

BENEFITS OF A GREAT CHURCH CULTURE

"When we respond to what circumstances are put upon us, with what God put within us, then we can transform the world around us."

A healthy church **CULTURE** is a difference maker for your church when it is:

C	CREATIVELY
U	UNLEASHING
L	LOVE
T	TRUST
U	UNITY
R	RESPECT
E	EXCITEMENT

A great church culture brings **PEACE** to your church when it is:

P	POSITIVE
E	ENGAGING
A	ACCEPTING
C	COMPELLING
E	ENCOURAGING

A clear church culture sets the **PACE** of change for your church when it is:

P	PURPOSEFUL
A	ACCELERATING
C	CONTAGIOUS
E	ENERGIZING

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another." John 13:34

"See how they love each other."

Tertullian, ancient historian commenting on Jesus's followers

CHURCH CULTURE *Check Up*

There are prescribed times in any organization—including a church—when it would benefit from a culture checkup.



WHEN THERE IS A PASTORAL CHANGE

Is the change involving a founder or long-tenured pastor leaving? A retirement? An abrupt change due to ineffectiveness, mis-match, or behavioral issues? Or simply A more typical 3-7 year change?



WHEN DISRUPTING EXTERNAL INFLUENCES STRIKE

Coronavirus, denominational uncertainty, social unrest, economic upheaval are examples of pressures that create shock and turmoil.



WHEN DISTURBING INTERNAL ISSUES ERUPT

A church endures culture changing pain when there is bad behavior or malfeasance among staff or laity.



WHEN GLACIER-LIKE CHANGES ERODE EFFECTIVENESS

Sometimes a church isn't really aware of slow, generational declines or changes which diminish relevancy and effectiveness, often resulting in the church no longer looking like its community.



WHEN NEW & DIFFERENT RESULTS ARE DESIRED

Leadership intentionally and strategically decides there needs to be a culture change to get needed new and different results in its ministry and for its mission.



COMMON SYMPTOMS OF CHURCH *Cultures*



It is often said that the best way to take the temperature of a church is to put the thermometer in the leadership's mouth. While this is true and necessary, you can also take the temperature of a church's culture by observing the congregation's behavior. The following are common symptoms most often seen in the churches we work with. What is the cultural temperature of your church?

1. CULTURE IS UNHEALTHY AND NEEDS TO BE CHANGED*

- Lack of joy; burdensome feel; sterile feel; maybe even toxic.
- Inwardly focused culture directs church resources, energy, and emphasis almost entirely on maintenance rather than its mission.
- A growing prevalence of complaining, criticizing, negativity and blaming while there is noticeable lack of personal responsibility and accountability.
- Downward trajectory of nearly all measurables in life of the church.

2. CULTURE IS OK BUT NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED

- Fatigue, but people dutifully 'hanging in there.'
- Stake holders feel proud of good things being done, but express lack of focus.
- A lethargic spirit of volunteerism; fewer and fewer people doing more and more work.
- Not many first- time guests and very few return.

3. CULTURE IS GOOD BUT NEEDS TO BE BETTER MESSAGED

- Leadership becomes aware of plateauing impact accompanied by desire to do better.
- Outwardly focused culture making a difference accompanied by desire to see exponential impact.
- Pleasant, "Feel-good" church family spirit accompanied by desire to become more welcoming and inviting to make a difference in the community.
- Church rightly focuses on its aspirational dreams, but frustrated over slow results.

**A complete cultural transplant may be needed and may work, but should only be considered in the most extreme of circumstances, such as in the strategic "Friendly takeover" of a struggling church by a larger, healthier church.*

"The Feel" of our Church's Culture

"Feel" Even if someone can't describe it, they 'sense it'.

What is "feel" of the space?

Focused ----- Not so much

How well does it tell the story of the church's ministry? What kind of story does it tell?

- Architecture? Kept up? Landscaping?
- What kind of hallway and office decor?
- Do hallways and space message the ministry and passion of the congregation?
- Is parking sufficient?

What is the "feel" of the place?

Friendly ----- Not so much

How do people treat one another? How do they meet new people? Laughter? Fun? Joy? Does it seem 'permission giving' to initiatives and new ministries?

What is the "feel" of the pace? Is there 'buzz' & excitement?

Energetic----- Not so much

What would you add to get a sense of the "feel" of your church?

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Other ways to "assess" your church's culture:

1. Online tools (ie. Readiness 360)
2. Ask & Listen
3. Pay Attention
4. Other ways that you utilize?

Note: It is seldom just "one culture" ... Almost every organizational culture has a network of sub-cultures operating at the same time.

The "Firm Foundation" Assessment of Church Culture

"How firm a foundation!" proclaims the ancient hymn to encourage us even when facing "deep waters, fiery trials, or being overwhelmed and abandoned."

Here's an important question: Is the foundation of my church able to withstand being shaken by Covid-19? Denominational uncertainties? Responding to cries for social justice? Our foundation is in the Lord; a great culture reveals that foundation and enables the church to get stronger even when its foundations are shaken! It points to "Things unshakeable!" Hebrews 12

Look at daily life inside the church; then apply the "Firm Foundation" approach ... it can be a helpful way to look at your church's culture and impact!

F3 – Definite strength

F2 – OK but could be better

F1 – Needs Improvement

Simply place a # value next to each F; (Encourage other leaders do the same for healthy discussion.)

_____ **F — FUTURE** (Hallway talk more about future than the past)

_____ **F — FOCUS** (Clear sense of focus as to God's calling on the church)

_____ **F — FAITH** (Hallway conversations sprinkled with spirituality and faith stories)

_____ **F — FIRE** (Noticeable passion about what church is doing and what God is up to)

_____ **F — FREEDOM** (Unleashed passion! Entrepreneurial! New things in new ways!)

_____ **F — FRUITFULNESS** (Celebrating life-change & difference-making accomplishments)

_____ **F — FRESH** (Fresh ideas, fresh faces, fresh spirit abound)

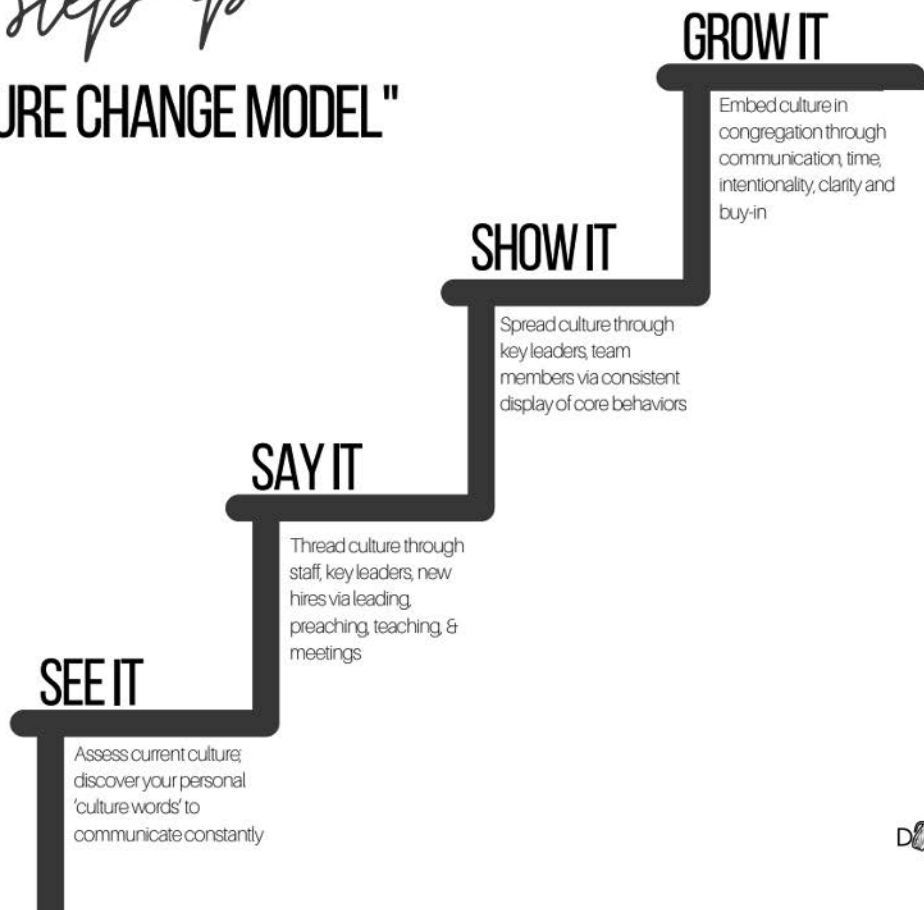
_____ **F — FUN** (Staff, leadership, and laity have fun being the church)

_____ **F — FAMILY** (Appropriate sense of intimacy, connection, and mutual support)

_____ **F — FINANCES** (Strong sense of generosity, stewardship, financial trust)

_____ **F — FUNDAMENTALS** (Biblical guidance, healthy structure, relevant application,)

"THE *step up* CULTURE CHANGE MODEL"



Finding My Culture Words

Set aside a few hours to be alone to reflect. This exercise should not be rushed. Think of three or four words (or short phrases) that truly describe who you are. These words come from your deepest inner self; they reflect your personality and reveal your soul. These words are not intended to impress anyone or be your aspirational wish list of what you would like to be. Just authentic in who you are.

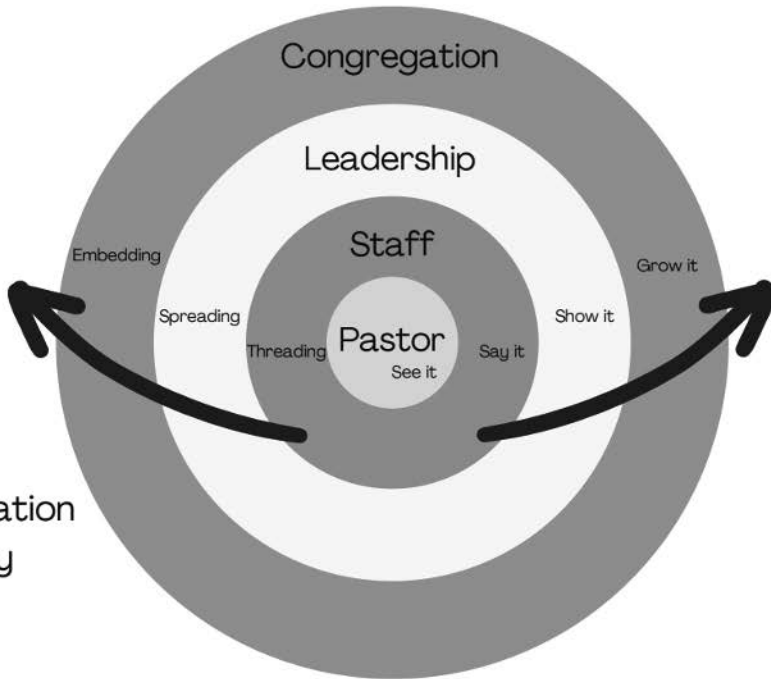
*When a leader can clearly articulate and consistently message her/his 'Culture Words' it allows the congregation to rally around and buy-in to common purpose and direction. Your culture words are the **first step** in what frames and forms a church's current ministry identity, core values, and unifying way of how it goes about doing what it does. They are what threads and embeds the desired culture throughout the congregation and community.*

Here are a few self-reflection questions that may help find your culture words:

- What did (does) God see in me to call me into ministry?
- What lights my fire?
- What keeps me going?
- What propels me forward?
- What about me inspires others?
- What biblical story helps me make sense of my life story?
- When thinking about my approach to ministry: "I like to have _____; I need to have _____; People often describe my personality as _____."
- When thinking about my life & ministry, core values that emerge are:

A first list of my culture words (may be revised as we go along):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Culture Creation
Pathway

BEATITUDES TO SERVE BY & STRENGTHEN CULTURE

BLESSED ARE YOU who possesses a positive attitude displayed at all times in the presence of members, visitors, and fellow workers, for even small seeds of negativism grow into large weeds.

BLESSED ARE YOU who see your assigned duties as a unique ministry in the Kingdom of God, for those who are dependable in learning and diligently applying their craft bring joy to the household of faith.

BLESSED ARE YOU who let the spirit of teamwork shine at all times, for its light illumines the dark corners of fatigue and discouragement that from time to time may creep in upon us all.

BLESSED ARE YOU who risks creatively changing things for the better, for initiative on behalf of the Lord is more to be desired than the wings of angels.

BLESSED ARE YOU who looks upon all persons with the eyes of Christ, for compassion and understanding are more esteemed than judgmentalism and self-righteousness.

BLESSED ARE YOU who ask, "What can I do to help?" with as much concern as "whose task is it?" for the future is found in the team that works together for the glory of God.

BLESSED ARE YOU who speaks of no problem without offering a solution, for the tongue of the complainer is not as worthy as the lips of a problem solver.

BLESSED ARE YOU who dwell in the abode of humble service with your brothers and sisters rather than wait alone outside the gates of haughty superiority, for there the heart of the servant is found.

BLESSED ARE YOU who find no fault in thy brother or sister that you are unwilling to discuss with them in Christian love, for "talking to" is far mightier than "talking about."

BLESSED ARE YOU whose smile and pleasant disposition are known throughout the church, for a "no" spoken in courtesy is better than a "yes" spoken in contempt.

CHURCH CULTURE CHANGE

Action PLAN QUADRANT

CHALLENGES

OPPORTUNITIES

Clarity on our desired results?
"What keeps us from achieving them?"

Actions (we) can take to assess, change, &
create culture.

GOALS

PLANS

SMART goals; immediate & long term desired results

Be specific; steps to SEE IT, SAY IT, SHOW IT, GROW IT