

Organizational Culture as it Relates to Effective Leadership

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Organizational Culture

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The church has been a significant cornerstone for African American communities over the years. My church culture had a congregation that once boasted of governmental officials, civil rights icons, and professionals in the field of education and business. The church helped mold the civic and religious characters of Atlanta. From the mid-1960s, a civil rights icon Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery was the senior Pastor of my church. Rev. Lowery was a pastor and civil rights leader who used the pulpit to preach the word of God and to encourage and educate the congregation on political issues. Some of the most progressive and aggressive movements for racial equality were engendered by and through Central. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was birth out of the church. Central has a storied history and continues its legacy of religious, civic, moral, and educational leadership. I am a member of this well-known church in Southeast Atlanta, surrounded by the Atlanta University Center. The culture is unique and transforming. It was lead by Dr. Lowery, who had a charismatic servant leadership style of leadership. Several pastors led the church with different dynamic leadership styles. The membership was 800 + made up of middle class and upper-middle-class African Americans.

My church culture is nested in a broader culture – the United Methodist Church, notably the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church – the Atlanta College Park district in Southwest Atlanta, Georgia. The culture of my church is deep, wide, complex, and multigenerational. Members are encouraged to worship in ways that many Africans found to be

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similar to African worship patterns, with enthusiastic singing, clapping, dancing, and even spirit-possession (shouting). The site of the church has now become an issue for the membership. The church's location downtown Atlanta at the corner of Northside Drive and Mitchell Street is in the ideal location for the sports enthusiast, shopping districts and governmental buildings, and major highways. Membership has dwindled to a faithful few that continue to support the spiritual and fiduciary obligations of the church. The members no longer live in the city or community.

Regentrification has destroyed affordable housing for African American citizens in the city. A prominent college located across the street from the church has recently closed its doors. All leaders agreed that the culture of the church was a very traditional African American church with a family atmosphere that operated from a 19th-century concept during the civil rights era. Home of Post Civil Rights! The older members of the church used the term "We have always done it this way" or "We have been done it this way since Dr. Lowery was the pastor here." My church is a church in transition. We are learning to be team players. The transition period for the church and the members is ongoing.

Leaders of the church are learning to move from an individual or clique attitude to learning function as a team that began under the leadership of two effective leaders. The church culture and belief system were that a woman did not belong in the pulpit as the preacher. The first African American female Pastor came to serve a term of one year. Some internal tensions emerged with the middle-class membership about women's participation in the church. The Pastor's leadership style was in a participative manner. She was caring and firm. She used the contingent reward; she rewarded followers when they perform as expected. (Goethals et al., 2017) She was concerned about the needs of others. During her tenure, she created a system to

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address the needs of the congregation during grief. She also encouraged and grew the Pastor's Bible studies class and other educational activities by inviting and funding meals for the events. During the onboarding process with the new Pastor, the following themes came forward from the honest and real assessment of the operations of the church from the leaders. The leader recognized the need for change in our organizational structure. The decline in membership, participation from members, and offering opportunities for members to serve for several years were the top issues of discussion. The external adaptation and internal integration issues discussed with the leaders of the church in a church council meeting were the present location of the church and what is the mission of the church, goals, unit of measurement, and correcting and repairing. Due to the backward' thinking of the congregation and leaders that a female did not belong in the pulpit, the Pastor's ministry had more negative responses than positive.

As we moved forward with assessing and reassessing our procedures and establishing lines of communication, the United Methodist Church moved our Pastor. Another pastor was assigned to us who thankfully, has excellent leadership skills and knowledge as well. We conducted the onboarding process, and the same theme regarding organizational culture and structure was present. During my first meeting with the Pastor, we discussed the external and internal issues of the church. He indicated that he would be meeting with all chairs of teams to open the line of communication and that he would be attending all team meetings. The external issue on whether the church would remain on the present site for the church would be discussed at church council. The Pastor proposed a task force convene to research our option for staying or moving from our current location. His leadership brought a renewed spirit to the members; he was a visionary leader. His leadership style was that of Theory X. He assumed and believed that

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people are internally motivated, like their work, and willing to accept responsibility. However, his leadership style would change according to the situation at hand. On many occasions, his leadership would be directive; he was confident and decisive. His vision of teams was easy. The teams were already in place. He began by addressing issues of the church with the congregation and leaders. At the church council meeting, the Pastor initiated the rational decision-making process model. In the first step, He used the participatory approach addressing the leadership team about the problem areas of the church. He began by asking all leaders, "do you know your vision for the church, why are you here? The leaders replied, "yes, we do have a vision statement for our church, members replied, "yes, but we do not know what it means." We do know the mission of the church from the United Methodist Church, "making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." The Pastor asked, "does the church does have a purpose statement?" Schien states that consensus on the core mission and vision does not automatically guarantee the key members of the organization will have common goals or that the various subcultures (groups) will be aligned to fulfill the mission. Also, Schein iterates that subcultures in an organization may be unwittingly working at cross purpose to some elements of the vision. The vision is often not articulated well. (Schein, 2017) In the second step, the leader introduced his intentions by stating that "Every system is perfectly designed to get the result that it does." (Deming, 2013) The church already has systems in place, such as two Bible Study classes that meet weekly; Not By Bread Alone ministry that convened on Wednesday monthly, a food pantry, clothes closet that went from one Wednesday a month to two Wednesdays a month to meet the needs of the homeless, vital teams such as finance and trustees meet monthly, a worship team that meets monthly, and the Six Marks of Discipleship. His goal was to build on the

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systems that were already in place and focus on how do you become holistic, being a disciple of Jesus Christ? To help teams and team members recognize the interconnected factors and forces that impact events. (Olson et al., 2015) He reassured the congregation that he was not going to change the vision of the church. To achieve a consensus on the vision, the Pastor understood that the congregation needed a common language and a shared assumption about the basic logistical operations by which one moves from abstract or concrete vision. A clearly articulated vision became one of the key elements of the espoused part of the culture. (Schein, 2017) He will instruct from the pulpit that every member will hear and recited the mission statement weekly from in the sanctuary. The leader began to get an understanding of the culture by attending all team meetings and giving feedback. Each committee chair and co-chair were charged to establish clear communication by producing an agenda for all meetings with the mission, goal, and purpose listed to every team member. The objective was for team members to understand why they were there and what to do for the people and the community. The second question the Pastor asked, "are their goals set for the church to move forward in this location?" Reply from the council was no goals set by the council. For the leader to be effective with the change, he recognized that change was desirable from the leaders, and he needed to know if it was feasible. (Hodges et al., 2015) The third question, which is a big issue, was, how is the church finances? The leaders were knowledgeable of the financial status of the church. Finance is one area that functioned or not. The problem here is that only the finance team members were aware of the church finances. The Pastor also revealed the church was in financial trouble, but nothing that the team could not handle. The culture of secrecy contributed to the lack of trust among members of the church. This one issue we found was a lack of communication and a

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culture of distrust and lack of openness with the congregation and other team members. One concern the congregation has with the trustees of the church was their lack of taking care of the exterior of the building, which was in much-needed repair. The trustees' lack of openness and evasiveness about that issue and others was a major concern. The Pastor stated that the financial position of the church would determine the external issue. However, he would meet with the finance team regarding the structural barrier because it was clear that the congregation was frustrated, and he did not want to risk the transformational efforts of the church. It was easy for the trustees to resist structural change because they did not have a sense of urgency. The fourth question was, how much training have you had in terms of Bible study, financial literacy, and mental health outreach? The leaders were able to answer by saying that "they had several courses years ago, nothing current except for Bible study." "Training had been provided, but not the right kind." In the third step, the Pastor provided opportunities for leaders to come up with possible courses of action to address the external and internal issues. An effective leader, he recognized that people are not expected to change habits built up over the years or decades with little education. He needed to think through carefully what new behavior, skills, and attitudes will be needed for a major change to happen. He also recognized that all of the evidence suggested that training and education was a critical element in empowering the leadership team to put the vision to work. He also knew that some training was required at this stage in the transformation, and it needed to be the right kind of experience for leaders to express the vision for change; some became believers. He stated that the resolution for the problems is embedded in the culture of the church. As an effective leader, he established a sense of urgency to gain the cooperation of the congregation. Increasing the sense of urgency minimizes complacency with

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the followers. (Kottler, 2012) He set higher standards both formally in the planning process and informally in the day-to-day- interaction. The Pastor shares the purpose of the church and explains how it would with the mission of the church. As an effective leader, the Pastor explains that in a change process, the vision of the church will be clarified. Clarity of direction helps the inability to make directions disappear. It also helps to motivate people to take action in the direction that God had for us. Change can be painful, but we will stay the course. A good vision helps to overcome the natural reluctance to do what is often painfully necessary by being hopeful and therefore motivating. He created a strong sense of urgency, took bold and risky actions by putting together a coalition of leaders to visit other churches in various cities that had the same demographic and similar concerns. A strong guiding coalition is needed with the right composition, level of trust, and shared objective. (Kotter, 2012) This capable team processed the information and communicated with the congregation from each of their level of expertise. The Pastors' combination of members for the coalition proved to be successful because those selected were trustworthy and shared a common goal. In the meetings, he increased the amount of external performance feedback everyone received. He and the church council president would reach out to leaders weekly. He rewarded both honest talks in meetings, and people would be willing to confront problems, thereby stopping baseless negative and positive talk from the top. From our conversations, he shared with me that the moves he was making would reduce complacency with some and increase anxiety in others at first. People do not like change. He was confident that taking these actions would unleash forces directed to achieve important ends for the church and the congregation.

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Significant change takes time, sometimes lots of time. Zealous believers will stay the course no matter what happens. Most of the rest of us expect to see convincing evidence that all the effort is paying. Nonbelievers have a higher standard of proof. To keep the motivation moving, it was necessary to create short term wins for the congregation. The short term wins needed to be visible for large numbers of people to see for themselves whether the results are real or just hype. It is unambiguous, and there can be little argument over the call. The short term is related to the change effort. He began with worship for short term wins. He communicated and planned with the worship chair to improve the worship service. As the worship leader, my goal was to work with the Pastor and other organizations of the church to provide inspiring, spiritual, and uplifting service for the congregation. As the worship leader, I was guiding and leading the worship team, which comprised of the usher board, communion stewards, altar guild, and the acolyte guild. It was my responsibility to make sure that the worship team enhanced the mission, vision, and purpose of the church through dance, song, and participation in worship. One short term win was inviting a choir composed of young people to perform during service; the response was our concrete feedback about the validity of our vision. Another short win is a system in place to meet the needs of the congregation when death occurred in their family that had not been in prior years. We received how helpful the service was to them during their time of grief.

An effective leader knows that for those who are working hard to produce meaningful change, planning for short-term results provides milestones for the members to look forward to while achieving the actual wins. He knows that short term performance improvement help transformation in six ways. First, the short term wins give the effort needed reinforcement. They

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show people that the sacrifices are paying off, that they are getting stronger. Second, the wins offer an opportunity for those working hard to relax and celebrate for a minute.

Third, the process of producing short term wins can help a guiding coalition test its vision against concrete conditions. Valuable lessons can be learned from these tests. Fourth, quick performance improvements undermine the efforts of cynics and major league resisters. As a general rule, the more doubters and resisters, the more critical are short-term wins. Fifth, visible results help retain the essential support of followers and leaders. Finally, short-term wins help build the necessary momentum. The systems that were already in place, the Pastor knew that he had to keep the momentum for change going because if he did not, the forces of tradition and complacency could sweep back in with remarkable power and speed. He also knew that the growth of the church in terms of increasing membership would slow down when he began to expand other areas of need. As an effective leader, he would state that significant change often takes a long time, especially in large organizations and especially in churches. The Pastor would also tell the leadership team that everyone is not going to be on board, although they will not say. They will not leave or change but will often wait for an opportunity to make a comeback to disrupt the change process.

An example is during one of the short wins at the church that could have caused significant regression in the church; a new florist was acquired to enhance the pulpit area. The previous florist, a resister who gave poor product quality and did not attend the church regularly, was replaced. She felt that her family's sacrifice and service to the church were more significant than her service and should be allowed to remain the church florist. The Pastor clarified to the leadership that this was an excellent opportunity to put our vision, purpose, and mission

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statement to work. He met with the former florist with another leader. He expressed to her that he was concerned about her soul and her walk with Jesus Christ as a disciple. From that experience, he knew that we could not let up before what we set out to accomplish is done; critical momentum can not be lost, and because regression may follow. Regression was not an option. An effective leader understands the importance of the nature of change in highly interdependent systems. For the change to take place at the church, he would have to slow down to build up the capacity to deal successfully with the situation. As the leader, the Pastor knew for organizational transformation that he would need the right people with the mindset and attitude to adapt to change. He met with the worship chair and the newly appointed Associate Pastor to discuss changing the direction of the worship team. He explained that because the worship chair had created a sense of urgency with the ministries in the church to attend meetings monthly, thereby changing the culture, it was a good time to restructure their purpose. As an effective leader, he increased learning opportunities, created a worship design team, expanded the Mission Outreach Mobilization Team with a focus on demonstrating discipleship in mission outreach, and expanded the Prayer team. The church as a whole focuses is on the vision of Exalting the Lord, Equipping the Saints, and Embracing the Community!

An effective leader recognizes that changing anything of significance is highly interdependent systems often means changing nearly everything. Effective leaders think long term. They are driven by compelling visions that they find personally relevant, and they are willing to stay the course to accomplish objectives that are important to them. In the United Methodist Church, pastors are itinerant; however, Rev. Dr. Ross has stated that he would stay for the duration of his ministry. Rev. Ross recognized that in our initial transformation efforts were

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the core of our old church culture and not compatible with our new vision. He takes time to ensure that all new practices are firmly grounded in the church culture. An effective leader knows the challenge is to graft the new practices onto the old roots while killing off the inconsistent pieces.

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See attachments

Link for Mid-Week Blast <https://conta.cc/2UsovZK>

Link for the Sunday Blast <https://conta.cc/30Gv13a>

Link for The Central Heartbeat <https://conta.cc/2M7iayl>

Link for church Sunday bulletin

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xCflvB4tXe_2pnPV-OiFYHp_l-WrBGCd/view?usp=sharing

