119 out of 120 wanted him to stay as their pastor.

Vision Community Church

Vision Community Church was stagnant for a long time. Pastors had come and gone after short stays. One pastor left after six months. No pastor stayed longer than ten years. Without steady leadership in the pulpit, two elders controlled the direction of the church, having been members of the session for fifteen years and twenty years

respectively. There was no fresh blood in the leadership, which bred infighting and conflict. They were losing members every year.

Pastor Lim was called twelve years ago, as the eighth pastor in the church's twenty-six year history. When pastor Lim arrived, there was only one child in the Sunday school. About eighty remaining members were still recovering from self-inflicted wounds that resulted from repeated conflict over seemingly minor issues. Pastor Lim had known the situation of the church before he was called. Occasionally filling the pulpit during the transition period, he was able to observe the situation, and a few times he gave counsel when requested.

When interviewed for the position, he presented his vision for the church. His ideal church was one where leaders led cell groups, so that "each group functions as a small church in one large church." Each family church would have the goal of doing mission work and taking care of one mission church. The church would help the family churches by providing matching funds for the missions fund that each group raised and by providing resources for the mission work. He also asked two elders to retire, as he concluded that unless fresh blood was infused into the leadership, there would be no change in ministry pattern. He believes that he was able to pull off these changes without much difficulty because the church was in such a dire situation. The congregation was willing to subscribe to the vision brought by the new energetic pastor, and the leaders had already agreed to follow his leadership.

The first thing Pastor Lim did on arrival was to lead Bible study. He opened his house and held a Bible study for thirteen weeks with the church leaders. Bible study

“prepared the leaders’ minds, through which transformation of thought pattern took place, which in turn led to vision casting.”

Pastor Lim also demanded that the church’s bylaws be changed. He appointed a committee for bylaw amendment, which was made up of deacons. It was Pastor Lim himself who dictated what should be changed. Since people felt the need for change, there was no visible resistance to the new pastor’s initiative of change. New bylaws specified that elders should be rotated every four years, rather than staying on the session for an indefinite period of time, so that they “serve the church diligently with a sense of tension.”

Even though the two elders pledged that they would retire, it was still not easy for Pastor Lim to find the right moment to ask them to retire. Opportunity came in the form of a government notice of the construction of a new highway near the church. This meant that the church had to relocate. As before, conflict surfaced over where to move and which building to purchase. In the leadership meeting, the deacons attacked the elders, and the elders attacked the deacons. Two elders also fought against each other. It was “the same pattern all over again.” It was this moment that he “seized” to summon the two elders and ask them to keep their promise to retire. They accepted and retired to the position of elder-emeritus. The following year, two deacons were elected and ordained as elders.

The second thing Pastor Lim did was to introduce the family church concept. After thirteen weeks of Bible study, Pastor Lim held a seminar on family church for ten weeks every Wednesday. After ten weeks of discipleship classes, the deacons and the elders began to lead cell groups. Since cell groups were led by deacons as well as elders,

they had the effect of decentralizing church authority. Before, the church was run by the session alone. Now, the session still existed, but actual ministry was assigned and divided among the deacons who led cell groups.

VCC didn't have visitors during first six months after Pastor Lim arrived, because the church image was so tarnished. But when the two elders retired, new leadership filled the gap. When six cell groups began in full swing, people began visiting to check things out, and some decided to stay. Most of the members came to the United States as international students and then became naturalized citizens. They had a high degree of education and a respectable social status. Pastor Lim concluded that the reason the church had constant problems and conflict was because people were "inward-looking rather than mission-focused." Their default mode was to think of the church in terms of "how it satisfies their own personal needs." He began to challenge them to look outward and seek ministry opportunities to serve. It was a big change, for the church of twenty-six years had never been engaged in any meaningful missions program. He created a motto for the church: "learning inside the church, doing mission outside the church," in order to unleash and channel their energy and gifts to mission ministry.

In the first year of the mission project, two adults and children went to Ecuador. One of the participants, a doctor, and another, a retired elder, came back with moving testimonies to share. They challenged other members, pleading, "This we must do!" The next year, twenty people participated. Every year, mission groups visited various mission fields. As a result, those who caused problems were also encouraged to participate and many of them actually did. The church began to change. The mission project channeled

the energy of those people who were inwardly focused and causing problems, spurring them to a higher calling.

Further, Pastor Lim challenged them to build a hundred churches in ten years in South America. Since everyone had doubts, the church started with a “One Dollar Mission Offering” drive, requiring everyone to participate. He recalled,

In the beginning of the mission drive, ten to twenty percent participated. The rest of the members stood on the sideline, feeling alienated, complaining that only the well-to-do can go on mission trips. Therefore, I started the \$1.00 mission campaign. “Mission is done by the mind, the heart, and a concern for lost souls, not by money,” I reminded all. “Anyone can participate in a \$1.00 mission campaign,” I encouraged. “Mission work for the each unreached tribe costs us \$3-5,000,” I announced. People resisted, especially old people. But we decided to do it because it was the right thing to do. The mission committee chairman and I pushed it forward in spite of resistance. We made a list of the members’ names, and under the names, we put stickers like they do in kindergarten, when they donated \$1 each week. In the beginning people resisted, saying it was too childish. But gradually, people responded. One day, someone who reached the age of seventy years offered money which was originally designed for his seventieth birthday party, for the mission program. One family donated money to build a church in the mission field as a thanks-giving to God when their child entered a college which they wanted. Then, eighty percent of our members made commitments and participated in the drive. During the last seven years, we were able to build ten church buildings in South America. Resistance also came from people who wanted to do God’s work in secret. But every year, two churches were built by the \$1 mission drive committee.

Now every year, ten percent of the members go onto the mission field and come back with changed perspectives in ministry. The life of VCC has become mission-oriented. Conflict and infighting have greatly decreased, Pastor Lim observed.

Inner discipline was developed through Bible study, and by doing mission work in practice, our church became healthy. We support twenty-five missionaries, and we have built ten churches. Adults participate in medical mission trips for four to seven days. It has effect of making the church become one. When people understood that their duty was to spread the gospel and to share the love of Christ, self love and fighting for position gave way to serving and participating in missions. The youth group grew as the church grew in numbers, and the budget increased four-fold. Young adults returned. Sunday school and college groups

started to grow in the seventh year. When the first generation returned to the biblical faith, the second generation grew and automatically revitalized.

Pastor Lim believes that preaching and servanthood were of utmost importance in effective leadership and ministry, noting:

The authority of preaching was important. Unless they didn't acknowledge the authority of my preaching, I would not be able to actually exercise leadership. That was why I was faithful to preaching and teaching. Second, while I was serious and stern in the pulpit, when came down from the pulpit, I tried to relate to them as a brother. I took a lowly position so that people wouldn't feel hindered. I was not aloof. I always tried to keep these two element balanced. During the first four years after I arrived, I helped church members when they moved, carrying furniture with my bare hands. People observed their pastor was not just talking but rolling up his sleeves and jumping in the action. I did all the small things myself, like buying groceries for Sunday lunch and locking the door. People had to follow my example, including staff members. I showed them the example of servanthood. Whether they asked or not, I was right there to help when people were moving. People were somewhat surprised, saying to themselves, "How can the pastor do menial work like moving the furniture?" I did all the cleaning of the church building. But in the pulpit, I preached with the authority of an anointed pastor. Coming down, I worked along with them, which helped me to foster smooth relationships with people.

During the first five years after he arrived, he was sort of a dictator in the session meetings. It was a session by name only. He led the session meeting "with a strong hand." There was no discussion in the session. He laid out the agenda, and they just rubber-stamped what he had already decided. He used this leadership style, because he believed that even though they were older, "spiritually in that transitional period, a pastor should take initiative, and he couldn't let them drag him." He was able to do that because they too agreed to his leadership style. But after five years, he began hearing complaints over his autocratic leadership style. They complained that the pastor made decisions by himself without consulting with the elders. At that point, he acknowledged their complaint and started to "do it in a new way – shared leadership."

Pastor Lim realized that his personal matters had become an intense focus of people's attention in church business meetings. He was therefore "always tense in congregational meetings." When the issue was about financial matters concerning the pastor, whether it was his housing allowance or financial support of his children's education, a congregational meeting or budget committee meeting would last twice as long as usual. What was discussed in a budget committee meeting and session meeting would leak out, and people would whisper about it. He said,

I could hear them all but would not bother to intervene. I ignored it, for there would be always opposition. Some people, when they could come to the deacon's meeting and voice their opinion, would not attend the meeting intentionally, and later appear at the congregation meeting and take issue and criticize. I then had to confront them and persuade, give apologia, and explain how much my living cost would be compared to my salary, providing minute detail on where I would spend my salary.

Pastor Lim related an episode which showed that the congregation was not yet fully recovered from chronic anxiety and a culture of suspicion of the leadership. One time, the pastor's residence got flooded during a family vacation. A couple of elders, who were concerned about the pastor's future financial security, brought up the idea of selling the residence and paying the pastor a monthly housing allowance. Pastor Lim agreed, since the timing seemed good. The insurance company had already reimbursed the church fifty-thousand dollars for flood damage. If the church chose to repair the flood-damaged house and then put it on the market, it would take a long time to sell. Since the government offered an eight-thousand dollar credit for first time home buyers, Pastor Lim figured it was the right time to sell the residence and buy his own house.

I thought people with common sense would agree with me and accept my suggestion, but in the midst of the economic downturn, some in the congregation begged to differ. When congregational meeting convened, several people rose in turn and discussed this issue. It turned out that most of the congregation were not

aware of the issue. I thought there would be no problem, since key members had already agreed to my suggestion. But what dismayed me more was that elders with whom I had already spoken, and who I thought were on my side on this matter, did not rise to defend me or speak favorably of the issue. They just sat quietly. The only thing that the elders mentioned was that the pastor had bought the house without their prior knowledge. I further prodded the elders to speak up on this matter, hoping some of them may defend me or speak favorably of my decision to purchase a house. But no one did.

It dawned on him that his prior communication with elders on this issue was not sufficient. There was a rumor going around that the church had paid for the down-payment of his new house. He recalled,

I told them, "I discussed this matter in the session and deacon's meeting. I thought we as a church had arrived at a consensus on this matter. But now I see most of you were not informed of the actual content of the story, and that you have wrong information which biased your opinion on this issue. I do apologize." And I pleaded for their counsel on this matter, since I had already bought a house.

He could have told his side of story to the congregation and then taken all the necessary steps to deal with this issue among the leaders. But instead, he took all the blame upon himself and apologized. After hearing his apology, those who rose and spoke against this matter in the beginning, changed their hearts and supported him by submitting a new resolution in his favor

As membership grew, the main sanctuary became crowded during the Sunday worship hour. After discussing it with the elders, Pastor Lim proposed to the session that they should expand the main sanctuary to accommodate the growing attendance. Most of the elders agreed, except a couple of them who "were not enthusiastic." After his prodding, all agreed to his proposal. One elder was appointed to supervise the remodeling. Pastor Lim was confident that he had all areas covered, and he kept the elders posted on the proceeding. But things didn't turn out as he planned. He explained,

I prepared all of the financial data to show that this plan was reasonable. I met with the elders emeritus and with all the leaders. I met with influential women in the church who could impact the outcome of the congregation meeting. I planned and tried to neutralize any opposition that might arise. I dealt with it politically. I maneuvered to have everyone I spoke to agree to my plan. It passed a combined meeting of elders and deacons, and kwon-sa, jibsa. In that meeting, more positive ideas were presented, and we fortified our plan with graphs and additional suggestions from the elders. However, when the strengthened, modified plan was finally presented at the congregational meeting, I realized that somehow, the mood had changed.

He sensed that there was a conspiracy afoot. One person, to whose voice people listened, but who had not attended the previous meeting, came out and rebutted every point of the plan. He argued, “Why should we spend money for remodeling? We need money in the education department. We need to hire good teachers and staff members to raise up a godly second generation. In this economic downturn, why do we need to waste money on a non-essential area?””

People were quiet. Pastor Lim recalled,

What most disappointed me was elders and other leaders who supported my plan in public were not willing to come out and defend my plan on the spot. Later, I found out that some of the elders conspired with the opposition faction, agreeing with them that “this area is losing property value, then why do we have to invest money where there would be no good return to the investment? Let us move to new location, rather than remodeling.”

Facing resistance, Pastor Lim tried to turn the tide, by saying “That is your individual opinion. Now let us hear from other members.” Then, in order to turn people’s attention to the merits of the proposal, he presented “his plan” with a power point which showed the current hallway, and then he showed the same hallway remodeled, noting what an enormous benefit they would enjoy. He highlighted the difference that the change would make. The elder who supervised the preparation came out to explain about the blue-print, the enlarged broadcasting room, the additional seats in the new balcony,

and the handicap access that would not be as stiff as before. “People seemed to understand and appreciate” his presentation. He continued,

We thought we would win. I was so confident that I even told congregation “even though the church bylaw stipulates that it only takes a majority vote to pass, we will not proceed with this plan unless seventy to eighty percent support this plan. We will not start remodeling with simple majority vote.” I was that confident. But when the votes were counted, sixty percent had voted no. I was disappointed. But since it was the decision of the congregation, we had to follow it.

Reflecting on his inability to anticipate people’s opposition in advance, he ascribed it to his own failure to “catch the signs of discontent” and also to the passivity of the elders. He remembered,

While preparing for this presentation, I emphasized that because this was an economically difficult time, we would not ask for additional offering for this project. We could handle this project with our current budget. But the person who was preparing the presentation said to me “I feel uncomfortable about this. Why should we take out funds from this account and that account?” I said that this was “small-mindedness.” But I thought I saw the larger picture, and when I looked at the larger financial situation of our church, I saw that we had the capacity to execute this plan. I don’t know. Our elders are rather passive. Rather than taking initiative and doing things themselves, they prefer to check and confirm what the pastor has done. Thus, in most cases, they followed me. But one problem is that the congregation does not respect the elders’ leadership that much. They don’t hesitate to oppose what the elders propose. That “no” vote in the congregation was one of those examples. Their position of eldership was not respected.

But the most difficult crisis in his ministry was spiritual resistance by a few people who would not recognize his authority as their spiritual leader. He recounted,

It happened that one family invited the church leaders for the memorial service of their deceased parent. After the service, we were having dinner in a room, when there came a loud cry from the next room. When we hurried there, we found a woman in her fifties who was paralytic, lying on the floor. One elder’s wife was sitting on her, praying with a loud voice while beating the woman. She claimed, “The Spirit descended upon me, and I have to help this woman to get healed.” Beside them, there was her elder husband praying in a kneeling position. Commotion and conundrum ensued.

The next day he called them and counseled, “Restrain yourselves. Even if the Spirit descended on you, you should not behave like that.” But they would not listen.

They became antagonistic and called him a hypocrite. He was “bewildered.” He said,

The pastor is in the business of handling spiritual matters. But when I met this spiritual crisis, it was difficult. I prayed that the evil spirit would depart from them, but it was of no avail. They still insisted that it was the Holy Spirit. The congregation was looking at the pastor for guidance in spiritual matters, watching how their pastor would handle this spiritual matter. But when I was confronted with this crisis, I did not know what to do. It has been difficult since then.

The session disciplined them indirectly, and some wanted to expel the elder who had been involved from the session. But Pastor Lim was hesitant to expel him, for “it would cause chaos in the church, and the damage it might cause to the church no one could know.” He explained,

The most serious resistance is not the one against the pastor’s vision, but spiritual resistance against the pastor’s authority. When he claimed that he received a spiritual gift, the gift of prophecy, my energy got drained out. How to solve this problem remains my biggest fear. When he claimed that he received new authority, other elders supported me by asserting “the authority of the church is the authority of the pastor. If you want, you can go out and start a new church.” The congregation did not waver, nor did it follow him, for under my leadership the church had grown many fold. But it hurt me twice as much as any other crisis. I tried to approach this issue from the psychological aspect, but Koreans think differently. They think the pastor has all the answers. They think it is a spiritual problem. And I tried to exorcize, but it didn’t work. We have six elders on the session, but the church is a pastor-centered church. Even when the pastor goes on vacation, people don’t like their pastor leaving the pulpit. As I see it, even though there are many elders, the church would be in danger if the pastor leaves church. That is our weakness.

Pastor Lim enjoys ministry and does not feel the need to manage ministry-related stress. He is inclined to get immersed in the work when he feels stressed. He said,

My hair got gray. The antidote to stress is to start new programs and push people to participate and get involved: Bible study on Tuesday morning, Wednesday evening service, Thursday leadership course, shepherd life, Saturday early morning prayer meeting. I push them to get involved in church ministry. They complain that they are tired. Still I push them to do biblical drama. When a

problem arises, I get to work, doing seminars, making them concentrate, stay focused, and not get distracted. People in our church are busier than those in other churches. People come to church many times a week.

Upon arriving, Pastor Lim found that his original plan to raise qualified leaders had to be shelved. This was because, before he was called as pastor, ten people had already been chosen and ordained as deacons, in a hastily arranged meeting. They were selected without the proper screening or the adequate preparation that the Bible specifies. After surveying the fragile state of the congregation, the pastor was “compelled to play the cards dealt to him,” rather than having a fresh start. That meant that “seniority had to be respected.” He had to recognize them as the leaders of the church and manage the process by which each of those deacons become elders. Since they were expected to be “the next batch of elders,” it was his responsibility to make sure their expectations were met. The question at hand was not who was qualified, but rather when to “elevate them to the next position.” People were most sensitive to the position of eldership and *kwon-sa*.²⁹⁶

Nine deacons became elders during the past nine years. Only one among the original ten has not become an elder yet. He was sixty years old but had not gained enough of the people’s trust to be elected as elder. He came to Pastor Lim one day and pleaded with tears in his eyes for the pastor to “save him.” He insisted that he too should become an elder. Pastor Lim “confessed” that he “accepted reasonableness of his plea,” because he knew that in their system, those elders were “elected not by their qualifications, but were products of the circumstances.” He could not require this last

²⁹⁶ *Kwon-sa* is elected by 2/3 vote in the congregational meeting and commissioned to the service of prayer and visitation to needy members. They are neither officers nor ordained. But in Korean church tradition they are regarded as the female counterpart of the ruling eldership in terms of status, respect and influence in the church.

person to meet biblical qualifications which had not been applied to any of the other elders. He “accepted the reality” and decided to give him an opportunity. He explained,

That is why I had to take initiative in every aspect, because the elders were not able to lead. That is why we have so many elders. He is the last old timer. After that, those who will be chosen as leaders from now would have been disciplined under my leadership. I expect them to be more disciplined and mature in leadership roles.

Pastor Lim emphasized the importance of relational aspects of ministry to success in real ministry.

I don't have a long-term plan. I had to adapt to a new situation. People had to be accepted and loved and cared for. In the beginning, I kept emphasizing principles of biblical leadership, the nature of the church. But one of the reasons I gave up on that was because they would accept my teaching intellectually, but would not accept it emotionally. It was not possible for them to accept emotionally that ordained deacons may not become elders, however faithfully they might have served as deacons. It was an extremely sensitive issue. When we vote to elect elders, we are extremely tense and do our best to be exact in administering the process. Every member comes to the front, where voting booths with curtains are set up. They vote in secret behind the curtain. We even formed an election watch committee to make sure voting procedures are fair. Old timers are sensitive and pay attention to the position of eldership. I am sorry to God. But this is reality and as a pastor who came to a twenty-six year-old church, I had to accept the reality. Structurally, our system is not healthy, but if new people were selected as elders at that time, the church would have had more problems. That is why I believe faith and spirituality are not enough. Ministry is people business. We need to learn the relational aspects. We are dealing with people, relationships, groups.

Pastor Lim does not have close relationship with, nor open up what is in his heart to, members. Besides his family, the only close relationship he has is one with God through the Word and prayer. He regards pulpit ministry as the upmost privilege given to him. He comes across as “a stern, powerful charismatic prophet” on the pulpit, but very gentle off the pulpit. People think they know him but then still not sure because they see there is something “mysterious” about him

Bethel Baptist Church

After six years of turbulent ministry filled with conflict and bitter accusations, Pastor Gu left BBC. The conflict between one faction who were in favor of the pastor and another faction who were against him continued until Pastor Hong arrived. Newly arrived Pastor Hong found himself between a rock and a hard place. He tried to remain neutral in the conflict between the two factions, but neither side was satisfied. They attacked him for “not taking their side.” Since he accepted the call with the goal of healing the wounds of the congregation, he made it clear that both sides were important for the church. But one faction, which included the choir director, the missions director, and cell leaders, felt that they were slighted and mistreated by the new pastor, while there were some in the other faction who thought the same. What most energized the opposition, though, was the difference in ministry style between the previous pastor and the new pastor. Pastor Hong recalled:

I did not come to this church to make my disciples. I was shocked when I arrived because the ministry pattern of the previous pastor was markedly different from mine. Some people were confused and would not accept my ministry style. Under the teaching of previous pastor, members were very legalistic and pharisaic. They wanted to wear their spirituality on their sleeves and be recognized, competing to show “my brand of religion is better than yours.” They were hard-working, loyal to their previous pastor, and taking good care of him. They expected me to commend their “superior” practice like the previous pastor did. But when I did not, they started to oppose me. They misunderstood the gospel as earning blessings by being loyal to the pastor.

Pastor Hong’s response to the opposition was to clarify the essence of the gospel through Bible study. But when he tried to correct them, stiff resistance followed. Comparing the new pastor’s style with that of the previous pastor, some people started openly criticizing Pastor Hong. They were trying to “find the opportunity to pin him down.” That opportunity came in the form of a theological question.

One member asked pastor Hong about his position on drinking alcohol. It turned out that a key member of the opposite faction was known to be an occasional beer drinker. By then, that faction had become friendly to the new pastor. Pastor Hong reluctantly intervened on this discussion since he felt this issue could drive a wedge among members. He tried to persuade them that this was a cultural issue. He told them,

There are some American pastors who drink and smoke. Asserting that drinking is a sin is itself a sin of judging others. When I go to denominational meeting, I see some pastors drink a couple of beers during lunch at a restaurant. It is a matter of personal prudence and discernment. When husband and wife have a glass of wine at home, we cannot find fault with it.

Pastor Hong tried to help them understand that abstaining from drinking alcohol and smoking is not an essential element of faith. He showed them the denominational position on this matter, that “drunkenness is subject to discipline, but simply drinking and smoking cannot be branded as sin.” But when he lay out his position on this issue at the leaders’ Bible study, there were some who were shocked to hear that. One member rose, “waved his finger and yelled at him.” He “got into catastrophic mode and could not function properly.” The pastor recalled, “I lost my sense of direction. I could not differentiate what I felt and what was out there happening in reality.”

Some thought that the new pastor was a false teacher and sent a letter to the synod, calling on other pastors in neighboring cities for input. They even tried to take him to the church court. Pastor Hong “was devastated.” They became his adversaries and continuously opposed his leadership. He relates a dream that he had in those difficult days:

That night I had a dream. In the dream it was time for the church to make certain important decisions. But people were just watching, doing nothing, just waiting for me to solve all the problems. Decisions had to be made, but people were throwing all the responsibility of making decisions on me. I dreamt I was

pressured all day long. As I look back, I wish I had someone who had gone through such a situation before and could give me advice. I think I knew what I had to do, but I was hesitant. I needed someone who would nudge me a little bit, and encourage me to do what I thought was right. That was what I thought in retrospect, after the incident.

One source of help was his assistant pastor, who saw what was going on. They were together all day, eating together and talking to each other. Having someone to talk to in the time of distress was a big help by itself. Having someone who saw who he was and how he responded to various situations liberated him. They talked as friends, and the fact that he was simply listening to what the pastor had to say lessened his stress.

Eight families who were close to previous pastor opposed the new pastor. They faithfully attended the early morning prayer meeting. One of them even drove forty minutes to church every morning for the prayer meeting before going to work. They were faithful in Sabbath keeping and tithing, and they believed themselves to be righteous. But they began to accuse the new pastor of being a false prophet, a hireling, when Pastor Hong's position on some theological issues was different from theirs.

They started to ignore Pastor Hong when he passed in the lobby. They said they couldn't sit with a sinner at their table, referring to one who was known to drink. Pastor Hong tried to persuade them, saying "we are all sinners, and it is not proper to condemn and not show courtesy and be rude to people. Rather, we have to consider one another first, and be humble." One female member left the church after telling him that her belief was different from his.

But Pastor Hong did not waver in teaching the word, whether they were ready to accept it or not. He held to his principles that the gospel must be preached clearly. When some opposed, he called them and tried to persuade them that his position was from the

Bible. He was determined to “carry out [his] ministry with the power that God provides, by the grace of God.”

Two of the cell group leaders from the opposition faction stopped coming to the leadership Bible study meeting. It was held every Saturday morning right after early morning prayer meeting. Deacon Jung, who belonged to the other faction and was later elected as an elder, was not able to attend because he lived an hour and a half drive away. The opposition leaders said that they were not attending either, because Deacon Jung was not coming. Pastor Hong tried to explain why Deacon Jung could not attend. But the opposition faction would not listen.

It was clear to Pastor Hong that they were challenging his authority as their pastor. In the new year, when the time came to appoint new cell leaders, Pastor Hong did not reappoint the opposition leaders as cell leaders. He said,

I gave them two reasons why I did not reappoint them as cell leaders. “First, you are not willing to attend leadership meetings even when you could. Second, the reason the church appoints cell leaders is because I cannot teach all of the groups by myself. That is why I appoint leaders to teach in my place. But since you call me a false prophet, how can you teach in my stead?” Looking back, I have to admit that I might have unnecessarily provoked their further resistance by not reappointing them as cell leaders. I might have pushed them in that direction.

When these people were dropped from cell group leadership, they started to speak ill of Pastor Hong. But it was not until a new elder was elected that this conflict “crossed the bridge of no return.” Elder candidates and deacon candidates were nominated by the members, “according to biblical principles of church leadership and church bylaws.” Eldership required a two-thirds vote and deacon candidates needed a majority vote. Pastor Hong reflects on the election procedure:

I later thought I should have been more flexible in the election procedure. I should have had only those who could clearly be electable nominated. Rather than having

lay-members nominate candidates, I should rather have had the board nominate the candidates who would be sure bets. I think they were angry partly because of my thoughtlessness. But since they did not have a specific deficiency according to 1 Timothy 3, we put them on the floor for a vote. Four people were on the ballot. Only one got elected. We voted for each candidate one by one, to make sure each one got fair treatment. But it turned out they didn't receive even twenty-five percent of the vote. Their faces turned white. I guess they thought I humiliated them.

One Sunday in the lobby, Pastor Hong got into an argument with one of the opposition leaders over the legitimacy of a new elder, and a conundrum ensued. It happened that some people near were listening, and they declared that they would not recognize the eldership of the one who had been elected at last congregational meeting. Then they left the church. He reflected,

The conflict had been there all along, but it surfaced visibly after they were not elected as elders and deacons in the congregational voting. They left after the ordination of the newly elected elders and deacons. They blamed me for false teaching on smoking and drinking, as the cause of their leaving the church. But was it a coincidence that they stopped coming to church right after the ordination Sunday?

It took four years before things got better. The culture of the church began to change. The previous pastor emphasized devotion, loyalty, and passion. He publically praised and encouraged those who followed his leadership, which was construed by those who were not in his favor, as "showing favoritism." But the new ministry style of Pastor Hong freed them from their concerns over how to please their pastor. He explained,

I recognized that some who were accustomed to the former pastor's style of praising and prodding on their back to encourage, suffered depression for a while, due to my different ministry style. The previous pastor would praise people, singling out their names when they excelled in their ministry, but I had a more reserved style. I am not built that way. Of course, I have many weaknesses. But isn't it natural for Christians to come to church on Sunday and tithe? I don't think it is the Christian way to try to be better than others, and be the subject of praise, and be recognized in public for their good works. God remembers them, of course.

People also had learned how to conduct themselves in the meetings. In the beginning, the deacons' meetings were all conundrum and confusion. People yelled and burst out of the room, and others had to bring them back. Discussion usually turned to personal attacks. He taught them how to make meaningful conversation in the cell leaders' meeting: "Don't attack other's hurts and weak points; don't criticize. A reasonable mind and biblical principles are for the sake of persuasion, not for attacking. Always speak positively for others. Respond to only the issues that are mentioned, Don't jump to hasty conclusions." He pointed out this problem in his weekly column and shared the practices of American churches.

Pastor Hong made it a rule to make ministry decisions through group process. He recognized the importance of prayer in decision making but insisted that the decisions be made through the group discussion. When he was wrong, he didn't insist, but changed his position. He gave direction on principles from the Bible, but the matter of how to do what needed to be done was decided in their meetings. When a matter was not wrong biblically, not a matter of value, he followed the majority even when he didn't agree with them. He again reflects on the nature of pastoral authority:

The Word is preached with authority. I point out the wrong in the pulpit, with conviction. But coming down from the pulpit, I don't insist that my authority be respected. I was called through a legitimate procedure, and I accepted it after receiving the gift of teaching and preaching. My authority comes from the authority of the Word. Whether people accept it or not, even if I don't have more life experience, the church has given me authority through a legitimate calling procedure, which is specified in the letter of calling. First, I received it from God. Secondly, I received it *probably* from the people. They have to recognize my authority in order for my authority to function. I received it from God, but it is not automatically given as a position. The congregation recognizes my authority, and when the pastor's word has weight, words and actions are congruent.

Looking back, he recalled that when he first arrived, he wasn't comfortable with the reality that they took their relationship with the pastor more seriously than their standing with God. They wanted the pastor's personal care and attention. They needed someone who remembered them, prayed for them, spoke warm words, and comforted them. Rather than paying attention to the Bible that was preached and taught, they cared more about encouraging, caring remarks from the pastor. He noted,

I am not saying it is right, but it was reality. I found out that people whom I encouraged and made caring remarks, more readily accepted and followed my leadership. But when relationship was not built, when there was no good communication between us, I had hard time. Personal attention was very important. I felt I was in mission field when I arrived. People claimed they were Christians, but there were many non-Christians inside the church. They did have religious custom, but didn't know Jesus. Therefore I had to focus on teaching and preaching. I had no time to do anything else.

He didn't pay much attention to, nor was he affected much by, how others thought about him. Growing up as the eldest child in a dysfunctional family, he was expected to take care of everyone and solve all of the family problems. He explained that he would go crazy from the burdens and expectations placed on him, even when he was young. He naturally learned to cope with those expectations and his feelings of helplessness "by ignoring the problems," keeping his distance from them, "staying indifferent to what was happening in the family." He practiced "intentional indifference." Sometimes he found that things took care of themselves automatically, even though he did not consciously try to solve the problem. He believes this tendency of being intentionally indifferent affected his behavior in leading the congregation.

Pastor Hong reflects on his leadership style compared to the cultural expectations of leadership:

Korean culture is a community-oriented culture. It appears that people don't follow the law and their principles so much as they follow those people with whom they are comfortable, who are close to them. They lack the discipline of judging according to the Word. They take sides with those closest to them. That is why there are many factions. Some pastors mobilize people – motivate them, make them move. But I want them to change their thinking patterns, attention, and affection, becoming able to walk by themselves, rather than me pulling them along. I prefer a leadership style where people are changed gradually, through continuously challenging their fundamental issues, thinking patterns, and value systems, rather than having me tell them to follow me and pulling them along.

On the other hand, pastor Hong was helped by other aspects of Korean culture.

First aspect was the respect for authority. While hard-core opposing members were exceptions, most other members, especially older people, recognized the authority of the pastor. They respected their pastor and supported his agenda even when they would not agree in other situation. While young generation tended to voice their own different opinions, old members would rally behind the young pastor. Second aspect was commitment. Most members kept Sabbath and tithing. Pastor Hong believed that respect for authority and devotion were two positive aspects of Korean culture.

Christ Methodist Church

CMC experienced some difficult times. Once known to be the largest Korean congregation in the area, its membership went down by more than half in just a couple of years. The decline was due to the conflict between Pastor Shim, who arrived five years before the conflict, and the older members. Pastor Shim wanted to build “a church that was friendly to young people,” but his vision and priorities did not sit well with the needs and expectations of the old members. Pastor Shim left the church after an acrimonious dispute with the older members over the direction of the church.

CMC wanted to call as their new pastor, someone who wouldn't favor rapid change. They called Pastor Sohn, who was studying for a D.Min degree in the local

seminary. Prior to that, he had served as a missionary in China for six years. He looked like a good fit for CMC, which favored order and stability. Pastor Sohn grew up in a pastor's family, with an older brother, a sister, and a younger brother. His elder brother was "the focus of attention," since he was the oldest. His sister was "loved," because she was the only girl. His younger brother was "doted upon," because he was the youngest. Pastor Sohn grew up feeling ignored in the family. He thinks his upbringing predisposed me to favor stability over challenge.

Since CMC had gone through a bitter dispute with their previous pastor, the succeeding pastor was careful to minister within the boundaries of their expectations. In the first board meeting after he arrived, the elders showed him a list of the next elder candidates which they themselves had already chosen, "in the correct order." He was at a loss, but he felt that he had to honor their decision. There was no room for the new pastor to voice his opinion in the direction of the church, at least for the time being.

But soon the board suggested that he start cell groups, which had become popular topic among other Korean churches. Upon their suggestion, Pastor Sohn attended a cell group seminar, not because he wanted a change, but rather because he was curious. Later, six lay leaders, including elders and other leaders, took the same seminar. Their feedback was that the program might not work in their town, and some of them expressed reservations over whether this program could "revitalize the church." But the board decided to give it a try and initiated the change. At this point, Pastor Sohn was little more than a "timid follower." In two years, the cell group program fizzled out, and Pastor Sohn believes that this was because he was "just following the others' lead." Also, the board members did not have a sufficient level of communication and understanding with the

church members. This church was forty years old, and he believed that this attempt to bring change was “not well received among the people.”

It was not until his sixth year that Pastor Sohn initiated his first change, which was an alteration of the church’s worship style. He thought that this was a good timing because CMC had just moved to a new location and would be less resistant to such a change. He had prayed for five years about where to begin changing the environment, since the members were growing old, and there were few new members. Even when the church moved to a new location, there was no visible growth. While they had visitors on Sunday, the visitors did not stay. People started asking why the church was not growing. Some complained that the preaching was not good enough. But Pastor Sohn believed that people were not ready to cede their ownership of the church to new people. CMC was “a large family who were tightly related to one another.”

One year after they moved to their new location, the new worship style was introduced. Praise time was included in the formal worship. Reciprocal reading and the Lord’s Prayer were dropped. The sermon was delivered right before the final hymn. He changed this so that the sermon would remain in the people’s memory after the worship service ended. Previously, there were seats for the choir and the preacher on the podium, but now they all sat at the front pew. Complaints mounted. Pastor Sohn recalled,

Some argued that people in other churches said we were practicing heresy, therefore it is heresy. Some brought other churches’ bulletins and asked “Why did we drop the responsive reading, when other churches still do it?” Some questioned, “Why do we have to sing gospel songs when we have beautiful hymns?” These complaints were not made to me directly, but through the elders. But I didn’t pay much attention. They kind of quieted down when they saw that the new members favored the new worship style. I found it interesting, though, that it was not just old people but some young people too who were resistant.

The following year, Pastor Sohn tried a new way to enlist people's willing participation in the ministry. It used to be customary to appoint qualified members, who were usually old members, to the position of assistant to the deacons at the beginning of the new year. But since some of those who were appointed were not engaged in the assigned ministry in a meaningful way, the pastor wanted to make sure that this year they would show commitment that was commensurate to the position. He sent recommitment letters to members who were qualified for the position, asking them to sign the letter and send it back, indicating their willingness to serve the church faithfully for another year. But instead of sending back the letters with their signatures, he found out that they were triangling. They called the elders and told them that they would not be able to serve that year. In turn, the elders came to the pastor and related their conversations. It appeared that the elders sided with them. Pastor Sohn had to give up this new attempt and automatically reappointed them to their positions as tradition dictated. That was what was expected of the pastor.

As Pastor Sohn fostered personal relationships with the elders, he found them to be more receptive to and supportive of his change initiative. He reflected,

I regret not doing this earlier. They didn't share what was in their minds freely in formal board meetings. But when I met them privately, they shared their personal problems and struggles. After that, they behaved differently in the board meetings, supporting me in more cases. Elders are fragile sheep, too, who need care. I met them privately before I talked about new plans in the board meeting. I found out that they were more receptive since they felt respected by their pastor. Since I came to the United States at the age of seventeen, I felt that we had some cultural differences among us. But the more I hung out with them, the more I got to know them.

Pastor Sohn discovered that the elders felt accountable to their supporters as much as they are to the pastor. One day, they asked him to attend a meeting that they had

sponsored. When he got there, many of the old members were waiting with lists of complaints. The new worship style was one of them. One member complained that they felt like they were losing their traditions one by one. Another rose to convey his complaint. It was “like beehives were disturbed,” he said. Pastor Sohn met some of them several times afterward to discuss the issues that concerned them. But these conversations were not profitable, he concluded, for “Koreans are not accustomed to parliamentary rules. They only complain and have no intention of changing themselves.” Pastor Sohn had to draw a line on how much more he could take on this matter. He explained,

I finally told the elders, “It is important to listen to the voice of the people, but sometimes it is important to stay in our original direction when there is no major opposition.” When I attended the meeting, people were not hesitant to voice their concerns and complaints, which led to confusion and argument. Providing an opportunity to vent frustration and anger actually made the situation worse and caused more problems than it solved. Therefore, I concluded that I would continue to listen to individual concerns and suggestions, but I would not attend meetings of this nature any more. Since then, I made it a rule to explain what is going on in the church and why we do this and that, not in the meetings, but during my sermon.

There was continuing dispute and murmuring over the choice of praise songs used in the worship. Conflict flared up between young and old people. Pastor Sohn had to mediate between two groups, suggesting to the worship team that they include at least one hymn for every two gospel songs they sing, and that they repeat the new songs until people get used to them. Also, since young people prefer a faster tempo, while old people want a slow tempo, he nudged them to compromise. He used every opportunity to loosen the resistance of older people. He said,

It seemed they were not still completely sure that was the way to go. But I saw the trend among the people. In the beginning, the majority opposed the new worship style, but as time went by and more people felt comfortable for the new style, we were turning the corner. They opposed it not because of any biblical conviction, but because they were uncomfortable with new experiences. I explained that

worship was a community event. Therefore, rather than treating it as a performance, everyone should participate in it. Prayer and praise should be participated in by the whole community. Old people were advised to give up some of their cherished traditions in order that young people could participate and feel that they are part of this church. There was clearly a generation gap. The praise leaders were young, while the majority of the congregation were older.

It was the board that made the decision to listen to the young people and honor their wishes. But Pastor Sohn still saw ambivalence in the elders' attitudes when they talked about the new worship style. He was still not sure whether the elders personally liked the change. Whenever the subject came up, they only said that people didn't like the new worship style.

It was not until his eleventh year in this ministry that Pastor Sohn began to feel he could lead meaningful change. He determined that he had accumulated enough relational capital to challenge them for change. And he was able to see clearly which direction this church should go. He felt the church might lose the opportunity to make an impact on the community if he didn't start to push. He began to share his concern with those who might be sympathetic and play the role of catalyst. When he went on a mission trip with several members, he shared with them his concern about the state of the church. Some agreed and responded positively to his challenge. They too were worried that church was stagnant and content with the status-quo. They wanted to be more active and diligent in kingdom work. It was in this situation that he decided to revive the cell groups.

Ten years before, he had stumbled upon this program at the suggestion of the elders, but at that time he did not know whether this program was right for the church. However, now there were enough new people who wanted change. Some who were not even sure whether this church was right for them decided to stay and committed themselves to serving the community after they participated in this new program. Most

surprisingly, old members who participated in this program also recommitted themselves and began to desire a change.

There is a growing sense of unity and common understanding about where we should go. God regards what is in our hearts. He decides when to cause us to bear fruit. It is God's will whether we bear fruit soon or later. But I am now convinced that sharing the gospel is the most important aspect of our mission. Our prayer lives are getting stronger, more fervent. Our intercessory prayer meeting is very powerful and fervent. People are praying in a kneeled position for hours during the Wednesday night meeting, praying for our town, our country, for the world mission. Our prayer door has become enlarged.

Pastor Sohn endured the last twelve years, faithfully serving and meeting the needs and expectations of the congregation. He suffered several illnesses during his ministry that he thought resulted from the stress of the ministry. Whenever he faced difficulties in the ministry, what sustained him was his memory that God had been faithful to him during the period of his serving as a missionary in China. He sees his first priority as nurturing his own family to be a godly and God-honoring family. His wife has been an anchor in his family, preparing a home environment where her tense husband can rest and be refreshed.

Lakeview Baptist Church

Fourteen years ago, several families started a prayer group, and a year later they called Pastor Yeo to start a new church. Pastor Yeo retired five years later when the church grew to one hundred members. Pastor Kim was then called as their new pastor eight years ago. Pastor Kim found upon arriving that the church leaders were preoccupied with a building project. They had been searching for the right building while renting an American church for their Sunday worship service. They had a building fund of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars but there was no fund for missions, nor for the poor and needy.

The first thing he suggested in the board meeting was that the church needed to make a proper allocation of the church fund. But leaders said they wanted to build their sanctuary first before they paid attention to other areas. While Pastor Kim thought that it was not yet the right time to purchase a building, he could not get any tangible support from other lay people on this issue. While in private they voiced their support for his passion for missions, in meetings they were silent, watching on the sidelines.

Rumors started to circulate that Pastor Kim was trying to divert building funds for other purposes without the consent of the congregation. There were several occasions when they asked him to accompany them to examine buildings on the market for the future sanctuary, but he hesitated. This attitude led them to believe that he was not interested in purchasing a building, but only in missions, and they became resistant to any proposal he forwarded. While he believed it was not the right time to purchase a building, they thought he had another agenda.

For the first three years, Pastor Kim would have an upset stomach on days when they had a board meeting. He was so nervous that he couldn't eat when they went to a restaurant after the meeting. The elders enjoyed their food, but he didn't have any appetite. He was too nervous about how the elders viewed his leadership. Then things started to improve. He recalled,

As I become comfortable with the elders and learned how to persuade them, conflict became less frequent. I became more comfortable arguing with them since I got to know where they came from. I started to laugh more often and came home less stressed. I prepared well before the meeting, anticipating what their response would be to my suggestions and prepared my answers accordingly. In the beginning, I told myself, "wait, wait, don't blow up. Once you blow up in front of the people, you are undone."

There was one elder who persuaded him that the church needed its own building before investing in missions. Pastor Kim recollected how he learned to adjust and manage their resistance to starting the mission fund.

I thought that if God wants to give us a building, he will give it to us, for God's purpose will not be thwarted. So I began to listen to them on the building project. Whenever they asked me, I went with them to inspect buildings to see if they would be the right one. I gave them my opinion and let them decide. Since then, the elders stopped opposing me. I realized that I needed to understand first where they stood on important issues. What were their important issues? I had this preconceived idea that if a church wanted to grow, we should pay attention to missions first. But the elders had this long-held longing to own their own building. I had to learn to honor their longings, even though it was not my priority.

He began to understand that the building project would eventually help his ministry in major ways. He started to encourage them to actively pursue the building project while also waiting for the timing for the mission project. Every year, at the end of the fiscal year, they had surplus funds of \$10-20,000. He suggested that the surplus should go to the building fund, instead of to other areas like missions. The elders liked that, and they started to think he did not necessarily oppose the building project. They began to trust him. In turn, Pastor Kim had to placate those who were concerned with the lack of missions funding and promised them that in coming years he would make up for their current deficit in missions activity.

When he asked the elders to start a missions fund, he insisted it had to be at least ten percent of the budget. But after period of failures, he began to negotiate with them on the size of the mission fund, starting from two percent of the total budget and then three percent. It took five years to raise it to ten percent of total budget. Still CBC doesn't send a full ten percent of the budget to the mission field. Pastor Kim had to learn to negotiate. He recalled,

It was a give-and-take experience. My initial thought was that even though we would purchase a building, we wouldn't be able to pay all the related expenses to maintain the building. I was afraid we might end up spending all our energy, time, and resources on buying and keeping up a physical building. We would neglect our calling to reach out to unbelievers—the great commandment that Jesus gave to his church. But as I showed respect for their desire to own a church building, they loosened their resistance to my initiative. Gradually, the elders understood that mission is not merely a dispensable, negotiable activity, but rather the essential core duty of the God's community.

At CBC, the deacons watched on the sidelines, since the elders did most of the work. For four years, Pastor Kim alluded on various occasions to the elders that they were the spiritual leaders of the church, and the “physical” work should be delegated to the deacons. When two elders expressed their desire to retire, he seized the moment, and officially declared that it would not be good for the elders to shoulder all the burdens of the ministry. He said,

I knew there would be resistance. That is why it took me four years to let them process my suggestion. I began to allude to that idea for four years and kept throwing it around, suggesting it briefly, mildly, whenever a situation allowed, until their resistance become manageable. I made it clear that I would not bring up this idea formally within the first four years. They had enough time to get themselves acclimated to the new environment. They almost began to think this was actually their own idea rather than their pastor's idea. They felt comfortable with it and stopped resisting. Or they might have thought they had enough time to oppose my idea later. But when the time actually came, and I formally suggested it, they found it difficult to openly oppose it, since they had not voiced opposition in the beginning. I left the issue to ripen for four years.

The system changed, but people's mindsets were still controlled by old habits and values. Under the new system, the board would supervise, and the deacons would execute the decision that the board had made. This created a problem because neither side took responsibility for their own duties; instead they began to blame each other for poor results. People have not learned to work together. They began to look to the pastor for a solution. Those who were frustrated that things were not getting done on time started to

demand stronger leadership – that is, authoritarian leadership. But Pastor Kim refused to intervene. He waited and took his time so that they would figure things out and learn how to work together. He left the responsibility to them so that they would negotiate with one another about who does what. This was how he saw the situation:

The issue was there was lack of communication between the elders and the deacons. The problem I saw was that the deacons, being younger, were reluctant to make decisions, since there were elders above them, and they were not sure if it was proper to make decisions by themselves. That was why I demanded that the elders and the deacons must communicate and share their ideas.

Another issue was fear of failure. Even though the board delegated certain matters to the deacons, the deacons still hesitated to make the decisions that they were supposed to make, for they feared failure and didn't want to take any blame for it. It has been three years since the system changed, but still it is not working properly. Pastor Kim expected a healthy tension between the deacons and the elders. But instead, the elders became complacent and didn't want to get involved in ministry. They stood back, watching. They retained the title of elder, but once they stepped back from physical ministry, they became fully withdrawn. There was talk about adopting a rotation system, but some elders opposed it, saying that if any elder was voted out, he would be distraught and leave the church. They suggested an automatic return to the session after each sabbatical, a system to which the pastor agreed.

One of the relationships that sustained him in the midst of opposition was his friendship with Mr. Yoo. Mr. Yoo used to have difficulty getting along with people, and as a result, he was once subject to disciplinary procedures. But as Pastor Kim stood by him, corrected him, and encouraged him, Mr. Yoo became his loyal supporter. When the church purchased a piece of land two years ago and started construction, he was involved

in every step of the process as a general contractor. He was a very methodical, experienced builder *in preparing all the steps of construction*. Pastor Kim explained:

If it were not him, I would have had difficult time dealing with people who tried to pull in different directions. Whenever he got into trouble, I visited him and showed my love and compassion for him. And my attention and care paid off in the process of construction. He became a loyal, close friend of mine. He has been concerned about me and my ministry and actively supported my ministry since.

Pastor Kim recognized that their church fellowship had become a traditional Korean family gathering rather than true Christian fellowship. He wanted people to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. He envisioned that they might have genuine fellowship in cell groups. But his vision took many years and setbacks before it began to take off. He had mentioned this concept incessantly for about three or four years, hoping that people would become familiar with this program. Then, two years ago, he started a pilot program with two families.

We met in our home every other week for six months. After that, I started another pilot program with a few other families for six months, followed by another pilot program for six months. I announced my plan to start a cell group program, but the response was weak. So I split regional meetings into smaller groups and asked them to try to meet twice a month. I did not start a leaders' study program, for I knew that people would resist. I just changed the structure and format so that they met twice a month, led by deacons. And when I noticed that people resisted the concept of a cell group, I changed the title of the program to "Impact."

He wanted people understand that the new program was not a borrowed cookie-cutter program, but a new program that was tailored to their needs and situations, intended to help them influence and encourage one another to grow and share the gospel with unbelievers. They got comfortable since they were not constrained to meet so many times a month. They were given flexibility in running the program. He said,

Right now it is sort of a hybrid of cell groups and previous regional meetings. People are moving to the direction that I envisioned, but very slowly. I just keep encouraging them, believing that there will come a certain moment when they

will accept this change with open hearts. I am waiting for the moment when at least half of the congregation participates in this program. Then I will push a little harder, insisting that they meet twice a month, and starting a leadership program for the cell leaders. But in the meantime, we are in the pilot stage. People are not so sure whether this program is good for them. Thus, I just gently push them to try it to see if it is beneficial for them.

Pastor Kim found that the Korean culture still had a great deal of influence over how the groups functioned. Elders participated in the cell group meetings which were led by deacons. It appeared to him that they attended the meetings not to oversee, but in order to “save face.” They seemed relieved not to have to lead the meetings, for they were “not comfortable, unlike the young people, with sharing their lives.” They were not used to it. Their prior experience of fellowship was to answer a biblical quiz and to have a meal together. Opening their private lives to one another was “not in their cultural DNA.” But they “seemed to enjoy the cell group experience” where the younger people genuinely shared what was in their hearts and were willing to be vulnerable.

During the period when they were looking for land to purchase, he often encountered abrupt mood swings among the church members. One day people were elated, and the next day they turned cold, “like the ebb and flow of the sea.” When they found a good building and took the deal to the congregational meeting for final approval, it seemed like a done deal. But he felt an unexplainable feeling of mood swings among the people. He later discovered that some people who opposed the deal had conspired together to kill the plan. Of course it caused him a great deal of stress. He asked himself “What should I do? Why do I feel this way?” In this case, it was not just a few people. Instead, the mood of whole congregation turned cold. It was a sudden change. He could feel that people’s hearts were closed. He continued,

And it was not just one individual or a group, but the whole congregation that went through this mood swing. Each one had his or her own problems and issues, and when they come to church, their individual problems were felt by other members. Each problem got connected to other problems, and when they talked to me, those problems washed over me. I became overwhelmed. If there were only a few problems, I could've handled them. But when numerous problems attacked me simultaneously, I got stressed out. The mood of whole church was like the current economy – in a dire situation. We had a building project to finish. People felt the financial burden of supporting that building project. Their status in the church, the building project, and their relationship with their pastor – these three elements got intertwined, and people felt burdened, overwhelmed. It became the church's mood. And I felt the full load of that stress over my head.

He had felt a desperate urge to leave the ministry on several occasions. He got his blood pressure checked, and his doctor warned that it was at a dangerous level, so he started to take medicine for that. He and his wife went as far as saying to each other “Let's throw the resignation letter in their faces on Sunday.” But they had agreed upon a principle that once they were to utter the word “resignation” to people, whether as a threat or a joke, they would take responsibility and leave the church. He turned to his wife and to his prayer time during these times of stress, for comfort and encouragement.

I talk to my wife about many things pertaining to the church. I complain, I moan, I protest about people and problems to her. She feels what I feel, and we have long conversations. We ask “Why does this person behave like this? Why does that person say things like that? What should we do to get out of this problem?” But the conclusion always has been that we should pray more. It is my time with my wife and my prayers that sustain me. Early morning prayer helps me a lot. Tuesday intercessory prayer meeting, Friday night prayer meeting. There are only a few people attending, but prayer meeting sustains me, for when I pray in the midst of desperation, I regain strength. Even when I was discouraged, and almost gave up, when I started to pray, I felt the presence of God and was refreshed.

In the midst of conflict and stress, Pastor Kim kept his compassion for people by controlling his emotions, ruling over his mind, and laying hold of God's promises. He sometimes felt that he didn't want to go to church, and that he didn't like the members. He told his feelings to God, asking, “Does that mean I hate them, that I don't love them?”

But it didn't. He continued, "I felt that way because I was over-burdened, stressed out, and sorrowful. But even if they overburdened me with many problems, when they asked for help, I was ready always to run to them and help them with prayers and blessings."

He learned not to cause people to "lose face" by rebuking them to their face. One elder called him one evening. When they met, the elder gave him a three-page paper written both sides in small letters. It was a list of what Pastor Kim did wrong during the last year. He went over those points one by one and demanded that the pastor correct them. When Pastor Kim said that he would consider those points, the elder retorted by saying, "What do you mean 'consider?' Didn't I say to correct them?" Pastor Kim tried to find out why the elder had behaved in such a rude manner. Later, the reason dawned on him. He recalled,

It was some months after I arrived. For his daughter's wedding, he made an arrangement directly with the American church we were renting, to use the sanctuary for the ceremony, without notifying me. He chose a pastor from another church as officiant of the wedding. Later, other members protested, "How could he do things this way?" I met him privately and said, "I am your pastor, and it is wrong that you rented the church sanctuary and arranged all the ceremony proceedings without consulting me first." He seemed to accept my correction. But starting at that point, he consistently opposed me and my plans.

He learned an important lesson from that experience. "Don't ever say to someone's face, especially that of an older person, that they are wrong, unless it is a case of censure." In this case, it hurt the elder's pride. He thought his pastor caused him to "lose face." Since then, when there was serious conflict among the elders, instead of confronting them, he put it aside for the next meeting. When somebody else pointed out the weak point of one elder's suggestion, the pastor covered up those weak points and explained why that elder approached the issue this way, adding the reasons why he agreed with the elder. He said,

I used to make mistakes of pointing out their weak points, saying “That is not right, that is not true, you are wrong.” Now I would say, “That is a new idea, let me think about it.” When I say “you are wrong,” it turns into emotional conflict. And when one becomes emotional, he tends to oppose me for the sake of opposition. So I usually reply, “That is a good idea, let me think about it.” As time goes by, and I do not embrace his idea in my ministry, he will think it over and come to a realization that his idea was not necessarily a good idea. And later, when I explain why I did not embrace his idea, listing some weak points in his idea, he will be willing to accept my explanation.

Pastor Kim emphasized the need to read between the lines when listening.

Once a member called me and said “I am having surgery tomorrow. I just wanted to let you know. You don’t have to come and visit.” But actually he wanted me to visit him in the hospital. A pastor should be able to read between the lines. You don’t have to visit only when he declines your offer to visit him two or three times. If you offered to visit him, and he declined once, and you took it at face value and did not visit him, he would be very disappointed and complain later. But when you visit in spite his repeated decline, he will be happy and glad.

While economic downturn had adverse impact on the building project pushing back the schedule by six months, congregation is upbeat on the prospect of owning their own church building. Pastor Kim’s perseverance, faithfulness and hard work have earned him growing trust and confidence among people.

Willowbrook Community Church

One year before Pastor Jounge retired, after fifteen years of ministry, his church sold their building in the city and rented an American church for an afternoon service in the suburbs where Korean immigrants were moving. When Pastor Jounge retired, Pastor Seung Han was called to Willowbrook Community Church. That was thirteen years ago. Prior to coming to WCC, Pastor Han had served for eleven years as the associate pastor in a large, stable church in California, which was known for feeding members with a steady dose of good preaching and teaching.

The first Sunday after he arrived, Pastor Seung Han found his new church in a “dysfunctional state,” running “like a dysfunctional family of ninety members.” People did not open the Bible during the sermon. There were many who did not have assurance of salvation. The deacons did not know how to pray. This was not merely a church with some unhealthy aspects. It needed “an overall surgery,” he concluded.

Still, the elders were enthusiastic, expecting that their new young pastor would guide the church to growth. They promised to fully support him and his leadership. Most of all, they were in one mind regarding the need to find a suitable building for their ministry. Pastor Han focused on a ministry of prayer and of the Word. He tried to restore the worship to its right place and preached expository sermons. And he always did his homework when the church had issues.

Pastor Han gained his first small success in six months. The session planned an early morning prayer vigil for two weeks. Even though the elders expected that only a few members would attend, more than two-thirds of the congregation showed up. It was “an epochal event” in WCC history. “That event stirred up sleeping souls,” the pastor recalled. Then he started discipleship class. Through the preaching, teaching, and prayer ministry, people began to change.

That change surfaced opposition. The pastor was the youngest adult in the congregation. The majority of the members were in their forties and fifties. Factions formed among the elders, and each elder had his own following. There was also a deacon who was the most influential person in the congregation. The largest faction got together during the week in the name of Bible study but actually spent the time “having a good time.” Since Pastor Han started to introduce programs which were very new to them, they

didn't like what he was doing. When he emphasized the importance of one's prayer life, and started an early morning prayer meeting, resistance followed. They wanted to remain with the current comfortable system.

They soon found a building which was strategically located in a good area. The church didn't need a special advertisement for their new location. They had a steady stream of visitors every Sunday. Church attendance went up gradually. Opposition from some of the old members grew stronger. After two years, it became so strong that pastor Han concluded that the church needed a surgical measure to gain health.

I made up my mind that if they didn't leave, I would have to leave. I concluded that I wouldn't be able to continue my ministry if they stayed where they were. They tried to tame me like the privates tame their new officers in the Army. But when I pushed back, they tried to get rid of me. That was their goal from the beginning. Our church in reality was controlled by the deacons, not by the elders who were elected and ordained to spiritually oversee the congregation. Even though the session made decisions on certain issues, opponents questioned the legitimacy of the decisions, asking, "Why didn't you ask for our opinion?" This was how this church was run.

Pastor Han reasoned that WCC was run like a dysfunctional family because there was a lack of order and a lack of respect for authority. He concluded that the best way to restore health in the church was to have the congregation follow the church bylaws and denominational rules. He told the elders they should run the church's business according to the bylaws. He stood by his principles, always going through all the formal procedures required by the bylaws. But someone always questioned the legality or feasibility of the elders' plans. When his agenda passed all the formal steps, however, he didn't listen to people who started to oppose, nor did he allow them to bother him. He told them "this issue has gone through all the necessary review. And you have had your voice heard. Now is not the time to talk, but the time to act." They grumbled, but he didn't flinch. He

called session members frequently and ran the church strictly under the supervision of the session. Still, the elders who represented the opposing faction continued to resist him. They opposed him for fear that they might lose their vested interest.

Reflecting on his “brash” response to the opposition during this early period of his ministry, he “wished he could have been a little more flexible and wiser” in handling the situation. But he was young, and he pushed back against the opposition. The church now has prayer day on the last Sunday of every year for those who left the church due to conflict. The church asks for forgiveness of God for any wrongs they might have inflicted on those who left or any misunderstanding from the conflict.

New members were watching while the conflict between the pastor and some of the older members was playing out in the open. The church desperately needed a steady influx of new members who could help to pay the mortgage of the new large building. While the regular attendance grew steadily, the offering did not go up in an amount commensurate with the growing membership. New people appeared to withhold their offerings, being unsure of what was occurring between the pastor and some of the old members. As Pastor Han observed the balance of power in the church, he concluded that if he remained silent, he would be pushed out. He responded quickly to the attacks from those who opposed him, dealing with their accusations head-on rather than attempting to placate them. He explained,

They started to criticize my sermons publically. But I pushed back, mentioning their criticism in the church bulletin. I did not stay silent when they opposed me. Whenever I felt I was in danger of getting sidelined, I used every opportunity to counter their criticism, whether in the pulpit, at meetings, or in the bulletin. Whenever rumors started to spread and threatened my authority, I confronted them right away in various ways. I made things public for everyone to see what was occurring. I showed them what the rumor was and what the facts were. I let them look at the evidence and judge objectively.

Even when the majority began to support him, those who opposed him tried every possible tactic to sabotage his ministry. They circulated acrimonious letters anonymously to the whole congregation, listing false accusations against him. “It was a life or death situation,” he lamented. They yelled at him during the deacons’ meetings. They gave false evidence in the congregational meeting to embarrass him. When they were in the majority, their tactics worked. But as their numbers went down, their tactics didn’t “have teeth.” It was that way for several years. There would be arguing and yelling in every meeting. His response was to stick to the rules. Whenever they began to cause trouble, he made it clear that, “We will conduct the meetings according to the rules. You have to get permission to speak from me, the presider.” He warned that if anyone didn’t follow the rules, he would, as the presider, evict them. He solemnly spoke, “If you want to leave, I don’t care. Leave.” Usually, they left the meeting without causing further trouble.

He learned through this experience that when he was pushed, he had to push back harder. He was determined to save and protect “the silent majority.” He noted,

They were good people, but they didn’t open their mouths, even when I did something wrong. That was another problem. When a small faction caused trouble and hurt the church, the people, the body of the church, did not act. They remained silent. They were good people, but they just didn’t want to get involved in difficult matters that they were afraid might give them headaches later. That was the way the majority behaved in our church. I wanted to protect them. The tool to protect them with, I thought, was the law. That was why I always mentioned the laws and bylaws at the beginning of each meeting. This way, they could no longer disrupt the meetings.

He always thought politically. He ministered “with extreme situations in mind, where they might have to make decisions by ballot.” What tipped the balance of power was the growing number of new members who were drawn to the ministry of Pastor Han. Steady numerical growth saved his ministry from the barrage of attacks. The

congregation grew to 270 members. New members represented almost half of the congregation. Most of new members, along with half of the old members, supported him. He could see the balance of the power started to tilt in his favor. But until that time, he had to go through an “agonizing furnace of testing.” He was thankful that in the midst of the turmoil, God gave them growth. He believes that was the reason why he was not pushed out, and why church did not split. They could not claim, “The pastor made all kinds of controversial changes, but there is no growth!” They had to remain silent, and some left the church. He continued,

I would have got into big trouble if the church was not growing or the numbers went down. But the church was growing, and the opposition got smaller and smaller. When the church is growing, most mistakes that pastor makes can be covered up. Numerical growth is a pastor’s most powerful helper. The opposition could not continue to insist that they were right and I was wrong, in the face of continuous growth.

It took him ten years to gain the trust of the people. They began to see that he was praying for them and that he cared for them. He was always the first to be there when they were in trouble and in need of help, in the emergency room and at their family funerals. They began to see that he was a prayer warrior who devoted himself to the study of the Word. They began to treat him like a family member.

Pastor Han is methodical and strategic in planning but also flexible to adapt to a changing environment. He created his own vision through prayer and sent it to the church council. He was extremely careful in his preparation. As a result, he was always able to do what he had planned. As he looked back, ninety-five percent of his plans were accomplished. He recalled,

I postponed cell group meetings a couple of times due to wrong timing. They were not ready to divide the original cell groups as planned at the end of year. When the leaders were not ready, I didn’t hesitate change my plans to

accommodate the changed situation. I saw that if divided into two, both groups would have died or stagnated. So I had to change my original plan. After five years of cell group meetings, I concluded that the time had come to rearrange the members of the cell groups because I saw that groups became complacent and some members didn't like their groups. I announced the coming change, but one month before the change date, I judged that it was not the right time to change. I announced that we would delay for six months. And after six months, it was still not a good time. So I had to announce again that we would delay another six months. I knew that I risked harming my credibility, but I realized that I had to do it. Looking back now, I think I made the right decision. I asked for the council members' advice about the situation of the cell groups. I gave them my observations of the situation in each cell group, and they all concurred.

He chose to avoid those with whom he was not comfortable, who raised red flags.

When he had to meet them, he tended to have formal conversations with minimum courtesy. He said, though, that he had "never faced a moment when he could not give an answer." In any changing situation, he was always prepared to respond.

Pastor Han had grown up alone. Even though he had two older brothers, they were not close. As a result, he grew up making decisions on his own. He served as an officer in the Army for ten years. He believes that "when there is a problem, the answer is in that problematic situation." He believes that one of the qualifications of a leader is to "find that answer by prayer." He explained,

Members are sheep. They don't feel much responsibility, nor do they have much ability. They do not think much. That is why I can't leave matters to them. The leader has to take responsibility. It is ultimately the pastor who takes responsibility. It is a heavy burden. The fate of the church depends on what kind of decisions I make. That is why I am lonely, especially when I am making difficult decisions.

He started to feel burnout after twelve years of ministry in this church. He always felt tired, not wanting to do things he used to do. His desire to excel decreased, and that led him to re-examine his priorities. He started to delegate many responsibilities. He said,

Now I take a day off on Monday, or at least I try. I exercise regularly. I try not to be overly concerned with non-essential things. Before, I did everything from

cleaning and managing the website, to advertisement design and turning off the lights. I had to know everything, from where to find the toilet tissue to what was in the storage room. But as congregation grew, I had to delegate. Sometimes I feel afraid. If I delegate most of my work, will I still be who I was? Now, I cut down visitation. I let staff take care of visitation and other stuff.

Pastor Han believes that Korean cultural values can be honored within the constraints of biblical principles and values. He asserts that he has not allowed Korean cultural values to interfere in the exercise of his leadership. From the beginning, he emphasized that the church must be run by biblical principles. Once, an elder said to him privately, "Since I am older, you should listen to me." But he ignored him, believing that seniority was not part of the biblical culture. When the church planned to adopt a rotation system for the elders and the pastor, the elders worried and insisted that the senior pastor should not be the subject of a confidence vote. But he was aware that they mentioned it not because they cared about him, but because they didn't want to be subject to a confidence vote. Since he insisted, it became part of the formal procedure. He believed it was beneficial to the church. His position is that the church should be transparent and run biblically, having nothing to do with saving face.

He found that out even among the same age group, there were differences in values and perspectives, depending on when the members came to the United States and how much they assimilated to the mainstream culture. There were many diverse sub-cultures in the church. He elaborated,

That is why immigrant church ministry is difficult. Because they claim that this is Korean culture, when so many other groups claim their own version of Korean culture. It is very complex. That is why I focus on Christian culture. I try to roll back negative Korean cultural elements by applying Christian culture in our ministry and our lives...And we have more young people compared with other Korean churches. 1.5 generation Koreans are coming to our church. They were sick and tired of Korean traditional culture, where the old people complained that the young people couldn't speak Korean. They were fed up with the aspects of

Korean culture where seniority and status quo were valued, and young people who didn't "behave like Koreans" were looked down upon. Since our church is filled with young people who were disillusioned with traditional Korean culture, there is not much room left in our church for the old people to demand that the traditional Korean culture be honored. We honor our cultural values like respect for old people and harmony. But those values should not interfere with our ministry, meetings, or running church business. Biblical principles and reason should guide our ministry and church business. Our people and our church culture are accustomed to this framework of biblical principles.

As pastor Han looks ahead next five years, he believes God is calling them to move to large building. Main sanctuary and parking space has already become crowded on Sundays. Now they provide 3 Sunday services. Being confident that he gained enough trust and confidence from the people, he has started to methodically plan next building project with prayer and with consultation with elders

Korean Church of Hope

Right after two churches were merged, the newly formed Korean Church of Hope called Pastor Kang. During his eleven-year- ministry, KCH grew to six hundred members and then went downhill. He was a very powerful preacher, but he was also an authoritarian leader who would not allow anyone to challenge his authority or the direction he had set. They purchased a large local school building and converted it into a sanctuary and other facilities. His strong leadership, coupled with good preaching, helped these two groups with different histories and cultures to enjoy an amicable coexistence and a reasonable level of peace until his authoritarian leadership angered the growing congregation. There was also a fire in the education building, and the police concluded that the cause was arson. People were unnerved by this incident, and some left the church. It was during this time of confusion that Pastor Kang started emphasizing spiritual gifts and the power of the Holy Spirit. Some members started to complain that

the pastor was on a power trip. They also began questioning his theology. He resigned after eleven years of ups and downs. There were two years of instability and uncertainty, during which two interim pastors came and left.

Pastor Si-Min Sung was called as the next pastor eleven years ago. When he arrived, the church was in turmoil. Controversy swirled about whether the church should continue to support a missions program which the congregation had decided to launch two years prior, in order to commemorate its thirty-fifth anniversary. There were meetings every Sunday after the worship service. He noticed that in the meetings, whenever people's expectations were not met, they "rose like a swarm of bees whose nest was stirred." The situation was explosive. Clearly, there was an urgent need to take some sort of action. It was a challenging crisis.

Even though the church at this point was not ready to continue the missions ministry, proponents of the project were adamant, with the rallying cry that they had to move forward because "promises were made to God." Since opinion was divided right down the middle of congregation, people looked to the new pastor for leadership. The church had already spent a substantial amount of money to purchase a piece of land and build a church in Chile, but it turned out that the land was not registered, and there was a dispute about the ownership of the land. To make matters worse, the missionary whom they were supporting had already left the field.

In the midst of the pastoral transition, some people left, and offerings went down. Financially, the church was not able to raise the funds to build the church in Chile. Those who were involved in this project from the beginning insisted that they should follow through on this, even though church had to sacrifice dearly. "It is God's work after all,

and we made a promise,” they argued. It was a great cause that no one dared to oppose in public. “I found myself right in the middle, with the whole congregation watching how I would handle this issue,” Pastor Sung recalled.

First I had to talk it over with elders individually until the session arrived at a consensus. I told them that even if only one elder disagreed, I would not go ahead. I had to wait until everyone came on board. I knew that if even one elder opposed, it would have a big influence on those who supported this project. I suggested to them that we should stop this project for the time being, until the church got its groove back. “I promise you all that we will return to this later and keep our promise. At the moment, the church is in turmoil because of this issue. How can we waste our energy and finances on this situation?” I challenged. When the elders were behind me, the next thing I did was to have good communication with people from both sides.

First, he did some homework on where the players stood on this issue. He found out who the people were and how they were related to each other—family members, places of birth, schools they attended, the year that each of them immigrated, who were their golf partners, what kinds of businesses they had, and the history of this issue. He had his wife invite to their house some of the old single ladies in the church who knew the background of the members, and thus he was able to “glean some information on the relational web of congregation.”

As he held several meetings to discuss this matter, the two sides were getting into open conflict. He “let the conflict to take its course to find out what the real issue was.” And he had to prepare himself extensively in order to be able to explain his position with reason and frankness. He noticed in the beginning that even though he thought people knew where he stood on this issue, they did not fully understand his position or why he took that position. People who were on the other side kept their distance from him. But he understood that as a new pastor, he would be given a honeymoon period, even by those who opposed his position. He had to move quickly. He started to write a regular column

in the weekly bulletin to explain the facts of the issue. He had to show them he could handle the first problem that he faced as their pastor. He explained that they were postponing the mission project for awhile “until church get back into its groove.” He met with the leaders of this faction to express his empathy for their passion for God’s kingdom and willingness to sacrifice. And he assured them that he would keep his promise as soon as the people were ready. He kept that promise later, and people understood that their pastor would not break his promises.

He started to meet or call every member of the congregation one by one. He also made it a rule to call all of the elders at least once a day. He let them know what he was thinking on church matters. He shared with them about the spiritual matters of members, except for personal things. They got to know each other fairly well. Leaders’ meetings which used to for last hours started getting shorter, because all the issues and disagreements were getting settled. The session meetings lasted only thirty minutes, since he had already had shared his ideas with the elders.

The most difficult period in his ministry was when they moved to the church’s current location. The old location was far from the area of the city where most Koreans were concentrated. Furthermore, the church building was too big and too old. But the old members aggressively resisted the new building project, “for fear of losing their hegemony.” By then, church had grown to 250 adult members.

Pastor Sung believes that he succeeded in leading this change due to two elements. First, people were “inspired by and benefited from his sermons.” Second, people began to believe that if they follow him, they would see results. He had to show them that if they followed his leadership “they would not become losers.” Before starting

a big project, he had to show them fruit, and they had to see that the fruit was beneficial for them. The church had to grow under his leadership. Since these two requirements were met, his initiative of change could be successful. There was a honeymoon period for first couple of years. That period was an important time during which he was able to “overwhelm the congregation spiritually,” and new people started visiting to hear his sermons. He said, “If I did not satisfy these two requirements, and the honeymoon period came to an end, conflict would have surfaced between me and the people.”

When Pastor Sung arrived, the congregation which once was the largest Korean church in the area, had mostly old people. They felt pride in their traditions, cherishing memories of their long history. But now they had only memories. They were suffering from defeat, lamenting, “We’ve been there and done that with no lasting success.” Pastor Sung knew he was also being watched by those who opposed his position on the missions project. The church suffered from continuous backbiting, innuendos, rumors, and division. It was one thing to solve these problems through pastoral authority. But there were “deeper issues that needed to be dealt with.” A gap existed between the values they espoused as members of a church and their tendency towards division, infighting and finger-pointing.

Whenever Pastor Sung brought up a new program to energize the congregation, they responded, “We have tried it before, but it didn’t work.” He realized that he would face resistance if he tried new things in this atmosphere. He did two things: communication and waiting. He wanted to start cell groups and addressed this issue at the session meeting. One elder expressed some reservations on the timing of launching the program, saying “I don’t think we are ready for that program yet. Do you think it will be

successful?” The pastor immediately withdrew his proposal, realizing that it was not just a question of whether the congregation as a whole was ready. The elder was expressing his own fear that he might not be ready for this program. He knew that the elder was implying that since he was an elder, he was supposed to lead one cell group, but he wasn’t prepared to bear the burden yet. The pastor had to “save face” for the elder. He had to give up that program for the year, waiting until that elder got rotated off the session. Pastor Sung believes that if he had insisted on going ahead in spite of those reservations, he would have had a very difficult time.

The pastor noticed the church members were not good at expressing their opinions in an orderly fashion. They did not have the discipline of orderly debate to arrive at reasonable decisions. Many meetings turned into personal attacks rather than discussions on the issues. He held two classes on how to conduct oneself in a meeting, explaining parliamentary rules. He also taught them leadership skills, such as how to deal with a trouble maker, how to open one’s heart so that other members may open theirs, and how to manage conflict.

Since they were busy with their daily business, the elders expected their pastor to raise and frame the issues of the church. Thus, he determined which issues would be on the agenda. When he had ten items to consider, he narrowed them down to the three that were most critical for his ministry, doing complete homework on those three issues. But he still raised the other seven less important issues for debate without much study. When an elder started to oppose any of the seven less important issues on the agenda, he immediately let him control the agenda so that he would feel that his pastor respected his abilities and opinions. This way, the elders felt that they contributed to the resolution of

seventy percent of the issues, while Pastor Sung could have his way on the three most important issues in his ministry.

He started with small changes and won small victories. This had the effect of enhancing his standing in the congregation. It was crucial to gain the trust of the choir, since many of the opinion leaders in the church were choir members. The curtains in the sanctuary were old and seemed to obstruct the acoustics, and thus the beautiful voices of the choir. Pastor Sung planned to change these curtains, using new material with a new color to enhance the worship experience and the acoustics. But he knew that people had good memories of the old curtains, since which the old members had raised money to buy them, purchased them, and installed them. They reminded the older members of the old glory days. He recalled,

I could not tell them that since the curtains were old we need to change them for new ones. I thought about it for six months before I mentioned the issue of the curtains to the congregation. The first thing I did was to praise the choir for their gift of good singing and commitment to praise God. Then I went around asking people, "Why when I hear the choir singing in the back of the sanctuary, does their singing not sound as beautiful as when I hear in the front?" I started to question whether it had anything to do with acoustics of the building. "The building wall appears to absorb the sound," I said. And I asked, "Is there anything we can do correct it?" I never mentioned the curtain. For six months, I continued to talk about our acoustics and how to preserve the beautiful sound of the choir. People came to an understanding that we had problem with our acoustics. I continued to bring it home that we needed to do something to enhance our worship experience. People began to recognize that the curtains absorbed the choir's sound. Once I judged that people were fully aware of the issue, on our church anniversary day, I formally proposed that we change the curtain. Since people were aware of the problem, and it was our anniversary, a few people donated money and volunteered to take the job of the changing curtain. The choir members who were core members of the opposing factions were pleased with my initiative to change. They said to each other, "We are such a fantastic choir." They found themselves, until now having opposed each other, in the same boat, with the same destiny. In this way, my credit accumulated bit by bit.

Another victory he won was to change church's name to an easily identifiable one. The original name of the church was difficult to pronounce. He started talking about changing the name. He started mentioning it in the sermon, using as an example his own name, which was also difficult to pronounce. He illustrated how when he was growing up, it was hard for the students, and most of all the professors, to remember or pronounce his Korean name. He recalled saying to them, "Teachers hardly mentioned my name in class, because it was too hard to pronounce. I could not have good fellowship, nor could I build personal relationships with them. Worse, it turned out that I was getting bad grades even though I was studying as hard as ever."

He repeated, whenever opportunity arose, his personal story of how frustrating it was to have a difficult-to-pronounce name, explaining the negative impact on his relationships with others. People began to understand how one's name impacts one's life, performance, and relationships. When he eventually forwarded the agenda of changing the church's name, people understood the need for a good name that would be easy to pronounce. They were able to find a new name that people could easily remember. The new name Korean Church of Hope "gave them a new identity, which represents hope, energy and progress." He said,

If I had tried to change it without patient communication with the people, I would have had fierce resistance, and worse, I would have been kicked out of the church. I knew they would resist. That was why I ripened it for five years before I acted. Changing their name was actually changing their identity. I think sixty to seventy percent of those who voted yes agreed with me on the need for new name because they liked me, they loved and trusted me, and they had watched how I prepared them, allaying their fear of losing their identity.

It took him four years to suggest starting a discipleship class. It took another two years to prepare and launch it. When he first mentioned starting a discipleship group, no

one was interested. They were lukewarm, since “they’ve been there, done that.”

Therefore, he changed his tactic and announced that the pastor would lead a short Bible-study program. Since he was a new pastor, the elders were obliged to attend, albeit hesitantly, because elders were expected to set an example. The session could not refuse, either, since it was only a short six week Bible study course. That was how it started. He remembered,

When we finished the six week Bible course, I congratulated them and asked if they want to continue for four more weeks, since there was a small book that was a sequel to our first Bible study. Since it was only an additional four weeks, they did not resist or refuse my suggestion. If from the beginning I had said that we were getting into a two-year discipleship program, no one would have showed up. But since it was short term, they did not have to make a big commitment. It was not threatening to them. I chopped the two-year course into twenty small sessions so that they could be manageable to people who did not want to make big commitments. I had to have them start somewhere. After several sessions, when they kind of got hooked, I told them that they were actually in the discipleship course. I challenged them to continue, since they had already started and progressed this far. I appealed to their sense of pride and honor, since they were proud people who had stuck with this church through thick and thin. Most of them decided to stay and finish the course. In the beginning, people said it couldn’t be done because there was too much resistance. Many were watching on the sidelines, questioning how long this new pastor would last, and expecting me to give up quickly. But I did my homework and was ready to handle their resistance.

Pastor Sung worked on moving to a new location for nine years. He spent the time building trust, gaining support from elders and other leaders, and helping leaders to claim their own success. All this was done with the goal of minimizing people’s resistance to the future moving plan that he had in mind. He did talk about moving, but it was only during unofficial conversations with elders and lay people. This way, he prepared for a long time, exploring possible reasons for opposition and trying to prepare convincing counter-arguments. He had already gone through a plan many times with the elders, who supported his idea. But people laid out reasons for opposing the move. Some said, “Our

pastor has success-syndrome. He wants to build a big church to satisfy his ego.” Others retorted, “Why do we have to leave this good place? Does he know how much suffering it will inflict on members?” Some others insisted, “Numeric growth is not the only growth.”

Pastor Sung reasoned that there must be another reason for their resistance:

I think there was a deeper issue here making them nervous about the prospect of moving. They were not a united group. There was still division among them, with long-time distrust and bickering and hurt. Both sides were afraid that they might lose power. They were afraid of the prospect that when we moved, new members would come in and take over. There was deep suspicion of the pastor’s true intent—fear of losing respect and status and position. That was why I tried to be as transparent and honest as possible about why I wanted to move. I told them that since I had entered the ministry, I realized that I would do God’s ministry more effectively if our church grew to five hundred members. I would like to minister in a church whose size is five hundred.

He never mentioned God’s will. When the issue of moving became known to the members, people began to show their passion. They wanted a clear reason, a cause for moving. Pastor Sung had to provide them “the reason for change—a reason that they could see, touch, smell, and feel.” But God’s will was not one of those reasons, he thought.

God’s will is between God and me. If I pushed this agenda with rallying cry of “God’s will,” I would have been a dictator. People who think they have powerful spiritual authority may say that, but I was not one of those. I wanted to provide a clear reason that they could understand and accept willingly. It took me long time – ten years – to find the right, clear reason. Finding and communicating the clear reason for change was the most important thing to do in order to lead change. Of course, there were some who opposed, but they could not do it aggressively since the reason was communicated clearly.

Pastor Sung approached this issue from a practical point of view. He showed them a chart of how much church had grown since he arrived. Annual visitors totaled seven or eight families at most, but during the last nine years since he had arrived, sixty percent of

those who visited the church stayed and became members. He argued that it “proved that KCH had resilience, health and competitiveness to attract and retain people.” He “used business jargon to drive his point,” since he wanted them to see the practical side of this issue. He tried to persuade them that they were “a good, strong, healthy, and competitive church,” but pointed out that their weakness was location. KCH was situated too far away from the Korean-concentrated area, and as a result, they had few visitors. For example, one small Korean church located in the Korean-concentrated area had five times more visitors annually than KCH which is much larger. He prepared scientific data to back up his argument, to convince them that it was what they must do. Many people started to rally around him, and relocation became one of the major prayer items during their prayer meeting, and in congregational prayers on Sunday.

The pastor repeated that church growth was not bad by itself. He presented them reliable statistics showing that when the Christian ratio in one area reached forty percent, it reached a plateau. Historically, when forty out of one hundred residents in a town become Christians, the area has become mature. Normally, those churches in that area will not see any more visible numerical growth in that area. He argued therefore,

For example, where there are a thousand Korean residents in a town, if the church grows to four hundred members, you should not target numeric growth for your goal. Of course I want one hundred percent to become Christians, but realistically it is not feasible. There are fifty thousand Korean people living in our city. That means that we can target our goal for twenty thousand Christians. But as we calculated current church attendance, there are only ten thousand people who are attending churches. That means we should target numerical growth as our goal.

While Pastor Sung presented statistical data on the one hand, he also shared with them his personal dream. He told them honestly that he really wanted to minister to a

church with five hundred adults. He shared with them his passion for church growth. And he appealed to their *in-jung* (intimate emotions).

Due to my age, even if we were to stay here in this location, I am sure we would grow to five hundred before I retire. But by that time, most of you would not be around to witness that growth. You would be with the Lord. And I would be very old. Do you want me to have to be that old to reach that number?

Then he explained in detail why he thought it was “practically profitable for all of them” to move to a new location. The church building was old and in dire need of repair.

A contractor made an estimate for renovation, which would be around eight hundred thousand dollars. He reasoned with them,

If we don’t move, you will have to pay for that, or we will have to secure a loan to cover the renovation, and you will have to pay a monthly mortgage payment. But why should we do that? Instead, if we put this property on the market, we can sell for the market price, which will be substantial enough to buy a new building in a good place. Furthermore, look at our maintenance expenses. A large portion of the offering that you all give every week goes to building maintenance, and we are struggling to balance our budget. Why do we have to waste that precious offering? Furthermore, our building is too big for our congregation of 220. I heard that a congregation of 220 is supposed to have a building of fifteen thousand square feet. But our building is more than thirty thousand square feet. 220 members are giving the offering, of which the lion’s share goes to maintain a building designed for five hundred. Look at the utility bill for a newer building which is the same size as ours. Those people pay less than half what we pay, because our building is too old and energy-inefficient. And they have more members than we have. Why do we have to waste God’s resources? Should we not use our resources more on missions and other areas?

But he didn’t know exactly how cohesive the fellowship of the church was. There were two factions and a group of new comers. So he asked the elders for help. He set one condition before debating this proposal. He made it clear that no issue that was more important than keeping the peace in the church, and he assured them that if this was God’s will, this issue would not damage the peace of the church. He asked the elders to alert him if this issue became volatile enough to break the peace. He reflects,

I didn't know where and when that critical point would appear, because I was so preoccupied with how to convince people. But I think the elders knew when and where that critical moment would come. That moment when this issue would become so volatile and emotional as to break the peace. Until that moment, it would be a healthy debate, and I would continue to provoke healthy tension and debate. But I didn't know the critical point, because I was a strong personality and not sensitive enough to catch the sign that might indicate that that point was approaching. That was why I asked the chairman of the building committee and the elders to alert me of the possible approach of that critical point. "I will stop right away when you alert me," I guaranteed them. "I will find other way to solve our building issue," I told them.

Besides the elders, the pastor had another member who helped him to identify any active opposition to his proposal. He played the devil's advocate. He was vocal in pointing out the weak points of the pastor's proposal, looking at the issue from the opposite side. Pastor Sung said, "He criticized me openly on this issue, and it hurt sometimes, but I did listen to him. It turned out that people were approaching him to voice their opinions on this issue, seeing that he was very courageous and honest in expressing his views. He helped me a great deal in identifying people's fears and concerns on this issue."

He wrote a letter addressed to the whole congregation. He began the letter with a description of the state of the church, and the necessity of the move to a new location. He reminded them of the many difficult changes that had been made under his leadership. He appealed to them to follow his leadership one more time. He commended them for participating in many successful changes. Finally, he challenged them with an emotional appeal, asking, "Now let us go out into the wilderness one more time to enter into the second Canaan!"

He had already found a piece of land. While the people were debating, he had been going around looking for a lot for the new church building. The one he found was

already designated for religious purposes. He mentioned this land in the letter, describing its location, price, and size. He also suggested that they purchase the land. The whole congregation got excited. They started to voice their opinions over the pros and cons of this land. It became a hot issue, which was exactly what Pastor Sung hoped would happen. He wanted people to “be agitated, instigated, incited over this issue,” rather than staying calm. He said,

I did not like the location myself. But it was the only location that I could find at the time. I needed something that would turn them on, to have them excited, to be passionate. People started debating over how we are going to build there, what the cost would be, and how big it would be. At the end of the debate, they concluded that that lot was not the right one.

After another year, they found the right building in the right place. The debate started all over again. There were arguments between the elders and the deacons at the building committee meeting. The elders supported the purchase, but some of the deacons opposed it. Personal conflicts arose between the elders and the deacons. Many of them were of similar age and had started their Christian lives at the same time. But some of them became elders, while others were still deacons. Some of the deacons were jealous of elders, their position, and the prestige that came with it. That conflict surfaced during the building committee meeting.

Two members of the building committee who were somewhat unenthusiastic about the project stopped coming to the church. Pastor Sung repeatedly visited and called them, for he knew that if he didn't, they might become his personal enemies. When he visited them, he never talked about church issues, but talked instead about spiritual issues and about their daily lives. He reminded them that he was their pastor and that business issues should not damage the relationship between the pastor and the church members.

His visits and calls were not intended to rally their support for the church relocation.

“That would have been a business deal between merchants, rather than a spiritual father-son relationship,” he reasoned. Finally, they dropped their opposition. After ten years of hard work, they were able to move to a new location.

Pastor Sung is a risk taker, and leading change provided him “a sense of accomplishment and pleasure.” He doesn’t feel much stress. When he faced a challenge, he got excited. He pursues challenges “the same way an addict chase opium.” He explains, “It excites, pleases me to face and solve challenges. That is why I think the pastorate is my calling.”

He provides this insight on Korean culture:

You have to read between the lines to understand Koreans. When they say something, you have to figure out what their other meaning could be. When I ask a member to do certain work, he may decline, saying “I don’t have capability to do that.” But you have to understand that he does not necessarily mean what he says. Second, Koreans are not issue-centered, but rather in-jung-centered. When you handle certain issues, if you focus solely on the issues, there is high probability that you will fail. People vote for or against certain issues, not because they are right or wrong, but in many cases because they like or don’t like the person who proposed the agenda.

Recently he had argument at home. His children who had been quiet and obedient, started to complain that he had spent too much time for the church, but not enough time to care for the family. His wife joined in their protest, saying he “hardly showed affection” to her and children, which made him depressed. It is his ministry that makes him happy. He anxiously waits for Sunday and preaching time.

Eden Presbyterian Church

EPC was planted by Pastor Ki-Young Um with eight families seventeen years ago. It grew to 350 members in fifteen years. Pastor Um felt that the church had reached

a plateau. Most of the people in the congregation appreciated his gift of teaching and preaching. God gifted him in that area and opened the doors to let him use that gift. But there was a downside. While preaching was a good gift on one hand, on the other hand, too much emphasis on teaching and preaching resulted in a congregation of laid-back Christians. Pastor Um reflected,

They misunderstood the Christian life as simply listening to good sermons and then continuing to live their old lives. They didn't care to get involved in community life. Some people were coming to church for the sole purpose of listening to my sermons. Church members relied on me to an undesirable degree. With the original elders, I became the center. Everything centered around me, and people looked to me for the answers to even minor issues. I grew too big in the eyes of the congregation. On the other hand, members expected the same level of care and attention from me that they had received when the church was small.

To solve this dilemma, he tried to implement some programs that would raise new leadership. But he found he was not gifted in that area. Twice, the church had called an associate pastor whose job description covered that area, but neither of the candidates fit the position. Somehow, the new associate pastors "didn't get along with the elders" and left. Pastor Um finally concluded that without a new pastor, it would be difficult for EPC to grow.

On the eve of the church's fifteenth anniversary, Pastor Um gathered the elders and started talking about the last fifteen years of hard work together. He praised them for their labor of love, prayer, and devotion. It was time of remembering. They talked for two hours about how God led them through much difficulty and sufferings. Then, after everyone became reminiscent of the old days of tears and hard work, Pastor Um announced that he had decided to search for a new ministry opportunity.

Initially, they didn't believe he meant it. They thought he was bluffing in order to push them to become more committed to the future ministry. Since pastor Um wielded

absolute power in the church as the planting pastor, the elders needed his presence and support to preserve their status in the congregation. His influence was so powerful in the church that without his sanction, no agenda could pass. But when they realized that he had already made up his mind, the elders replied, “we respect your decision in principle, but we need time to prepare for the smooth transition.” The elders wanted to buy themselves time to think over what this change meant for them individually.

While his transition was supposed to be confidential until he received a calling, the matter started to leak to the members. Debate started among the members about whether he should leave, and about what caused him to decide to leave. There was a palpable sense of high anxiety and confusion. The elders were quiet, whispering to one another. Young people who were loyal to him were sad but started openly discussing the implications of his departure. The old people were angry and felt hurt. He noted, “It might be a general phenomenon in the Korean church. After the news of my resignation got out, the first reaction from the people was to ask one another “Who gave the pastor such a hard time that he decided to leave? Who are the bad people driving away the pastor?”

There was blaming and pointing of fingers going around among the members. In most cases, the blame was directed at the elders. Young deacons and people in general viewed the pastor’s intent to resign in that context. The elders were perplexed at the blame directed at them. When they first heard his request to be given permission to search for a new ministry, they didn’t give his announcement serious thought. Since he had not received any specific call from other church, they did not recognize the

seriousness of his intent. They were slow to grasp the issue and unable to handle it with a clear sense of direction. That was the reason that they were blamed.

Elders and older members, who had depended on the leadership of their senior pastor for as long as they could remember, felt threatened by the prospect of a pastoral change. It could jeopardize their position of trust from the senior pastor, and that position was a source of power to them. On the other hand, both new and young members, while feeling sad, were interested in the pastoral change. It wasn't evident, but Pastor Um knew that they wanted a change in the church culture. But they had remained silent until that time. He explained,

Especially those who were close to me, and the young people, responded positively to my announcement. On the other hand, old people who liked me protested, saying "You can't leave us behind." Young people suggested that I should leave for my own sake, but old people said "Why do you have to leave now that everything is going well after all these years of hard work?"

Pastor Um grew up in a family where the parents were absent, and his grandmother took care of them. As the eldest of four brothers, he grew up filling the role of a father to his younger brothers. They were a closely-knit family. He grew up as the leader of the family, and he had difficulty delegating family duties to his younger brothers. He had not had the learning experience of submitting to someone, nor had he ever served under someone else's authority. This upbringing might have influenced how he led the congregation. He remembered,

Growing up, before being converted, I led my three brothers with force. Having come to the United States when I was sixteen, I was expected to take responsibility to care for my brothers, since my parents had to work long hours to support us. We were very close and always did things together. Our everyday schedules were almost identical. I influenced them in many ways. In a way, we were more like buddies, friends sort of, rather than me playing the authority figure. Looking back, I think I feared that I might not please my parents...As a pastor, I had hard time confronting the elders.

He knew all along that the congregation should not expect certain things from him. Even though it wasn't his intention, he realized that he had made them depend on him too much. He "wanted to be treated like an uncle" who was easily approachable, "without wearing a mask." He didn't mind making blunders in front of people. He did not give them the impression that he was a holy, pious, devoted, model pastor. People liked him and cherished him, partly because they were "comfortable being with him."

But he had difficulty staying connected with people he didn't like. He reflects on his experiences, saying:

I couldn't stand those who wouldn't listen, would not budge, and insisted unreasonably. I didn't want to talk to them. I tried to avoid and ignore them...when we could not communicate, those were the most difficult times for me. I didn't experience this kind of allergic reaction to certain people before I entered the ministry. When some people caused trouble, or something happened, I was inclined to avoid those who caused the problem. I usually waited until things calmed down, or I avoided the people or the issue involved. And I was left with anger over the realization that I couldn't handle the situation well.

Gradually, he began to learn what the consequences would be if his anger was not managed. For a long time, when he started to think about these issues, his thoughts became "imaginative and became exaggerated out of proportion, out of his control." But these days when that happens, he reflects and realizes that he is guessing, imagining and exaggerating. He is now able to stop imagining and dwelling on such things. Continuing to imagine things and trying to solve the problems in his head only made him angry and invariably led to blunders.

Three months after the church's anniversary, he received a calling from an out-of-state church. But while he was considering the calling, the new church notified him that they had to withdraw, due to unspecified conflict related to the calling. By then, Pastor

Um's session had already concluded that for the sake of the stability of the church, he should withdraw his intention of resignation. After Pastor Um prayed about his future and consulted with the elders, he decided to stay with the unanimous approval of the session. However, the conflict that surfaced as a result of his initial announcement still simmered.

The issue was deeper than what immediately met the eye. Pastor Um knew all along that there was a leadership vacuum among the elders and deacons, and that he was part of the problem. It became glaringly obvious to the church's members that EPC was Pastor Um's church. Some young members murmured that the church leaders were not capable of handling even the basic responsibilities of the session during the pastoral transitional phase. Since they had been completely dependent on the leadership and authority of senior pastor for far too long, the elders froze in the face of a pastoral transition.

After he withdrew his resignation, Pastor Um started leading change. Conflict which had lain dormant for some time between old members and new members came to light. He recognized that he had to change the church culture if he wanted to continue to exercise his leadership in the congregation. Pastor Um's action was decisive:

So my first action to solve the problem was to announce clearly that I had withdrawn my resignation and intended to continue to serve as their pastor, and I made a public apology for handling poorly the process of pastoral transition. I took full responsibility for this matter. Then I called together the leaders of the congregation, and I made it clear that our leadership was weak, and that we needed to strengthen and raise new leaders. This issue was communicated to the congregation.

For the first time, the congregation recognized the possibility that their pastor could leave the church. They realized that they needed to build leadership among themselves so that there wouldn't be a leadership vacuum in the case of a pastoral

transition. They understood that they should bear a certain level of leadership responsibility. This incident seemed to result in a positive attitude among members of the congregation.

The following year, EPC elected and ordained new elders. Up to that point, all the elders had been with pastor Um for the previous fifteen years. They were loyal to him, and they relied on him. But he began to delegate responsibilities to the new elders, honoring their desire to initiate new ministries. Since they were new elders, they brought fresh energy and excitement to their respective ministries.

He started a leadership class for the elders. As he shared with them his vision of forming small groups, he suggested several related works of literatures and had them read and discuss the material. Rather than having them follow the pastor's lead, he started to let them discuss the subject and arrive at a shared conclusion and action plan. That became his leadership style. Now there is not one elder who "simply tries to dictate to the congregation what to do." They now understand that it "takes long talks with lay people," using tenacity and persuasion, in order to arrive at a shared vision.

Emboldened by the installation of new young elders, the young people openly demanded that the church adopt a contemporary worship style. Pastor Um held several meetings to discuss the issue. He made it clear in the meetings that he fully understood the importance of honoring memories and traditions, but that he also understood the need to adapt to a changing environment. He recognized that some of the old-timers missed the early days when the congregation was small, and he had enough time to care for them personally in big and small family matters. He had been close to them "like a family member." They missed those days, even though it was not possible to return to that

ministry style. He visited those members and shared old memories. He encouraged them to accept the new reality while keeping good memories and traditions.

Eventually, the church adopted a new worship format, introducing drums and guitars. Contemporary gospel songs were added. Soon there were complaints among the old members. Some old people preferred old hymns over “noisy gospel songs.” Pastor Um gathered the old group and explained why he introduced the new format. He told them,

I think the unity of the church is important. We have a choice to make. We can start this new style of worship in the afternoon, especially for the young people, and keep the old style of worship for the old generation during the current worship hour. But I don't think this is the right way. This way, we will not be able to walk together in our spiritual journey. The young group will become like a sort of para-church group. Then what would they learn, and from whom? We need to make mutual concessions, and let's make unity our priority. Even though it is not your taste, let's give them some concessions. And I will tell the young group that since you made concessions, they will also make some sacrifices in order to stay together, to keep unity. What is important is to be together as a community, not to be convenient and comfortable.

Most of the older people did not object to his plea to embrace the young people. They understood the situation and agreed to meet in the middle. The young and the old made mutual sacrifices by singing old hymns and new gospel songs alternatively. When their vision was shared, there was willingness to sacrifice and accept different worship styles. He remembers,

I thanked them for their sacrifice. I explained why we were doing this. I tried to make them feel dignified and honored by sacrificing their religious traditions and customs. I thought it was very important for the congregation. The young people also did not insist on starting a new worship service later in the afternoon for themselves. They felt dignified and honored by worshipping with the older generation. They didn't think it was a sacrifice.

Last couple of years during which adaptive process was going on, pastor Um's leadership style was transformed from traditional Korean leadership style where a leader

simply dictated what needed to be done with personality and power, into more shared leadership style where he enlisted other leaders' input in initiating changes.

In this chapter, eight pastors' stories have been presented on their leadership roles and behaviors during times of adaptive challenge in their churches. Each pastor used various leadership skills to deal with conflicts and responded to emotional situations differently in the unique Korean cultural context which is authoritarian, status conscious, and values harmony and order. These stories are important in shedding light on how Korean culture affected the way they led adaptive change. What this researcher has learned from these stories will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focused on the process of leading adaptive change in Korean congregations in America. The problem addressed was the lack of research regarding the experiences of Korean pastors who led adaptive change in Korean congregations in America. The study was composed of interviews of eight Korean pastors who were serving in Korean congregations in America. The interviews focused on the following four research questions:

5. How do native Korean pastors describe their leadership roles and behaviors during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
6. How do native Korean pastors deal with conflicts that arise during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
7. How do native Korean pastors respond to emotional situations during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?
8. How do native Korean pastors describe the cultural issues that arise during times of adaptive challenge in their churches?

In some congregations, the adaptive change process went well, while in others, the outcomes were mixed, or poor. The churches represented in this study reflected various states of emotional anxiety and different degrees of ability to cope with the stress that accompanied adaptive change.

Emmanuel Korean Presbyterian Church (EKPC), Bethel Baptist Church (BBC), and Willow Bridge Community Church (WBCC) experienced different degrees of rupture in their holding environment due to the heat generated during the adaptive work. Each of these three congregations lost some key leaders or a sizable number of old members during the process of adaptive work. But those losses didn't mean that they all failed to effectively navigate the adaptive change process. All three churches experienced some difficulties during the disequilibrium period, but they emerged as healthier congregations.

While more supple leadership might have mitigated the negative impact of the change, I believe that the cultural constraints of valuing order and status-quo over change and progress had some role in causing the rupture. Among the three churches that experienced the departure of key leaders or a sizable number of members, the change process for EKPC and WCC were mixed, but quickly rebounded and became healthier than before. However, the adaptive change process went poorly for BBC. This was not because the church didn't reach a healthy place, but because the expressed goal of Pastor Hong was to unite the divided factions, and on this point, he failed. But he recovered as time passed, and the church grew healthy.

The beginning stages of the change process for VCC went well due to the pastor's authoritarian leadership. This conflict-filled, stagnant church was transformed into mission-oriented one. But the second stage of the change process went poorly because the people became weary of the pastor's autocratic leadership. The change process at CMC is ongoing, and at the present time, the results are mixed. As the congregation remained stagnant, the pastor became a convenient target for blame. When he belatedly embarked

on a mission to change the worship style, resistance followed, and negative attitudes still linger among members.

Eden Presbyterian Church (EPC), which was led by an autocratic pastor, experienced a dramatic turn after Pastor's Um's resignation was made known. The news of his resignation had a shattering effect on the congregation, and people became very responsive to the change. People's psychological readiness, along with his new consensual leadership style, helped the church to ride the wave of congregational resistance. I believe this change initiative has succeeded.

The change process in Korean Church of Hope (KCH) went well, led by a pastor who had a keen understanding of how Korean culture impacts the way people respond to their leaders. He performed as a traditional leader, casting vision and selling it to the people. His preaching skills and early small victories paved the way for the realization of his long-term goal of moving to a new location. On the other hand, the change process at Lakewood Community Church (LCC), led by a pastor who exercised shared leadership, also went well. He waited patiently, managing the level of heat generated during the disequilibrium, and led incremental progress. I conclude that both Pastor Sung and Pastor Kim succeeded in leading adaptive change with different leadership styles.

The adaptive change process worked best when pastors expanded their informal authority by earning trust, scoring early small victories, and focusing on good preaching and teaching. Steady numerical growth also made the change process more palatable to the people who would lose something as a result of the impending change. In the most problematic change initiative, no personal relationships or trust were established with those who opposed the transition. Resorting to treating the change process as a technical

solution made the situation worse, and anxiety rose to an unacceptable level. The pastors at EKPC, BBC, and WCC paid less attention to the Korean culture, which values order and status-quo. As a result, those churches experienced much heavier opposition and lost members. However, they recovered quickly as new members joined the churches.

Conclusions and Discussion of Findings

I will begin by offering some general conclusions which apply generally to the eight congregations studied. Then I will offer some specific conclusions related to each congregation. Following these conclusions, I will set forth recommendations which relate to pastors involved in the process of adaptive change in Korean congregations.

General Conclusions from the Study

First, Korean cultural traits did influence how people reacted to adaptive challenges, and as a result, they impacted how pastors led the change. Since Koreans value order, harmony, and status-quo, pastors felt strong centripetal pressure to stay within the boundaries of their authority. Furthermore, in spite of a sincere desire to change on the part of the supporters, hidden loyalty to traditional values like respect for age hindered the pastors' change initiatives. One example of such hidden loyalties came to light in the form of hesitation of three elders at EKPC when the other four elders, attacked their reform activities as rebellion against tradition. Another example of this was the reluctance of the KCC deacons to take responsibility that traditionally belonged to the elders, due to their respect for the older members of the congregation. Emphasis on *in-jung* tended to turn issues into emotional conflicts, as seen in the experiences of CMC and KCH. People rose "like beehives that were stirred." Respect for authority tended to

produce “silent” people who were reluctant to voice their opinions when needed, making it harder to draw out competing values and priorities.

Second, pastors led successful adaptive change in spite of cultural constraints by using necessary tools to navigate the web of enduring social relationships. Since people tended to stay silent, pastors themselves had to raise the issue at hand. As a result, many pastors became the target of attack from those who opposed the change. The pastors’ adaptive leadership skills allowed them to “dance on the edge” of the boundaries of their authority and lead change without being sidelined by these attacks. Leading with grace and emphasis on unity in Christ were important factors in preserving a holding environment during the process of adaptive work. Emotional maturity was particularly important in supporting them under relentless pressure. Understanding how various Korean cultural markers affected the way people reacted to the emerging challenges was essential in mapping out the strategy for leading adaptive change.

Third, it took a long time to accomplish change because the pressure to meet the expectations of these congregations was very strong due to the nature of Korean culture. The change processes were messy, unpredictable, and still ongoing in some cases. Pastors had to prepare for a long time – five to ten years – practicing patience until congregation became psychologically ready. While sudden crises put the congregations into a learning mode in the cases of VCC and EPC, their adaptive work still had to be deliberately paced. To foster an adaptive culture by winning small early victories, teaching communication skills, expanding informal authority, and slowly building other platforms for the lay leaders were necessary components of leading effective change.

Discussion and Conclusions Regarding the Adaptive Leadership Experiences of Each Pastor

Each pastor led adaptive change with a unique combination of skills. These elements included leadership skills, conflict resolution skills, emotional maturity, and cultural intelligence. Each congregation studied had a unique history, various conflicting interests, and different degrees of resilience and cultural influence. As a result, each adaptive change process experienced a different degree of success, and the processes that each pastor underwent in arriving at those results were different.

Pastor Lee of Immanuel Korean Presbyterian Church

Pastor Lee survived a difficult adaptive change process. He handled some aspects of the adaptive process skillfully, while others were not managed well. The most difficult roadblock to the change in this church was the Korean cultural expectation of preserving positional authority. At present, Pastor Lee continues to have solid support from the congregation, and the church has become healthier now. The church is now guided more by biblical principles than by cultural assumptions.

His change leadership provides a good model in two areas. First, he focused the congregation's attention on the issue: how to keep church leadership healthy. He orchestrated the conflict and paced the work for five years. He intentionally sold his ideas, starting with little talks, book discussions, and releasing denominational position papers on the issue. Secondly, when four elders accused him publically of wanting "to be a dictator," he stayed calm, thereby kept the congregation's anxiety level from rising.

He expanded his informal authority by pursuing small victories (such as discipleship classes and numerical growth) and by selling his ideas for a long time. He focused people's attention on the emerging issue when they had a shortage of space.

Instead of providing his own solutions, he appointed a committee to search for solutions. Pastor Lee also modeled sacrifice by voluntarily moving out of the pastoral residence into a nearby apartment.

But when another issue (how to ensure the health of the leadership) came to the church's attention, he himself offered the solution (apparently convinced of the rightness of his cause), rather than letting the church leaders to grapple with the issue and come up with a solution. Pastor Lee seemed to treat this issue as a technical challenge that needed a technical solution. His solution was to adopt a rotation system which would screen out underperforming elders every six years. In the meantime, the adaptive issue was not fully addressed.

In retrospect, Pastor Lee admitted that his imposition of the rotation system to ensure the health of the leadership made it look like a fight between the pastor and the four elders. Although he intended to hold a discussion on the merits and demerits of the rotation system, the elders might have perceived that he was pointing to them as the cause of "the dysfunctional state of the session." This caused them to "lose face," because it appeared that they were being criticized publically by their pastor, who was much younger. Further, he failed to understand the level of resistance that he would face by challenging the elders' cultural expectations regarding the need to preserve positional authority.

On the other hand, even if Pastor Lee had understood the loss that the elders feared they would incur by following his lead and had tried to help manage their anxiety, it is not clear whether the elders would have been able to process the loss and thrive within their new constraints. The elders clearly struggled with the need to refashion their

identity, changing from life-time elders “appointed by God” into elders who could be removed from the session by a congregational vote. When their fear of loss was not managed, they further clung to their “positional authority.” Pastor Lee did not find a way to manage those “emotions,” and they fed the effort to undermine his change initiative. One potential way to allay those fears could have been to add a transition clause to the effect that the amendment would apply only to those who were elected after the amendment’s adoption.

Pastor Lee could not wait for the opposing elders to come to grips with the amendment. He felt that the three elders who were supportive of the rotation system were vacillating, struggling to bear the burden of tension and fighting. They seemed to have genuinely wanted change, but their loyalty to their traditional values (respect for elders and order) also pushed them to avoid conflict and disorder. It was not a coincidence that the four opposition elders accused them of subordination. In Korean history, “circulating *Yun-Pan-Jang*” was tantamount to treason. This hidden loyalty to cultural values appeared to weigh heavily on them. They looked to the pastor to “protect certainty” that they were right and that this issue was worth the fight. If he had waited, he might have lost their confidence. He had to turn to the congregation for a quick solution.

If the majority of the elders had left in the midst of conflict, the congregation would have experienced some trauma. But Pastor Lee held firm in the midst of this period of anxiety and disequilibrium. The end result was the adoption of the rotation system to guard the health of the leadership, which would in turn keep the whole congregation healthy. While majority of the elders who opposed this system left the church, the result of the congregational vote seemed to vindicate his leadership.

Pastor Lim of Vision Community Church

Pastor Lim experienced both success and failure in responding to adaptive challenges. He understood rightly that VCC needed autocratic leadership at the beginning and seized the “ripe” moments to change bylaws and retire long-time elders. Bible studies and cell group programs helped people to prepare for the change. His change leadership in the missions project provides a model of the process of transforming a stagnant, inward-looking congregation into missions-focused church. The congregation’s inertia necessitated an initial push by an autocratic leader. The missions project then channeled the energy of the people who were inward-focused, and who regularly caused problems, into a higher calling. They were prodded, pulled, and stretched, which was good for their spiritual muscles. As a result, division and infighting among members drastically lessened. People rallied around their shared purpose and mission. Pastor Lim was then commended for not wavering when people resisted, because it was “the right thing to do.”

But it seems that their missions experience did not translate into changed relationships with the pastor or with each other. The pastor’s personal matters, like his finances, continuously became the focus of congregational meetings. The underlying problem seemed to be caused by the pastor’s tendencies to use an authoritarian leadership style and to over-perform, and the session’s low level of maturity and under-performance. Even though the pastor agreed to be more consensual in the decision making process, the immaturity of the elders in this “pastor-centered church” tempted him to use an

authoritarian leadership style in order to produce results. When sacrificing “intentionality” for the sake of production, one risks depleting spiritual vitality.²⁹⁷

It is commendable, however, that in the midst of an anxious system, while working with immature elders, Pastor Lim showed cultural sensitivity to leaders’ desire for positional authority. He practiced transparency and vulnerability when faced with resistance, confessing his weakness and asking for the counsel of the congregation when the elders failed to support his change initiative.

VCC presented a vivid example of how Korean cultural pressures constrain the way Korean pastors lead adaptive change. Bible study and cell groups prepared the congregation for the change, which occurred within the constraints of their cultural expectations. The centripetal force was so strong that pastor Lim had to choose to “play the cards dealt to him,” ensuring that ordained deacons were “promoted” to the eldership. The only other option would have been to wait until mature leaders emerged, but instead he “accepted the reality.” As he observed the state of the congregation, he concluded, “If new people were selected as elders at that time, the church would have had more problems.” His choice to honor their expectations compromised his initial plan to make a fresh start with new leadership. Because he chose to honor and respect cultural expectations, the church leadership structure stayed the same. As a result, he had to improvise to produce results with a heavy hand.

In this context, his change initiative (the expansion project) failed. The church grew, and the sanctuary overflowed during the Sunday service. The technical challenge was a shortage of space, but there was deeper issue. The pastor came up with a solution

²⁹⁷ Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Waterbrook Press, 2006). 130

and circulated it among the leaders. He thought that the solution accommodated all of the people's input, but he failed to observe how they related to him in private and public settings. A few alluded to some reservations about the money transfer from another area, but he failed to "listen to the song beneath the words." His authoritarian leadership appeared to put distance between the lay leaders and the pastor.

The elders felt buffeted on one side by their authoritarian pastor and on the other side by the congregation, to whose periodic approval they were subject as a result of the rotation system. In addition, the lack of trust between the pastor and the elders made genuine dialogue and partnership impossible. Pastor Lim could have helped the elders to take ownership of the agenda by jointly creating it with them. He could have protected the dissenting voices, which would have brought to light the competing priorities. If those conflicts had been surfaced, clarified, distributed, and processed before the voting, the outcome may have been different.

While his authoritarian style continued to bear heavily on the overall state of church, I believe that the problems also emanated from the cultural expectations and "the card dealt to him," which pushed him to use an authoritarian leadership style. It seems to have been a trade-off in order to move forward. Thus far, his leadership seems to have worked. The church has grown, and the budget has quadrupled. While Pastor Lee of EKPC challenged cultural constraints, resulting in some casualties, pastor Lim chose to honor the tradition of valuing order and seniority. After thirteen years, the ten original deacons who became elders are retiring in their turn, and a new generation of leaders is rising up to replace them. The pastor's choice to work within the cultural constraints has limited his room for maneuvering, but within those limitations, VCC is slowly moving

forward. He should be commended for his patience, tenacity, and faith, which have sustained him.

Pastor Hong of Bethel Baptist Church

Having arrived shortly after the departure of an authoritarian pastor, Pastor Hong did a good job of persevering through the tumultuous period that followed, during which he became the constant target of false accusations and antagonism. He faithfully taught the Word, working to establish a Christian culture of humility and grace that would heal the wounds of this divided congregation. He provided platforms like communication skills to prevent church meetings from becoming too emotional. He also encouraged collaboration during decision making processes. Yet, the change process did not go well.

Regarding his leadership role during the conflict, he could have been more sensitive to the congregation members' fear of loss and modulated the heat accordingly. As he focused on technical challenges, providing theological clarification on the issue of drinking, the deeper issues did not surface. When the people interpreted his theological position as refusing to honor their tradition of prohibiting drinking, strong resistance followed. The temperature went up further when he declined to reappoint their leaders as cell leaders. He was expected to search out their hidden feelings of discontent and demonstrate *injung*. But he failed to recognize that the real reason for their opposition was not simply theological differences – instead, it was founded on their fear of losing their position in the church as rightful core members of the congregation. When he questioned their cultural values, habits, customs, and assumptions, they got defensive and started to attack him in an effort to keep what they had. When they were not reappointed as cell leaders, it appears they felt ignored.

Pastor Hong could have affirmed and honored their faithfulness, loyalty, and sacrificial devotion to the church. He could have gently suggested the need to debate whether the church's prohibition of alcohol was essential to their faith journey together, and this approach might have helped the church become a healthier system. The prohibition on drinking was an important Korean Christian tradition. In the early years of Christianity in Korea, drinking was a major cause of the disintegration of family and social fabric. In order to build healthy churches, missionaries and early evangelists labeled drinking as a cardinal sin. Abstaining from drinking became one of the major signs of being born-again and one of the qualifications to be an officer in the early Korean churches. Even nowadays, the fact that one should not drink alcohol is "an accepted truth" among conservative Korean churches. Considering this historical background, Pastor Hong could have expressed understanding of this tradition, while also encouraging the members to debate whether that tradition should be preserved for the future of the church.

Still, it is unclear how receptive the congregation would have been to that approach in such a emotional situation, considering the immature and unruly reaction of the opposition group. Since the two factions were hostile to each other, allowing the debate to proceed might have made matters worse in an emotionally volatile situation. Prolonging the conflict might have endangered the relationship between the pastor and the other faction, who have become friendly to the pastor.

His further failure seemed to be, as he admitted, to have provoked people unnecessarily by not appointing members of the opposition to lead cell groups. Their opposition became fiercer, because they saw this as proof that pastor was taking side with

the other faction. It was apparent to them that there was incongruence between what the pastor preached (grace, being non-judgmental, forgiveness, love of different people) and what he did (being judgmental, labeling them as disloyal).

When Pastor Hong appeared not to respect their values, the pressure cooker could barely hold the heat. And his decision not to reappoint them to cell group leadership caused the temperature to rise to an unbearable degree. He failed to see how the anxiety was spreading among the people. He got into “catastrophic mode” and lost his “sense of direction.” As a result, he reacted rather than responding thoughtfully to their anxiety. Further, he lost his composure and “got into an argument” with them.

He could have been more culturally sensitive to their fear of “losing face.” When the vote results were made public, and the opposition group was soundly defeated by the other faction whose leader was a beer drinker, they “lost face.” He later admitted that if he had thought more politically about the cultural implications of the failure to be elected – loss of face and humiliation – he could have delayed the vote or nominated those who would be sure-bets.

Ultimately, the opposition faction left, and the culture of the church began to change. The new ministry style of Pastor Hong “freed” them from “their concerns over how to please their pastor.” While he made some mistakes in not staying connected, and in failing to respect their cultural values, he is to be commended for staying tenacious, and for his attitude of learning from his mistakes.

Pastor Sohn of Christ Methodist Church

CMC has the most risk-averse pastor among the eight participants. In the beginning, his personality served him well, helping him to navigate the expectations of a

congregation that had suffered greatly from conflict with their previous pastor. It took a long time for Pastor Sohn to build trust among the congregation. He is commended for his perseverance and faithfulness in meeting their needs and expectations.

CMC shows another example how Korean cultural elements constrain the way pastors lead change. While pastor Lim in VCC resorted to authoritarian leadership style in order to produce results in an anxious congregation system, pastor Sohn took a path of “timid follower” under the elders’ leading. Centripetal pressure was very strong, but the elders wanted change. CMC wanted to change because the elders had proposed to start a cell group right after Sohn arrived. The elders wanted the church to grow, but “at the rate they can stand.” Understandably, Sohn carefully stepped over the boundary, considering previous pastors encountered severe conflict with the congregation over the direction of the church. It appears though Sohn played safe for too long. Instead of waiting, he could have introduced small changes over time so that the congregation would be prepared for the future challenges. The congregation started to complain when the church was not growing.

Sohn stayed inside his boundary of authority as “a timid follower” too long. As a result, Sohn later had difficulty locating where his scope of the authority lay when time demanded it. When he said no to the repeated invitations made by the elders to discuss the newly introduced worship style with dissatisfied members, then he started to “dance on the edge” by pushing back and feeling the resistance. Sohn tested his boundary again when he asked to sign up for the position of assistant to the deacons. He was pushed back again when disgruntled members of the congregation triangulated with the elders.

The first change he introduced appeared to be too drastic for the congregation to handle. Change in worship content in wholesale fashion seemed to have overwhelmed them. Their resistance showed up as a form of attack on the theological integrity of the pastor. Incremental change paced over time, observing how people react and modulating the heat accordingly could have minimized their resistance.

I commend Sohn though for his firmness in drawing the line and refusing to pander to the excessive demands of habitual whiners. When he declined the elders' offer to broker repeated meetings on same issue, there was a tendency of triangulating among the elders and the people. The elders appeared to reject their responsibility of shared leadership. On the other hand, any discussion of change in the congregation, especially change that appeared favorable to new, young members, was bound to involve the congregation's past bad experience with their former pastor. The church members probably were not aware of the influence of those earlier experiences, which might have made the experience even more powerful. Clearly there was a high level of chronic anxiety. Rather than cutting off dialogue completely, Sohn could have used the meetings as opportunities. By bringing his own calmness to the anxious system, Sohn could have helped the congregation manage their own anxiety, enabled them to think more clearly about their options and developed a reasonable compromise.

When anxiety rose "like beehives were disturbed" among dissatisfied members, Sohn could have stayed with them while not succumbing to their anxiety. By overcoming his predisposition to avoid conflict and desire to keep the peace at all cost, Sohn could have used their emotional state to draw out the competing values, rather than avoid or ignore them. "Sense of unity and common understanding on where we should go" could

only have been drawn out through dialogue and shared destiny. Sohn could have led in asking how to preserve the congregation's important tradition of family church and what they can give up in order to progress. Sohn could have inspired people to see a better future by showing them what would happen if they gave up unessential elements of their traditions like things they could "feel, see and touch." By having honest dialogue and asking the congregation what their fears were, Sohn could have helped them to process their loss and pain.

I commend Sohn for starting personal relationships with elders, building trust with the elders and waiting patiently to "accumulate enough trust among people." Because the Korean culture values order and stability, it took a long time for him to gain the elders' trust and push them to change. To help the elders survive and make progress in an anxious system, it is desirable to provide them platforms like communication skills and emotional intelligence. There are resources available that Sohn could have utilized as the authority figure. For example, Sohn could have provided the focus and framing of the issue, rather than letting elders control the agenda.

Pastor Kim of Christ Baptist Church

CBC has changed steadily under the leadership of pastor Kim. His change leadership provides a model of how to stay and "dance on the edge of his boundary of authority." Unlike Pastor Sohn who stayed safe inside the boundary of people's expectation, Kim started his ministry by focusing the congregation's attention on the adaptive issues including competing priorities (building fund vs. mission fund), and the gap between espoused value (obeying the great commandment) and practice (no funding for missions).

The congregation resisted and pushed back when rumors surfaced of his misusing church funds without authorization. However, Kim did not fall back but remained on the edge. He learned to “honor their longing” to own their building while assuring those who were concerned with the lack of mission funds. While Kim kept emphasizing the importance of funding missions, he learned to feel the push and pull of resistance, the “give-and-take experience.” I commend Kim for being quick to discard his own “preconceived idea” and his willingness to listen to what the congregants were saying and understand what was important to them. As the congregants understood that he respected and valued their longings, resistance decreased. His successful change process also highlights the importance of securing loyal supporters. Without them, Kim would have had a difficult time dealing with people who tried to pull him in different directions.

When leading change in the area of the relationship between elders and deacons, Kim paced the work carefully in consideration of the sensitive issue. Kim did a good job by waiting patiently and repeatedly introducing the idea of delegation of authority over a long enough timeframe “to get themselves acclimated to new environment.” The elders almost “began to think this was actually their own idea” rather than the pastor’s. As the elders felt “comfortable to that idea,” resistance stopped.

I commend Kim for not resorting to a quick fix under the pressure. Instead he stayed focused on the mission. Even when an organization structures had been changed, the leadership mindset was “still controlled by old habit and values.” The leaders participated in work avoidance. Fear of failure and the young deacons’ hidden loyalty to the senior members prevented them from exercising their full potential and responsibility. “Those who were frustrated that things were not getting done on time” looked at the

pastor “for a quick solution” and started to demand an authoritarian leadership. Certain members of the congregation applied pressure to the pastor as the authority figure and expected him to treat it as technical problem that required a quick fix. But pastor Kim understood the nature of the problem and did not give in to their pressure to meet their expectations. Instead he gave the work back to the people so that they themselves could learn how to work together.

Kim understood the adaptive work is messy and would take time to process. In leading change from traditional monthly meetings to biblically functioning cell groups, he modulated the heat that is generated in adaptive work. He did this by making the program “tailored to their needs and situations,” not imposing a “borrowed cookie-cutter program.” They were “given flexibility” on the timeframe. He understood it would take time for the congregants to accept the new life style of Kingdom community. After 2 years, the meetings were still “sort of hybrid” between cell groups and previous regional meetings. People are moving “but very slowly.” Kim continues to encourage them, “believing that there will come certain moment when they will accept this change with open heart.”

Kim’s situation provides an important insight into dealing with conflicts in Korean culture. It is a cardinal sin in Korean culture to cause people to “lose face” by directly pointing out their faults,, especially the faults of older people. Directly confronting a person’s fault would cause the situation to turn into an emotional conflict, escalating the difficulty in reaching a resolution.

Kim’s experience of depression during this period of conflict provides a window through which we can see how anxiety spreads to the congregation system. People who

believed they would suffer loss if the building project proceeded as planned became anxious, which brought unbalance to the system. The anxiety intensified as the congregational meeting date approached. As the anxious congregants felt they could not control the outcome, the anxiety level shot up. Then “an unexplainable feeling” of mood swings rose among people and “washed over” Kim, making him “overwhelmed.” When the whole church was engulfed with a sudden mood change, Kim could not handle the anxiety and “got stressed out.” The whole church felt “burdened, overwhelmed.” Kim felt “the full load of that stress” over his head. The adaptive challenge brought unknown fear for the future and anxiety spread throughout the system like “ebb and flow.” Kim became “over-burdened, stressed out and sorrowful.” A practice of raising self-awareness and social-awareness could have helped him to cope with and recover quickly from the stress that accompanies adaptive process.

Pastor Kim had a good grasp on the nature of the adaptive change, which requires change in people’s attitude, values and customs in order to move forward. While Kim still needs to learn about the emotional system and how it works, overall his approach was sound. Learning has been taking place among the people. Kim understood that the adaptive process is a messy, non-linear process that requires patience and compassion. Most of all his change leadership was grounded on the grace of the gospel, continuously showing compassion and mercy to those who caused him to suffer the stress.

Pastor Han of Willow Bridge Community Church

WCC survived an initial bumpy road in the midst of a change process that led to a healthy, growing church. Even as the youngest in the congregation, Pastor Han showed the courage and decisiveness to maintain the course and to resist opponents’ attempt to

sabotage his efforts to make a healthy church. By responding quickly to the character assassination attempts with counter attacks, he successfully restrained what threatened the peace of the church and kept the direction of the church aligned with the purpose.

Initially, Pastor Han's leadership style and personality may have exacerbated the already volatile situation. But Han's strategic preparation coupled with a tenacious political astuteness helped him to persevere into success. Han stood his ground in the process of making "an overall surgery," not buckling under the pressure of the opposition's immature and irresponsible behavior which could have held the whole congregation hostage. It was Han's ability to think politically along with a steady influx of new members that saved him from the danger of being sidelined. Non-action was not an option. The emotional situation appeared to have been justified.

Han wondered though, if he were "more flexible and wiser," would his presence in the anxious times have had a calming influence on the disgruntled congregants' reactive behavior? While Han was convinced of the rightness of his cause, his survival instinct may have played a role, causing him to overreact with the rigid thinking of "us vs. them" and to opt for the defensive behavior of a quick fix. By asserting that he followed all needed procedures and did not need any more input nor discussion, Han might have shut the door to a constructive conversation that might have led to clarification of competing values, a prerequisite for adaptive change. Apparently there was no possibility for reconciliation "unless they change."

While there was a painful rupture in a holding environment, still it appears to have been inevitable, considering the emotionally charged state of the moment and inaction of "the silent majority." The conundrum of emotional whirlwind seemed have

left Han without leeway to maneuver and to experiment with new ways of doing church in a democratic way. Han was fighting for the survival of the church. Han survived “the agonizing furnace of testing,” and the church did not split.

I commend Han for sacrificing himself first. In EKPC and VCC, only the elders were subject to the confidence vote, but Pastor Han put himself in the confidence vote along with elders. This bold action likely led people to believe that their pastor was genuinely working for the good of the church, by risking his job in the vote.

Han’s take-charge personality and his ability to strategize with thorough preparation came across to the congregation as a traditional super-hero leader who can single-handedly rescue his “sheep” and deliver them to the Promised Land. Han represents an ideal Korean traditional leader who has all the answers, is ready for the emerging problems, and therefore can guard the order and harmony. In order for the church to continue to stay true to its mission and move forward, Han’s new challenge will be to foster an environment where people can “speak the unspeakable” so that a full range of perspectives can be examined and emerging competing values can be clarified.²⁹⁸

Another problem is the method Han used to guard the peace and the order of the church. If majority rule only functions to silence a grumbling minority, the majority is in danger of oversimplifying the issue at hand and the complexity of the issue might be obfuscated. Han needs to learn self reflection as he handles the difficulty of tolerating chaos and disorder, which are necessary ingredients for adaptive change. Furthermore, God’s community is operated not by the rules but by grace. In negotiating conflict,

²⁹⁸ Ronald A. Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Martin Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business Press, 2009). 82

Christian leadership requires that pastors treat opponents graciously, while also recognizing their own brokenness. While Han was frustrated with people who valued the status-quo, his position of strict adherence to the rules could also lead to preserving a new status-quo where an over-performing pastor and an under-performing “silent majority” would lead to a new disorder.²⁹⁹

But it seems Han’s leadership style has the support of “the silent majority.” Even though Han mentioned his congregation has a majority of members who are not comfortable with traditional Korean culture, it appears that the Korean culture of valuing order and harmony over progress still permeated in the congregation. While the process of change has a mixed result, WCC has become “healthy” and continues to grow under the leadership of pastor Han.

Pastor Sung of Korean Church of Hope

KCH has gone through a succession of changes culminating with moving to a new location under the leadership of Pastor Si-Min Sung. Sung provides a model of a traditional leadership style that motivates and inspires. Sung has the personality, the authority, and the power of leadership to influence his congregation to follow his vision.

Sung’s success in the change process partly derived from his informal authority. Sung earned enough trust so that he did not have to violate the expectations of the people while pushing through the agenda. Sung built up personal relationships, especially with those who had big interest in the status quo by contacting them regularly. Sung invested time and energy to amass a track record of successes and overwhelmed them spiritually. Sung supported the elders by helping them accomplish their own agenda. Sung strengthened shared values among two factions in the choir, and he “gave them a new

²⁹⁹ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 92

identity” of hope, energy and progress. He also successfully introduced a discipleship program in spite of the elders’ initial lukewarm response that “they’ve been there, done that.” By doing so, Sung led a transformation of their fatalistic mind-set into positive, optimistic attitude.

Sung patiently sold his ideas over a long period of time, bringing them along one small step at a time. This patience helped the congregation to adjust to the issue and neutralize their fears. Sung conducted complete stake-holders’ analysis before advancing an agenda. He further fostered an adaptive culture by teaching communication, leadership and conflict resolution skills. Sung protected and even encouraged dissenting voices in order to locate and address, if possible, any possible source of resistance. Most of all, Sung provided them “the reason for change” that they could “see, touch, smell, and feel.” Sung provided scientific data of cost-benefit analysis, appealing to the congregation’s *In-Jung* (intimate emotion) and showing the future that would materialize if they made the changes. Sung seemed to be resonant with the longing of the people and possessed a keen sense of when the issue became “ripe.” The congregation began to see that if they followed him, they would not lose. They saw that “the fruits of the change” would be “beneficial for them.”

I commend Sung for his special attention to keeping the peace of the church and assessing continuously how much people could handle the adaptive work. He paced and sequenced the process accordingly, with the help of elders and other opinion leaders. By assuring them “keeping the peace in the church” was his priority, Sung further gained their trust and muted potential resistance.

One drawback of the traditional leadership style is its failure to draw out the hidden conflicts clearly. However, in the case of the KCH congregation, it was persuaded that moving to a new location would be “practically profitable for all of them.” They were sold on the idea that no one will lose if they moved; there would be no conflict; utility bills would be reduced in half; the church would grow; there would be no sacrifice to make. Sung did not challenge them to face the possible loss, to let them reflect more fully on the nature of the losses, to accept these losses, and to move forward with the new limitations. Some people would have to lose. Still, a Korean culture that respects authority and values harmony might have silenced the voice of the hidden conflicting interests.

Pastor Um of Eden Presbyterian Church

EPC went through a successful adaptive change after a rude awakening about the church’s condition. Whether intended or not, the news of Pastor Um’s resignation had a shattering emotional effect on the congregation, and caused the congregation to become “psychologically ready” for the adaptive change. Pastor Um did a good job in his subsequent leadership role. Um’s leadership style changed after he decided to remain as pastor. While the threat of resignation will not work always, in order to put this complacent church in a change mode, Pastor Um’s leadership following the withdrawal of his resignation provided a model of how to lead an adaptive change.

Pastor Um’s growing awareness of self and of the systemic nature of the congregation that was the impetus for the change. I commend Um for fundamentally changing the way he related to the elders and other members. The system had worked fine until he offered his resignation. The church had been the way it was because people

wanted it that way. There was a collision between the over-functioning pastor and the elders, who wanted to maintain the status-quo among the under-functioning congregation. Um's upbringing predisposed him to shun those who opposed him, and he became reluctant to challenge elders.

The elders and older members were interested in maintaining established relationships, while younger and new members were more interested in results and organization. These differing interests were conflicting but had not surfaced until the announcement of pastor Um's possible departure. Managerial expertise could not solve the emerging adaptive issues. For a period of time, Um practiced work-avoidance, such as repeatedly hiring associate pastors and letting them handle the problem. But it came to a point when Um could no longer ignore the challenge. Without knowing how to respond, he decided to quit. In the ensuing emotional turmoil, the elders came up with quick fix to solve the disequilibrium by asking the pastor to stay. This technical problem needed a technical response, as far as the elders were concerned. I commend Pastor Um for recognizing that it was an adaptive challenge that required adaptive response.

The system began to change because the congregation learned to adapt. Elders who were over-dependent on the leadership and authority of the senior pastor learned how to have a "long talk with lay people" in order to arrive at shared vision instead of "dictating" to the congregation what should be done. Older people began to give up some of their traditions in order to accommodate younger people, even though they missed the early days when the congregation was "like a family." Other lay people were changing and learning too that they should "step up and bear certain level of responsibility of leadership."

Pastor Um learned a new leadership style: shared leadership. Um grew in self-awareness, with a growing understanding of how his upbringing affected how he led the congregation. He clearly saw how anxiety was spreading throughout the congregation upon the announcement of his resignation. Um stayed connected with the elders in the midst of rising anxiety, commending them for their sacrifice and hard work. He also comforted older members who would lose some traditions in order to make room for younger members in the new enlarging family of God. Instead of maintaining a quick fix, authoritarian approach as an over-functioning “father,” Um now motivated people to work out their issue among themselves.

After Um focused the congregation’s attention on the adaptive issue, he also inspired them to see the bright future that wait for them if they worked together. People started to take a long-term view of their spiritual journey and shared responsibility for the congregation’s future. Um’s encouragement and empathy made his congregation feel that they had a stake in the new direction of the church.

Recommendations

Recommendations for pastors who lead adaptive change in Korean congregation in America are divided into the four categories established in the Literature Review: adaptive leadership skills, conflict resolution skills, emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence. The first three categories will be discussed in terms of how to take advantage of the opportunities in the Korean culture and how to minimize the hindrances unique to Korean culture. The final category will be discussed in terms of the leadership style that best serves the adaptive change.

Recommendations for Pastors in the Area of Adaptive Leadership Skills

Recommendations in the area of adaptive leadership skills are divided into two categories. First, the recommendations are related to the nature of the adaptive challenge and the dangers that pastors will face in leading the change as authority figures. Second, the recommendations relate to the leadership skills needed in order to survive people's resistance and thrive in the adaptive process.

First, pastors who lead adaptive change should understand the difference between an adaptive challenge and a technical problem. As noted in the Literature Review, a technical problem can be resolved "through the application of authoritative expertise and through the organization's current structures, procedures, and ways of doing things."³⁰⁰ But adaptive challenges can only be addressed "through changes in people's priorities, beliefs, habits, and loyalties."³⁰¹ Without understanding the difference, pastors are in danger of misapplying a technical solution to an adaptive challenge and thus face continuing failure. The conflict in EKPC was an adaptive challenge that required change in the elders' beliefs that eldership is "a positional power," not "earned authority." Simply applying a technical solution, such as amending the church bylaws, was insufficient. The conflict in BBC was an adaptive challenge that required the opposition faction to change its belief that spirituality is simple adherence to tradition and performing duties like tithing and Sabbath keeping. Simple theological clarification is tantamount to a technical approach. The conflict in VCC was an adaptive challenge that required a change in people's priorities: a building expansion versus maintaining a fund for Sunday school. LCC needed a change in people's perception of the mission of the

³⁰⁰ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 19

³⁰¹ Ibid. 19

church and Christian fellowship. Conflicts in CMC, WCC and EPC were adaptive challenges that required shedding entrenched ways by the older members on the matters of worship style, Christian fellowship and church ownership.

Without understanding the nature of the adaptive challenge, pastors will apply simple technical solutions and quick fixes. Some examples of applying technical solutions are when EKPC amended their church bylaws to sort out under-performing elders; when BBC sought theological clarification for the issue of drinking alcohol; when WCC silenced dissenting voices by majority rules; and when EPC hired an assistant pastors repeatedly to fix problems. Each church sought a technical solution without going through the adaptive process of drawing out and processing the hidden competing interests. As a result, some churches suffered the critical losses of key leaders or sizable numbers of people because they failed to engage in “helping them to process the loss” which those changes would represent. These losses represented an important part of the story each congregation was telling themselves about who they were.

Pastors also have to understand the systemic nature of problems. As seen in figure 4, as an authority figure the pastor is under pressure to meet the cultural expectations of the Korean congregation. The pastors are situated in the node of the congregational system, and the culture-specific pressures that Korean pastors face result from the congregation’s expectations that their pastor preserve harmony, order, status quo and positional authorities. The circle is the boundary within which pastors are authorized to function. Beyond the circle, pastors begin to disappoint the expectations of the congregation and take risks. In order to survive and still engage in the change process, therefore, pastors have to “dance on the edge” of the authority circle line.

Koreans tend to want to keep their system intact, because the system has been working fine for them. And Korean churches look to the pastor as the authority figure to keep and protect the system as it is. For example, four elders in EKPC did not want their pastor to touch the bylaws so that their positional power might be preserved. People in VCC did not want their pastor to transfer funds to the church's construction. The opposition

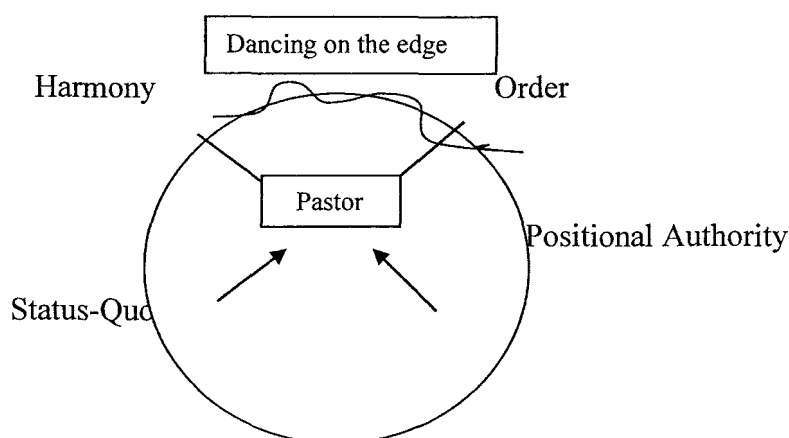


Figure 4 (modified for Korean cultural context)³⁰²

faction in BBC wanted their pastor to respect and keep their habits and traditions. These Korean churches all looked to their pastor to preserve their values, priorities, and entrenched ways. And when the congregation's expectations were not met, they started to attack the pastor.

These attacks usually took the form of personal attacks. Especially when people felt the pastor's position caused them to "lose face," the problem would turn into an emotional conflict, as seen in BBC. And when people become emotional, they generally opposed "for the sake of opposition." People would attack their pastors like "beehives that were disturbed," accusing them of being dictators, charging them of using church

³⁰² Ibid. 25

funds “without consent,” and using various acrimonious personal criticisms such as “hireling,” “heresy,” and “poor sermon.” What pastors need to understand in these circumstances is that these problems reflect structural and systemic issues and are not personal. Therefore, pastors need to be able to make a distinction between the roles they play and their selves. By so doing, pastors can gain emotional strength by ignoring the personal attacks their opponents hope will stymie their initiative.³⁰³

Second, pastors need a set of skills to navigate the hazardous terrain of the congregational system which goes through disequilibrium during difficult adaptive work. As noted in the Literature Review, dock skills are skills to keep the leaders and key stakeholders in the process of the adaptive work. During the adaptive process, pastors should stand on the dock to survey what constraints are impeding their progress. Only then can pastors can jump into the anxious water to be with the people and effectively help them by building platforms to survive the anxiety and make progress. In other words, pastors need to get out of the system to see “what is really going on” and then come back into the system to engage in the process. Dock skills include leadership inventories, system diagnostics, genograms, EQ self-work, evaluating “togetherness” factors, and reflection in action.³⁰⁴ With these skills, pastors can more clearly understand themselves, as well as other participants in the system, because they are taking time to reflect on the situation from the dock. Platforms they can then built to bring health into the system are, for example, leading with grace, leading with questions, communication skills, parliamentary rules, conflict resolution skills, emotional intelligence, and cultural intelligence.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ Ibid. 213

³⁰⁴ Ibid. 47

³⁰⁵ Leadership Foundations-Intersect (Covenant Seminary, Center for Ministry Leadership: 2009) 47

While on the dock, pastors should perform a stakeholders' analysis. A stakeholders' analysis will inform the location and the intensity of the resistance while helping pastors dance on the edge and continue to exercise adaptive leadership. When pastors make a stakeholders' analysis in Korean congregations, they should clarify the nature of these pressures and their individual interests with cultural connotations. The following is a checklist that pastors could consult in making a stakeholders' analysis:³⁰⁶

- the effects that the challenge will have on the church
- the resources the pastors control
- understanding who wants those resources,
- their desired outcome for the resolution,
- their commitments and beliefs,
- their loyalty and obligation to those outside their immediate group
- the loss that the change engenders
- any hidden alliances

As a part of the stakeholders' analysis, pastors must also ask themselves what are the conflicting views on the adaptive challenge? How does it look to each party? Who needs to learn what in order for progress to be made? What are the real stakes and interest of the pastor as well as other interest groups? Are there any underlying or hidden issues? What options are off the table and why? What would success look like to the parties?

In the eight churches included in this study, pastors naturally initiated the changes. In Korean culture, juniors or subordinates have been taught to obey and not question their seniors or superiors, especially in the public setting, lest seniors or

³⁰⁶ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 90

superiors “lose face” in front of others. But Korean churches still expect their pastor to meet their expectations. When their expectations are not met, misunderstanding on the real intent of the change and emotional conflict may follow. That is why when pastors initiate change in a Korean congregation, the following questions should be asked:³⁰⁷

What is the pastor’s position? What are the real stakes and interest of the pastor as well as other interest groups? What has the pastor contributed to the problem? What possible interpretations has the pastor been unwilling to consider? What does the pastor need to learn in order for progress to be made? What options has the pastor taken off the table and why? Is the pastor negotiating his interest in a Godly way?

As Pastor Lee reflected, he failed to consider any interpretation of the issue other than that the pastor initiated this conflict in order to dispose of uncooperative elders rather than preserve the health of the church. On the other hand, Pastor Sung owned up to his own interest in moving by confessing “I would like to do ministry in a church whose size is 500.” Sung’s honesty might have led people to have more confidence in their pastor. EPC understood with his notice of resignation that Pastor Um had no vested interest in changing the status quo, except for the health of the church. Pastor Han included himself in the rotation system so that he too would be subject to periodic confidence votes by the congregation along with elders. Even when the interests of the pastors are solely for the Kingdom, those interests should be negotiated in a Godly way so that the conflicts do not turn into emotional ones.

When pastors initiate change in a Korean congregation, they need to frame the issues in a way that resonates with the cultural expectations of the congregation. When

³⁰⁷ Class Handout (The Art and Practice of Leadership[DM807], 2009 Summer, Dr. Bob Burns and Dr. Sean Lucas)

Pastor Lee framed his proposed changes with the goal of raising healthy children and youth, he resonated with people, especially with parents of Sunday school children, whose number were growing rapidly. In most conservative Korean church settings, circulating *Yun-Pan-Jang* would have likely failed because the culture of honoring authority and harmony would shun a drastic measure such as a circulating letter against the will of the senior members. But in the case of EKPC, that cultural pressure was offset by the cultural expectation of providing a good education for the children and family fellowship. Pastor Lee saw their cultural expectation of good education in his stakeholders' analysis. On the other hand, pastor Lim neglected to have cultural consideration when he initiated the sanctuary expansion agenda. The opposition's plea to use the funds instead for hiring good teachers resonated with the people more powerfully.

Since the systemic pressure to honor the cultural expectations is strong in Korean churches, pastors should learn to take the heat while still holding steady for extended periods of time and dancing on the edge of their boundary of authority. Pastor Lee spent over five years dancing on the edge, suggesting related books, leading discussions on how to strengthen leadership and challenging the elders to search for a way to keep the church healthy. Pastor Kim "gently pushed them to try" new fellowship groups "over time" in order to overcome their resistance. Then Kim "pushed a little harder," when they became responsive. Pastor Sung made several small changes over the course of ten years to test their resistance before initiating the big change of moving to a new location. Pastors must find a way to know when and where the heat has been turned up too high and modulate the social pressures accordingly. I wonder what would have happened if Pastor Lee lowered the temperature of social anxiety in his congregation by suggesting

that the amendment for elders to be reconfirmed would be applicable only to the new elders who would be elected after the amendment date. I wonder what would have happened if Pastor Hong reappointed the opposition leaders as the cell group leaders and delayed the election of officers. And I wonder what if Pastor Han loosened the strict majority rule and showed a little respect to the voice of the unruly opposition.

In some cases where the pressure was too strong, some pastors chose to stay within the confines of their authority and honored their cultural expectations. For example, at VCC and CMC the deacons were “promoted” to the eldership. In other cases pastors had to handle the expectation that they produce results. In order to produce results within the cultural confines, Pastor Lim resorted to an authoritarian leadership style. On the other hand, Pastor Sohn played it safe as a “timid follower,” and as a result, he became the target of attack when church members became weary of the stagnant state of their congregation. And Pastor Lim said, in order to produce results it is “the reality” and a dilemma that Korean pastors find themselves in often, that they have to lead their congregations with an autocratic leadership style. What pastors should do in these high-pressure situations is develop an adaptive capacity among leaders first and then gradually develop the same capacity in whole congregation. To do so they would need to provide platforms that would help them to survive and make progress.

Pastors also should account for the possible inner conflict that congregants would experience in adaptive work in the Korean cultural context. The findings reveal how some church members were hesitant, passive or unknowingly became stumbling blocks to the change, even when they were committed to the change. Three elders in EKPC who were key, genuine supporters of their pastor’s initiative were buffeted by the cultural

force of cultural norms of respect for the elders and the order. Anxiety rose due to the conflict with their cultural norms; the very people who were authorized to preserve the order were circulating *Yun-Pan-Jang* to disturb the order and harmony. Deacons in KCC, who were expected to participate in the change process, became reluctant and passive when responsibilities were transferred from the elders to them. Even when the church was in danger of a split and turmoil, “good people” in WCC remained silent and looked to their pastor to restore the order.

According to Robert Kegan as noted in Literature Review, this hesitancy and passivity occurs when people who have hidden loyalties face a change that would violate their hidden values and assumptions. When conflict with these deeply rooted beliefs—respect for elders, order and harmony--were brought to light, fear of unknown and chaos followed, and WCC church members became passive.³⁰⁸ In order for congregants to continue in the adaptive work, pastors need to guide them through a process to bring their competing commitments to the surface, let them see how their own frame of reference filters and limits their desire for change, and finally help them manage the inner conflict that is preventing them from continuing to participate in the change process.

Pastors have to wait and see if the issue is “ripe,” that is, if people have a sense of urgency to weigh priorities and take losses.³⁰⁹ As seen in the churches of this study’s participants, people were ready to tackle the issue when they were in a learning mode due to a shattering experience in their congregation life. The psychologically battered members in EKPC agreed to drop the traditional, cherished early morning prayer

³⁰⁸ Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey, *Immunity to Change : How to Overcome It and Unlock Potential in Yourself and Your Organization*, Leadership for the Common Good (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business Press, 2009). 58

³⁰⁹ Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line : Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2002). 146

meetings and invest their energy on evening discipleship classes. VCC lost large members in short amount of time, but the church agreed to change the bylaws, adopt a rotation system and retire long time serving elders. When EPC experienced bewilderment when their long-term pastor resigned, the members agreed to accommodate the wishes of the new, younger members to adopt contemporary worship style.

Pastors should expand their informal authority by accomplishing early, small successes, like adding a few members and slowly changing the worship style. It is also important for pastors to build up their relationship capital, especially with members who have an interest in the challenges addressed by the adaptive situation. In the beginning of his ministry Pastor Sung built up his relationship with the elders by making a rule for himself to call them at least once a day. Pastor Kim cultivated a close relationship with an elder whom he had stood by and encouraged during a time of trouble. The elder became Kim's loyal supporter when conflict brewed over the building project. Pastor Sung established a track record of successes early on by a number of small victories. Changing curtains improved acoustics and as a result gained trust among influential members of the choir. Changing the church's name and successfully launching discipleship groups transformed people's attitude from fatalistic to hopeful. As a result, Sung enhanced his standing among the congregation. People in KCH began to think if they followed pastor Sung's leadership "they would not become losers." Pastor Sung made it a rule to support elders' initiatives that were not crucial to his ministry, whereby gaining their support in the times of conflict later in the change process. Pastor Lee modeled sacrifice by moving out of the pastor's residence into an apartment to make room for expansion. Pastor Han modeled dependability by including himself in the

rotation system in spite of the elders' discouragement. Pastor Kim patiently planted his ideas on delegation into the minds of his leaders. For four years he continuously was "throwing the idea, suggesting it briefly," until the elders almost began to think "this was actually their own idea rather than pastor's idea." After this period of time the elders felt comfortable with the idea and stopped resisting it.³¹⁰ These various small victories built up each pastor's informal authority, so that these pastors could lead an adaptive change without violating the expectations of the congregation.

Since the Korean culture is not hospitable to adaptive change, one of the ways to foster an adaptive culture is to make a practice of asking questions. By posing the right questions, pastors in this context gain a new understanding of the different perceptions that people have on the specific issues. Pastors could give read-made answers, but by engaging other leaders in finding the solution to the challenge, pastors help these leaders to focus on their positive contribution in the change process rather than the possible loss the leaders might suffer. The leaders will then feel that they are given the opportunity to participate and share the responsibility.³¹¹

Another skill pastors need to master is deciphering non-verbal modes of communication. The Korean, intimate, emotional feeling called "*Injung*" can only be understood in non-verbal modes of communication. In many cases, rather than the rational conflicts based on reason, it would be a breach of the assumed rule of respecting "*Injung*" that can only be understood in non-verbal mode of communication, which breaks the authority relationship. As illustrated in the conflict in VCC, Pastor Lim failed to catch the real meaning of the elders' and other leaders' responses. They respected his

³¹⁰ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 135

³¹¹ Ibid. 169

authority and were hesitant to reveal their real position. On the other hand, Pastor Lee recognized the stress signaled by three elders murmuring when facing conflicts with hidden loyalty. Pastors who lead change in Korean churches need to observe their context closely to see clues for what is really going on and to hear what the elders really are saying. Korean pastors must stay sensitive in observing others' facial and body expressions as well as physical positioning. Otherwise, people's polite reply that is cultural norm might later blindside them because they didn't understand what the people were truly feeling.

Recommendation in the Area of Conflict Resolution

Pastors should not be afraid of conflict, for it can draw out competing values and priorities. Conflict also can "stimulate productive dialogue, encourage creativity, promote helpful change."³¹² As seen in CMC, avoiding conflict in the name of peace for extended periods of time can foster a culture that becomes resistant to change, and then the pastor becomes the issue for the lack of progress in the church.

On the other hand, good conflict resolution skills are essential to assure that the holding environment not to rupture. In three unfortunate cases in the change processes studied, elders and some members left the churches, unable to stand the heat that was generated during the adaptive work. One of the ways in which adaptive work can proceed without boiling over is if pastors affirm that their relationship with the congregation grounds and guides the results they seek to achieve. Therefore in the beginning of the adaptive change, pastors should emphasize and recall their unity in Christ, reminding them of what they share in the Holy Spirit, "common identity, common destination,

³¹² Alfred Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2006). 30

common struggle, common provision and wisdom in Christ.”³¹³ In the stories found in this study, when these elders and members left their churches, cultural restraints had some impact on their leaving. However, a repeated focus on Christians’ unity in Christ in spite of the conflict may have lessened the intensity of the conflicts in three of churches studied. For example, KCH was able to preserve the system from rupturing by emphasizing unity in Christ and keeping an eye on the emerging disunity in the church. Pastor Um also made the unity of the church his priority in leading change in EPC. He pleaded to both the young and the old to “go together in our spiritual journey,” to “make mutual concession.”

Pastors have to understand there are three levels of disputes in conflicts as seen in the Literature Review: issues, positions and interests.³¹⁴ And they have to be familiarized with non-verbal modes of communication in order to understand these hidden motives, positions, and interests of each faction. In EKPC, the issue was whether to adopt the rotation system. Elders took their positions of pros or cons. Interests varied from the health of the church to shared power. In VCC the issue was whether to expand the sanctuary. Interests were growth, education of Sunday school and desire for shared leadership. In BBC the issue was whether drinking alcohol was sin. The positions were pros or cons. The interest of the opposition was the respect of tradition and recognition by the new pastor. In WCC, the issue was if the majority rule should silence the minority voice? The positions were pros or cons. The interest of the new pastor was that the church would become the army of God, well-disciplined and mission-oriented, while the interests of older members was that the church grow as a closely-knit family church.

³¹³ Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2004). 231

³¹⁴ Ibid. 234

Only when interests become clarified, then each side's interests can be negotiated honestly.

Each pastor interviewed found himself unwittingly to have become a party in the emerging conflicts. In the emotional culture, where rational reasoning is overtaken sometimes by the emotional reaction, pastors should model repentance, by willingly confessing their own sins and failures and also speak clearly the promise and power of the gospel of Christ. By modeling the life that is lived by grace and given in the gospel, pastors can lead the congregation to do the same.³¹⁵

When people adamantly opposed their pastor's plan to buy a house, Pastor Lim confessed his own failures and asked for counsel. As a result, in spite of his authoritarian leadership style, Lim was able to lead and thrive. While churches cannot be held hostage by immature members and must deal with them firmly, the way leaders treat those who oppose them reflects how they are treated by God, as shown in the case of Pastor Kim who was "ready always to run to and help" those who were against him "with prayer, blessing." Pastor Kim knew that while he was an ungodly, powerless sinner that Christ died for him to save him and lead him into the Kingdom.³¹⁶ Therefore, leaders should lead with humility based on God's mercy. Pastors are "called to lead with character."³¹⁷ And pastors cannot lead people where they have not been. Pastors need to grow their own character first, gaining more of a sense of who they are, knowing how sinful, fallen, inadequate they are. This humility will help open discussion and plan for forward movement.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ Poirier, *The Peacemaking Pastor : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict*. 46

³¹⁶ Romans 5:6-8

³¹⁷ Allender, *Leading with a Limp : Turning Your Struggles into Strengths*. 148

³¹⁸ Ibid. 152

As noted in Literature Review, Sande suggests basic steps called PAUSE, that incorporates biblical principles and truths in dealing with conflict: prepare with prayer, affirm relationships, understand interests, search for creative solutions, and evaluate options objectively and reasonably according to God's standards of justice. PAUSE serves as a map to navigate through the relational maze of stakeholders and will help conflicting parties to stay together and process the losses.³¹⁹

Recommendations in the Area of the Emotional Intelligence

Recommendations in the area of emotional intelligence are divided into three sub-categories. The first set of recommendations relate to how the emotional system works and how the pastors play a role in it. The second set of recommendations relate to how pastors can continue to work with people who become resistant due to the fear of loss and pain that might result during a change. And the third set of recommendations relates to how pastors can stay calm and continue God's kingdom mission in spite of the pressure of people who oppose the change.

How the Emotional System Works

First, pastors should understand that when disequilibrium takes place in the midst of adaptive work, anxiety rises and rocks "the emotional boat" of the congregation. When a dispute in the session halted construction, and the *Yun-Pan-Jang* was circulated to call an emergency congregational meeting in order to adopt a rotation system so that certain session members might be removed, anxiety rose rapidly in EKPC. At VCC, anxiety spread across the congregation when at the congregational meeting, an autocratic pastor spearheaded the agenda of expanding sanctuary, but later it was discovered that other cherished funds would be diverted to cover the cost of the expansion. Turbulent waves of

³¹⁹ Sande, *The Peacemaker : A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*. 175

anxiety swept across BBC's congregation when what was regarded as a taboo for "Godly" Christians was reinterpreted as acceptable by the new pastor and there were perceptions among the opposing faction of favoritism and incongruity in the pastor's conduct. When long-lulled CMC made a wholesale change of their Sunday worship format, murmuring began to spread "like beehives were disturbed." In LCC, when the new pastor demanded part of the building fund should be transferred to the mission fund, false rumors began to spread about the true intent of the pastor and anxiety began to rise. When an influx of new members began to change the composition of WCC, and anonymous letters started circulating with a groundless accusation against the pastor, anxiety rose rapidly. When a mission project which was planned years ago by KCH was in danger of being shelved and people began to be divided on the issue, anxiety "rose like swarm of bees whose nest were stirred." When confidential information of their long term pastor's intent to search for a new ministry was leaked, the news set off an alarm bell among the congregation of EPC and anxiety spread like fire in a dry prairie.

According to Peter L. Steinke, anxiety is

not necessarily harmful to relationship system...anxiety has the potential to transform relationship beneficially. When intense anxiety explodes into reactive behaviors and is mutually reinforced, however, a vicious circle forms. A person becomes anxious. Feeling insecure, the person reacts. In the face of the initial person's anxious reactivity, a second person becomes anxious and reactive. If anxious reactivity continues to be fed in both directions, it is reinforced and maintained. The individuals become unbending.once inflexible, people polarize. But polarity itself is anxiety-producing. The vicious circle is in place: anxiety-reactivity-rigidity-polarity-more anxiety. As long as there is a mutual 'charge', the circuitry operates.³²⁰

Pastor Kim's experience at LCC doing adaptive work personifies this process.

Kim felt "an unexplainable feeling of mood swings among people," and "the mood of

³²⁰ Peter L. Steinke, *How Your Church Family Works : Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* (Herndon, Va.: Alban Institute, 2006). 25-26

congregation itself turned cold.” It was “sudden change.” Kim could feel people’s hearts were closed. He felt “the full load of that stress over my head.”

This phenomenon occurs because adaptive challenge brings unknown fear for the future. The chaos during the disequilibrium stage spreads anxiety throughout the system. Everyone’s anxiety becomes “locked onto the system,” including the pastor who is part of the system. And everyone “stays stuck in a circular flow.”³²¹ In the midst of rising anxiety, many pastors wonder how they can stay on to their mission of doing the right thing, as leaders of the congregation. Since pastors themselves are the part of the living system, first they need to understand “a set of observable rules”³²² by which the system plays.

Pastors should understand, first, in a living system, “whenever a problem is chronic, just about everyone has a part to play in keeping it going.”³²³ Second, the people’s and the pastor’s emotional maturity work in tandem with the level of anxiety and tension which spread in the system.³²⁴ Third, there are two opposing forces that interact to each other and affect the pastor who leads the change: individuality and togetherness.³²⁵ When anxiety becomes chronic, patterns of symptomatic behaviors occur: conflict, distancing, over-functioning,/under-functioning reciprocity and projection onto a third person.

An example of the over-functioning/under-functioning pattern can be found in VCC. Arriving at a church that had been controlled by two long-time elders, Pastor Lim started with an authoritarian leadership style. This style looked natural because when the

³²¹ Ibid. 27

³²² Jim Herrington, R. Robert Creech, and Trisha Taylor, *The Leader's Journey : Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003). 30

³²³ Ibid. 30

³²⁴ Ibid. 33

³²⁵ Ibid. 40

two elders were forced out, Pastor Lim took their place as the center of the power. People granted that authority and allowed him to use that leadership style as long as he met their needs. Lim was over-performing and people were under-performing. As a result, the mindless cycle of activities filled the church calendar. This incident illustrates how Lim played a role in keeping things in balance for the VCC congregation system.

Other various patterns of symptomatic behaviors were manifested in the churches studied. There were continuing conflicts among elders in EKPC, between elders and lay people in VCC and between two factions in KCH. The opposing faction members were distancing themselves from the new pastor at BBC. Pastors were over-functioning, and people were under-functioning in VCC and EPC. People became reactive rather than responsive (BBC), repeatedly chose order over progress (CMC), stayed as the “silent majority” in the face of challenges (WCC), asked for a quick fix to the problem (EPC).

Some pastors interviewed responded in thoughtful ways during these emotional situations, while other pastors were less constructive. In an emotional situation where the elders accused him of attempting to be a dictator in front of whole congregation, Pastor Lee did not react to that accusation emotionally. While an elder was speaking, Lee stayed calm, “not saying a word and waiting until he finished his speech.” While caught in the middle of a crossfire between two opposing factions over the mission project, Pastor Sung did not make a hasty move, but “let the conflict to take its course to find out what the real issue was.”

Some other pastors had a difficult time dealing with the emotional situations. Pastor Lim focused on winning an argument with an unexpected dissenter rather than focusing on the larger point of the issue. In the midst of a heated dispute on whether

drinking alcohol is acceptable or not, Pastor Hong “lost a sense of direction” and “got into an argument with one of opposition leaders” in the hallway. When older members rose “like swarm of bees whose beehives were disturbed” over the new worship style, Pastor Sohn became defensive and kept his distance from them. For his first three years, Pastor Kim would have an upset stomach on days when he had a board meeting. He occasionally felt “stressed out,” with his blood pressure rising and with a desperate urge to leave the ministry. Pastor Han displayed an all-or-nothing thinking pattern of “if they don’t leave, I will have to leave,” treating the volatile situation as a “life or death situation.” Pastor Um used to have allergic reactions to certain people; he would become angry, and the anger would become “imaginative and became exaggerated out of proportion, out of his control.”

How pastors can continue to work with people

Second, pastors should learn to stay with the people who are going through disequilibrium due to the fear of loss and pain in the process of adaptive work. This means working to understand and feel what congregants are going through and listening to the stories that they are telling to themselves. This ability to feel empathy is especially important in a Korean congregation where *In-Jung* is highly valued. The unique human feeling called *In-Jung* in Korean culture is intimate feeling, as seen in the Literature Review, which is “based on mutual dependence and engenders usually favorite treatment”³²⁶ to one another. Therefore, leaders who neglect this intimate feeling towards their subordinates face strong negative reactions from their subordinates. In the case of three churches where holding environments were ruptured, older members felt they were

³²⁶ Guk Je Han Kook Hak Hoe, *Han guk munhwa wa Han gugin* (Seoul: Sa kye jul, 1998), 164

not shown *In-Jung* by their new pastors. These members expected their pastor to empathize with them on what they were saying to themselves.

Four elders at EKPC told themselves the narrative that “God ordained” them as elders, and as “a servant of God” they were overseers of the Korean immigrant church along with the pastor; they were “prayer warriors” who had built the church through sacrifice, prayer and tears; they were faithful and did not leave when church was in trouble; they were supportive to their new pastor as co-leaders; they deserved the respect of the members; the church and their ministry were their life, as they were living as immigrants in an adopted country. Considering even the possibility of being removed from the session membership due to the suggested rotation system would devastate them and take away a crucial element of their identity as faithful elders in the house of God.

The opposition members at BBC told themselves that they had served the church faithfully to keep it pure and holy, abstained from drinking and smoking, driven 40 miles every morning to attend prayer meetings, had been loyal to their pastor as the one appointed by God, kept the Sabbath faithfully, tithed as the people of God and thus expected the new pastor to honor their tradition and devotion.

The opposition group at WCC told themselves that they sacrificed to build a family church that emphasized fellowship among God’s family members. They cared for and helped one another settle down in an adopted country. When the new pastor ignored their wishes and wanted to build an “army of God” and focus on mission, they interpreted his actions as an assault on their idealized church.

Therefore pastors who lead adaptive change have to learn to stay with people who go through disequilibrium so that their people can see how they as pastors have “walked

in their shoes,” understand what their losses look like, and are helping them process the loss they had to suffer. Pastor Um stayed with the elders and older members in the midst of rising anxiety by remembering and praising them for their labor of love, prayer and devotion. Um repeatedly made it clear that he understood the importance of honoring memories and traditions of EPC, but he also saw the need to adapt to the church’s changing environment. Um recognized that some old-timers “missed early days when congregation was small and he had enough time to care for them personally in big and small family matters,” “like a family member.” While visiting older members and sharing old memories, Um encouraged them to accept the new reality while keeping the good memories and traditions.

How pastors can stay calm and continue God’s kingdom mission

Third, pastors should learn to stay calm, respond thoughtfully, and hold on to their beliefs and missions in the midst of anxiety that is generated during the process of adaptive work. Learning to think systems means learning to ask and answer two questions: “What is my role in keeping this problem in place?” and “How can I change my role?”³²⁷ Learning took place in the case of Pastor Um. As he “began to reflect” on the ways he reacted to the difficult people, Um was able to monitor his thinking patterns and feelings, noting where he was guessing, imagining, exaggerating or angry. As a result, Um learned where, with whom, in what circumstances and in what ways he became anxious and started to change his thinking patterns.

³²⁷ Herrington, Creech, and Taylor, *The Leader's Journey : Accepting the Call to Personal and Congregational Transformation*. 50

Herrington compared changing thinking patterns to “taping over cassette tape.” It takes “practice and repeated internal correction.”³²⁸ After suffering repeated upset stomachs during session meetings, Pastor Kim started practicing a new way of thinking before the meeting, which resulted in less stress. Another way to help change a thinking pattern is to identify faulty thinking and ask friends to point it out when they see it.

If pastors understand how their family relationships and critical incidents in their life influenced and shaped them, they can enhance their self-awareness on why they lead a certain way in change process. Pastor Han, a former Army captain who grew up “alone” without much support from other family members, found himself having a penchant for bearing “the heavy burden” of decision-making alone. Pastor Hong found his upbringing influenced how he was leading the congregation. Growing up in a dysfunctional family as the oldest, Hong felt the burden and expectation that he would solve the family problems, but under this expectation, he instead started “ignoring the problems,” staying “indifferent to what was happening in the family.” Growing up feeling ignored in his family, Pastor Sohn believes his birth order “predisposed” him to “favor stability over challenge.” Looking back, Pastor Um realized that he feared that he might not please his parents, and as a pastor he “had hard time to confront elders.” Accounting for their family history helps pastors reflect, and as a result, they can modify their default reactions to recurring incidents during adaptive work and become a calm leader.

Pastors need to ask to themselves what changes they are pursuing and what would happen if they actually produce those changes.³²⁹ Without knowing what is right, pastors

³²⁸ Ibid. 76

³²⁹ Ibid. 131

cannot do the right thing. Leaders cannot take people where they have not been. All adaptive changes in churches are closely related to the kingdom vision of bringing people to maturity in Christ and enlarging Christ's kingdom. And in order to know and do the right thing, pastors have to follow in the footsteps of Jesus who knew and did the right thing. Jesus practiced various spiritual disciplines such as preaching, praying, fasting, reading the Scriptures, participating in a faith community, retreating for times of solitude, worshipping celebrating and serving the needy. Jesus' example shows how pastors too should follow a set of disciplines. Spiritual disciplines help pastors "build our spiritual muscles so that when life requires more of us, we can rise to the task."³³⁰ Herrington continues,

The pastor who has faced his own fear of failure in times of solitude is less afraid when a family threatens to leave the church. The minister who has discerned the will of God for her church through soul-searching prayer is less at the mercy of others' agendas...Regular practice of a variety of spiritual disciplines also helps us be the kind of leader we want to be: mature, well-differentiated, and focused.³³¹

In addition to practicing spiritual disciplines, pastors should join a learning community that provides them the space for practicing these new habits and subsequent reflections. Pastor Lim contacted several pastors for help when he faced "the most serious resistance.... spiritual resistance against pastor's authority." Pastor Hong confessed the need to have a mentoring relationship in the times of distress, "someone who had gone through such a situation before and could give me an advice..... encouragement to do what I thought was right." In the interviews, all the participants agreed that a community of the pastors needs to support its members, but they also were unclear on the nature of their community and how their community could help them in leading a change.

³³⁰ Ibid. 133

³³¹ Ibid. 131

As noted in Literature Review, Herrington suggests following the model of Jesus' ministry. Pastors should take the iterative process of "information, practice, and reflection."³³² Pastors should first master basic concepts about the emotional system: differentiation of self, togetherness force, anxiety, triangulation, over-functioning, family of origin, and thinking systems, watching process. Second, they can help one another to practice new behavior.³³³ Third, after pastors returned from their real ministry situation, they should debrief and reflect on what they have learned. This continuous cycle of mastering concepts, engaging in new behavior, reflecting on what they have learned within the community of grace and truth will lead them to establish a new default setting in their relationships, so that adaptive work can proceed effectively.³³⁴ Practicing genuine humility and vulnerability among pastors in a Korean culture where pastors are expected to know all the answers and "find the answer by prayer" will not be easy. Pastors may also have a fear of "losing face" in front of their fellow pastors. Since immigrant churches are clustered in major metropolitan cities, competition may also eclipse pastors' desire to be honest and learn from each other. In order to help pastors start the community, they might need to find someone who models vulnerability, has a track record of meaningful, long-term relationships where transformation took place, and is willing to coach them in learning new behavior.

Also, if pastors form a community of core key leaders in their own congregations, this community will benefit the church in going through the disequilibrium of change. When lay leaders and the pastor together become engaged in the cycle of mastering a concept through practice and reflection, these leaders may be willing and able to share

³³² Ibid. 145

³³³ Ibid. 147

³³⁴ Ibid. 145

the burden and pressure that results from the disequilibrium that occurs in the process of change. In EKPC, when anxiety rose, three elders who were supporting the pastor's initiative started to vacillate due to the cultural pressure. Having a community with the pastor and other leaders would have lessened their anxiety and fear because they would have learned the concepts and practiced together before initiating the change. The same applies to VCC, where elders could not withstand the pressure of the system when anxiety rose. The elders contributed to the failure to adopt the renovation agenda and colluded with other people.

Recommendations in the Area of Cultural Intelligence

I found that the congregations where interviewees served had a mixture of old and new values and attitudes. While Pastor Han at WCC and Pastor Lee of EKPC asserted that Korean cultural values did not interfere in exercising their leadership, it is clear that Korean cultural values still exerted their influence on how they lead adaptive changes. At EKPC, when three elders suddenly changed their position in the face of older elders' accusations that they disrespected their seniors, their flip-flop forced Pastor Lee to resort to a congregational vote for a quick solution. The passivity of the "silent majority" in the face of a serious conflict between the pastor and older members prompted Pastor Han to the rigid adherence to the rules, illustrating the Korean cultural value of harmony over progress. In varying degrees, how to manage unique Korean cultural markers was an important factor for all eight pastors in leading adaptive change effectively. Such markers included emphasizing relationships over goals (WCC, EPC), feeling over reason (BBC, KCH), long-term perspectives over short-term perspectives (LCC), stability and harmony over results (WCC, CMC), respect for authority figures (EKPC, VCC, EPC), status-

conscious (EKPC, VCC) and the preference for indirect communication (VCC, KCH). Therefore pastors who lead adaptive change in a Korean congregation must understand how the characteristics of Korean cultural values are manifest in their churches, to what degree they are manifest and then take those traits into consideration when mapping out a change strategy. Resulting understanding will also inform them what kind of leadership style will best serve the change process.

Further, pastors who plan to lead adaptive change in particular Korean congregation in America should understand before-hand how much traditional Korean culture has permeated the congregation, and how much American culture is mixed and the make-up and composition of the congregation in cultural background. This will determine “its own particular sources of cohesion and limits of tolerance for productive distress” and “the range of productive discomfort zone (how much they value their tradition of honoring harmony and order over progress), and its own distinctive methods of modulating distress and restoring equilibrium- its unique symptoms of distress and default habits of response, its cultural history of problem-solving.”³³⁵ And she needs to assess which aspects of it facilitate change and which hinders.

The advantages to pastors leading adaptive change in Korean congregation include shared language, shared purposes, lateral bonds of affection, trust, and camaraderie, and vertical bonds of trust in authority figures. The authority structure provides strong bonds of cohesion and can offset the tension that surfaces during the process of adaptive work. Unique characteristic of human feeling “Injung”, while irrational, may be a very powerful glue that bind the people together. On the other hand,

³³⁵ Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994). 259

challenge will arise since the Korean culture values status, security, and order over progress, Pastors will face stronger expectation from the congregation to preserve calm, which does not foster change. If a pastor decided the issue on their own and resolved it as a strong authority person is expected to do, then they would become the issue, deflecting attention to their own behavior and choices rather than to the real work of adaptive change.³³⁶

Furthermore it would be hard for pastors to defend “trouble makers” who raise hard questions and generate distress, due to the pointing internal contradictions of the congregation that values harmony and order.

Pastors leading change also have to understand that in a feeling-oriented culture, people have to “feel” that the change is necessary. The four opposing elders at EKPC and the opposition members at BBC and WCC were provided with rational reasons for the change, including biblical principles and denominational positions. But their emotional side could not accept the reason for change. John Kotter said, “People are sensitive to the emotions” that undermine or facilitate change. The job of change leaders is therefore to “find a way to reduce or enhance those feeling.” Critical thinking alone will not do.³³⁷ As Pastor Sung said, pastors need to provide their congregations “the reason for change—reason that they can see, touch, smell, and feel.” Like any culture, the Korean culture wants their pastors to fulfill their expectations for a leader. Pastors leading change in a Korean congregation should therefore ask themselves whether or not they are tempted to fulfill the Korean cultural notion of leadership rather than the biblical image of

³³⁶ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 150

³³⁷ John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change : Real-Life Stories of How People Change Their Organizations* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 2002). 180

leadership. Pastors must be aware of the image that they hold as leaders of their congregations³³⁸ so that their desire as members of the same culture -- not “to lose” face and to insist “positional authority” -- will not hinder their own change leadership. Honest conversations on this aspect of the Korean community of grace and truth might help them to name, confront and process their own fear of “losing face” as an authority figure.

Congregations that interviewees served appeared to lack some of the characteristics of an adaptive culture that Heifetz has listed,³³⁹ and some congregations seemed to have too low a capacity to handle the stress that accompanies adaptive work. Giving work back to the people may overwhelm them. In the short run, pastors have to lead within the system’s current capacity to stand the stress that results from adaptive work. It seems inevitable to use autocratic leadership style in those circumstances. VCC pastor was autocratic in imposing new rules and system—retiring elders, EKPC pastor dropped Early Morning Prayer meeting for discipleship meeting in the evening. Pastor Um used autocratic leadership style in beginning years of planting church. But in the long run, they must intentionally work to foster an adaptive culture which can stand the heat generated during times of adaptive work, that would disturb the unity of the congregation, by building “greater trust in the leadership and organizational structure, strengthening shared values, and fostering learning and creativity”.³⁴⁰

As seen in VCC, WCC, and KCH, these pastors were tempted to continuously use a traditional leadership style that emphasized their leader’s personality and authority to influence the congregation to follow their vision. Pastor Lim who was result-oriented

³³⁸ Ron Heifetz and associates, quoted in RightPath.(2008, Covenant Theological Seminary, Center for Ministry Leadership), 7

³³⁹ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 101

³⁴⁰ Heifetz, *Leadership without Easy Answers*. 128

wouldn't let elders "drag" his decision making authority. Pastor Han mentioned about the lonely job of the leadership which was to "find the answer to the problems by prayer," because congregation "neither feel much responsibility", "nor have much ability", "nor think much." In *Intentional Church*, Randy Pope related his experience of going through the process of consulting elders in making decision on the direction of the church, and the resulting frustration "that more had been lost than gained in the process." He came to a conclusion that it would be best that he himself "goes to the mountain to seek the voice of God."³⁴¹ Autocratic leadership appeared efficient and "wise from the perspective of time stewardship."³⁴²

While it might be efficient and produce results in the short term, there are negative consequences of the autocratic leadership. The perception among congregation that "Eden Presbyterian church is Pastor Um's church" prevented "trouble makers" who have different ideas from being heard, in order to move forward in the changing environment. Pastor Lim's personal matters became "intense focus among people" and even in the great crisis of his ministry (one elder's spiritual resistance against his authority), people stayed passive, thinking "pastor has all the answers".

What makes the argument for traditional leadership style even in authoritarian culture less tenable, is that competing priorities that generate the tension and conflict in the congregations are not necessarily about moral issues. The issues are in many cases more situational than ethical. The issues of which worship style to adopt, whether to move or not are not in many cases clear-cut. Whether to focus on missions or on building a sanctuary, fellowship or mission in the faith journey of a congregation are not

³⁴¹ Randy Pope, *The Intentional Church : Moving from Church Success to Community Transformation*, Rev. and expanded. ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2006). E-book, ch 3, location 857 of 3540.

³⁴² Ibid. ch3, location 857 of 3540.

necessarily mutually exclusive. As pastor Sung suggested it would be improper in these cases to invoke “God’s will.”

Another problem of this traditional leadership style is that it provides its own answer. As a result, this method of traditional leadership is unable to clarify relevant conflicts which are “essential” when a church is falling short of its aspiration.³⁴³ Nor does it provide the context for processing the loss and pain in order to make progress. It may not be clear even when results (changes) were produced, if learning has taken place. The strategic challenge is how skillfully the pastors can use traditional leadership styles to produce results while developing adaptive capacities through various means noted in the Literature Review.³⁴⁴

Recommendations for Further Research

One particular area related to adaptive change in the Korean cultural context was beyond the scope of this research but worthy of further investigation. Further research is necessary to gain insight into the perspective of lay leaders such as sessions, elders’ boards or church councils. This research could provide further insight and useful evaluation with regard to leading adaptive change in Korean congregations in America. With varying degrees of power relationships with their pastor, the lay leaders’ experience of having participated in leading adaptive change along with the pastor could identify, from a different perspective, the strengths and weaknesses of specific approaches that the pastor has used in leading adaptive change in Korean congregation.

Another area to explore would be how the adaptive challenge in Korean speaking congregation affected the pastors’ family, especially pastors’ children. As noted, there

³⁴³ Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership : Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. 150

³⁴⁴ Ibid. 165

would be conflicts surfacing during the adaptive work, which would cause stress on the family life of the pastor who leads the adaptive change. A study on this topic would help the Korean pastors who lead adaptive change to map the strategy on how to guard the spiritual welfare of their family in the midst of intense adaptive work.

Final Words

The Korean immigrant congregations that were the focus of this study demonstrated the challenges of leading adaptive change in a Korean cultural context. Pastors had to adapt their leadership styles to different levels of resilience, timeframes, and expectations of their unique Korean cultural contexts. However, adaptive changes were made. Some churches changed quickly while others changed slowly. It is the desire of this researcher that the application of the conclusions and recommendations drawn from this study will benefit the Korean immigrant churches in America as well as Christ's universal church. May Christ grant grace and wisdom to these crucial pastors who respond with adaptive leadership to the frequent challenges facing their churches and effectively preserve the spiritual health and vitality of the universal church.

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