

DEVELOPING YOUR SKILLS

Archdeacon Bob Barrett

**Change
- Introduce
New Things
Successfully**

**Handled well, change brings great results.
Handled badly - the results can be disastrous.**

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Change Introduce New Things Successfully

**Change is a challenging opportunity.
Handled well - great results occur.
Handled badly - the results can be disastrous.
Face with positive anticipation the necessary changes
that will come as you follow the Lord's leading.**

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21 Principles for Managing the Local Church.

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The Change Process - and this booklet

***This Booklet originated** with a request from the Committee for Ministry in the Diocese of Nelson. They wanted to help the parishes implement necessary change successfully. Canon Richard Dyer and I gathered ideas and in discussion we shaped "A Paper On The Management of Change" - subtitled "How to successfully bring about change and not lose your people or your sanity". This was circulated widely throughout the diocese.*

Ongoing discussion with leaders and the experience of working with parishioners in the midst of change led further to the ideas and the process I now share with you. Thanks goes to all of those off whom I have bounced ideas - especially to Canon Richard Dyer and the clergy of the Diocese of Nelson.

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Gordon Miller wrote: *"The great alternative - change or die."*

INTRODUCTORY THINKING - READ THESE WORDS FIRST

Change (as a process) is something all leaders should **understand**.

Change is **unavoidable**.

Leading a parish or ministry group within the Church will challenge you to face change and find creative ways to handle it.

We must know how to cope with change - both the change thrown at us (which we are expected to cope with) and the changes we are expected to lead others into (which we expect them to accept).

This booklet raises some of the important things to **keep in mind** and some of the critical **things to do** if we are to successfully cope with change.

If we do not cope - the results can be disastrous: hurt people, split churches, good ideas lost, changes delayed (or never able to be implemented), disillusioned Christians, destroyed leaders.

Handling change is a **skill all leaders require** - whether you lead the parish as a clergy person, staff member, oversight committee member, lead a ministry group or are elected to vestry.

However it is not just a concern for leaders - **all members are involved**. All need to think through the issues. All have a part to play in helping the Church consider possibilities, make correct decisions and successfully implement appropriate change.

Change should never be taken lightly.

Good change takes hard work. Those who would lead a congregation to change and into new things should be prepared to spend time gaining the 'change agent' skills.

We need to begin with ourselves - our willingness to change.

Exercise 1:

Think of what, for you, is the most precious thing in the life of your church. The aspect or activity that is so important for you and your Christian life.

You are now told that this thing is going to be changed - perhaps not even be provided in the future.

"How do you feel? What is your response?"

Our response may give us some indication of how others might respond when we (or our church) wishes to change something which may be more significant for other people than it is for us.

Exercise 2: Think of your past experience in the Church ...

...when you or others in the church have tried to introduce change.

What is the biggest difficulty you have observed when change has been introduced?

What was the biggest difficulty you felt?

What was the biggest difficulty your fellow parishioners were feeling?

What happened to the leaders, the parishioners, the possible changes and the local church?

Which parts of the experience were good and bad? Why?

SEVEN REALITIES OF CHANGE

The following realities need to be considered when thinking about change. It may be helpful to share these realities with others (in discussion, sermons and articles) as you gradually open others to the necessity and complexity of change.

These are **not the only realities**. These are some of the **tip of the iceberg** realities. Many more 'truths of change' lie hidden in a variety of places. Hunt them out.

- Look in the obvious and the less obvious places:
- books and articles on change;
- study your own responses to change;
- use your God given intellect,
- develop sensitivity to the Spirit's nudges;
- spend time with those who oppose change (only then do you have the right to inspire them to new ways);
- pray for wisdom, sensitivity, love and compassion - you need them all if you are to be a successful 'change agent'.

There is much to learn from the experiences of others - hear the lessons learnt by those who have trodden the path ahead of you (including those who fell over the cliffs on to the criticism and crisis rocks below).

Change Reality 1: CHRISTIANITY IS A RELIGION OF CHANGE.

"Change is a reality we cannot avoid."

The Christian Gospel challenges us to change. Sharing the Gospel invites people to change - and the changes continue as we grow on with Christ.

- We are called to become new creatures in Christ - 2 Corinthians 5:17: *"If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"*
- We are being transformed - 2 Corinthians 3:18: *"All of us . . . are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit."* The Spirit brings change.
- The Christian life is a pilgrimage (a journey). Imagery which pictures us progressing forward (not staying the same). . . changing . . . improving . . . a people 'on the way'. See the biblical pilgrimages of Abraham & Sarah, Joseph, the Israelites in the Exodus, the Prophets, Jesus, Peter and Paul. Reflect on the changes these people had to face.
- Jesus said *'follow me'*. Jesus stays the same but experience shows us we cannot say 'yes' to Jesus and stay the same - nor, metaphorically, stay in the same 'place'.
- Jesus talked of *'new wineskins'* (Matthew 9:16-17) - changing from the old ones. He radically changed what it meant to be 'the people of God'.
- Many Christian truths only make sense in the framework of change - for example: healing, overcoming guilt, forgiveness, empowering, gifting, guiding.

- The prophetic nature of the Christian message speaks into a variety of situations and confronts the status quo.
- The Lord always has more to do in our lives - more changes for us to face., to mould us into the image of Jesus.

These things have an individual and corporate impact.

Fortunately we are not told to 'go it alone'. Jesus is with us as we journey with him.

Exercise 3:

What Biblical change 'images' help you the most?

Change Reality 2: NOT ALL CHANGE IS GOOD - BUT MUCH IS.

Not all change is good, appropriate, timely or handled well - but let's not reject changes which are good and necessary.

The responsibility for leaders is to discern what change could be good and what is wrong or untimely.

Ponder this:

*"If we continue to do things the way we do them now,
we will be no more successful than we currently are."*

There is good change and bad change. The TV series "The Vicar of Dibley" discussed change. Their new Vicar had arrived on the scene. She is a woman! Her presence inspires this dialogue.

Owen *"It can't be right, can it really?"*

Jim *"What's that?"*

Owen *"Having a woman vicar, I mean, Jesus didn't have woman disciples did he?"*

Leti *"No, but things have to change, don't they?"*

Jim *"That's right, I mean look at traffic lights. If they didn't change there would be terrible congestion wouldn't there?"*

Owen *"On the other hand there's gravity."*

Jim *"What about it?"*

Owen *"If gravity changed we'd all go floating up into space - and no one wants that."*

Jim *"So there's good change and there's bad change."*

Leti *"That's right, I mean there's the changing of the guard . . ."*

Exercise 4:

*What changes have you seen the church try to introduce?
Which were 'traffic light' type changes (needing to be done)?
Which were 'gravity' type changes - disastrous if changed?
How do you tell the difference?*

Some things should perhaps never change.

Another exercise you may wish to do is to draw up and discuss a list of what should never change, what could change a little and what we should be courageous enough to allow to change a lot (assuming it is for the right reasons, right timing, right preparation, etc.).

Change can be good when the following is true (this list is only a sample - add other things which, for you, make change 'good').

Change can be good when it:

- Introduces appropriate new things
- Picks up opportunities
- Corrects mistakes
- Overcomes obstacles
- Is done for the right reasons
- Keeps us in step with the Lord - following his leading
- Is done at the right time and in the right way
- Heals hurts
- Enables the church to better evangelise and care
- Opens the church to missing generations.

Change can be bad when the above (and other things) are not taken into account. What other things, do you consider, are likely to make change "bad"?

Change Reality 3: **CHANGE IS (OFTEN) MORE COMPLEX THAN WE WOULD LIKE IT TO BE.**

Complex because it always **affects people** - and people have feelings, hopes, dreams, likes, dislikes - as well as different things they regard as being 'essential' and precious. People in their responses make change complex.

Complex because change always **affects the present** - especially if we feel comfortable in the present

*'You cannot change the future without disturbing the present'
General William Booth*

Complex because what is a good idea and welcomed with open arms in one place will **not always be received positively** or be appropriate in another place.

Complex because it usually involves **more factors than we immediately perceive.**

Change Reality 4: PEOPLE RESPOND TO CHANGE IN A WAY THAT IS AND IS NOT PREDICTABLE.

Predictable things include . . .

- Most personality types will find any change difficult - even change they know is right.
- Some people will always be against it and some people will always be for it (no matter what 'it' is).
- Certain personality types will accept change more easily. For example adventurers are often keen for a new challenge. Traditional conservative people will never like some things.
- Just because people accept change in their work (or other) situation does not mean they will accept change at church.
- Most people, when pushed for quick decisions or immediate acceptance will say 'no'.
- The right process gets more people on 'board'.

Not predictable because . . .

- We cannot predict how any one individual will respond to a particular issue - because we may, for them, have touched a raw nerve; a pet issue; a past hurt; a place of security; or an issue of spiritual significance.
- When people say 'yes' (or don't say 'no') it does not necessarily mean they agree, nor will they automatically stay involved in the activity.
- Silence does not imply consent - but it might.
- People respond differently to different 'changes'. Some changes they easily accept and the same people find other changes threatening. Which will be which?
- Before accepting change some people require more time to think it through; some people more explanations; some people an experimental period to observe; some people the reassurance of others. Which people will need which?

Exercise 5:

What have you noticed to be predictable
or not predictable
about the way people respond to change?

Change Reality 5: ALL CHANGE IS (POTENTIALLY) BIG CHANGE. - and therefore hard to handle.

All change is likely to be seen by some people as major - because it *'rocks their boat'*.

To us what might seem a minor change (omitting a prayer, shifting a hymn, changing the tune) can cut others to the core and cause them to leave the church.

There is always the potential for 'big' hurts. Sensitive people suffer more.

Change is likely to be harder for the congregation than for the leader - but the **leader can suffer too**.

- **Harder for the congregation** because they may not have had time to reflect on all the issues (as well as the above realities).
- **Harder for the congregation** because one reason they chose this Church was for the way things were done.
- **Hard for the leader** because change in the church often means they have to change - laying aside what is precious to them and picking up roles they may not feel equipped for.
- **Hard for the leaders** because they often receive the 'flak' of criticism, pain and 'being walked away from' as a threat or actuality. They are criticised for what is changed and criticised for what is not changed and criticised for the way it is introduced (however it is introduced)!

Change Reality 6: THERE IS A TIME WHEN CHANGE IS RIGHT.

Some change should happen quickly. Some should be taken slowly - allowing due consideration, education and approval.

Skilled leaders know the difference - usually! They seek the Lord's discernment.

The **wrong time** is often when people are too preoccupied with other things; too busy; too hurt; too fearful; too drained of energy; not feeling loved or heard; unaware of the vision or reasons; and don't feel they have the skills to handle the new.

The **time is right** when we are building on what God is doing and going with the changes that God is effectively bringing. We need to notice what the Lord is doing in our midst.

We **test for God's timing** by looking at all the outcomes (are they the things God desires); the Spirit's prompting (is the Spirit nudging a number of people in this direction); the people's readiness (are quite a group feeling comfortable with the suggestions).

Exercise 6:

How would you detect God's timing?

Change Reality 7: CHANGE IS NEVER EASY

- BUT IT CAN BE MADE EASIER.

The (sometimes impossible) aim is to change without conflict. It is helpful to develop conflict management skills - but more helpful to develop skills which enable us to avoid creating conflict. See Booklet 13: 'Handling Hurts in the Church' and Booklet 14: 'Managing Conflict in the Church'

Change (and conflict) handled correctly can draw a parish together (creating unity), build anticipation (with excitement) and open all members to the Lord's empowering (and to his future changes).

Change should never be seen as a threat - but is a real opportunity for experiencing God's blessing and seeing our Lord at work in new ways.

It can be easier if people are not hit with too many areas at once - although be alert to those areas that should be grouped together and made into one change.

SEVEN STEPS TOWARDS CHANGE

"Successful change is not an accident"

Develop **your own approach** - keeping in mind the following suggestions. Seek an approach that encourages people to "go on together" in the journey of the Lord's leading. Do not use methods that will ostracise certain people or split a congregation.

Be A Leader (Or Leadership Team) Who Can . . .

Step 1: CREATE THE CLIMATE

Create a climate of trust, understanding and desire.

*People will not follow you
until they have got to know you and trust you.'*

1. Trust builds acceptance and security.

People are not likely to accept change if they do **not trust** those who are leading it. This increases as **relationships** are built. Put energy into building relationships with the congregation.

Listen and understand their interests, concerns, worries, hopes, threats and ideas. Be able to **identify** what is precious to them.

Know about the past - much change fails because we fail to identify the issues, attempts and hurts of the past. We run into the danger of repeating past mistakes.

Pray that you will feel love and compassion for each person - people will sense it. They will know when you have their best interest at heart - that you care about them, their future, their worship, their Christian growth.

2. Understanding enables people to see 'why'.

Understanding of church life, change in general and the issues of any possible change are important.

People need to know **why this change** is necessary. Why not some other change or no change at all. Help people understand the need for change.

They need to understand **what might change** and what will not be changed (as they could be fearful of more change than in reality is ever likely to occur - or change in areas people have no intention of ever altering). Understanding can remove threat - especially the threat of losing other things.

They need to see how this change fits into the biblical injunctions, God's purposes and the rest of the things going on in the parish.

3. Desire creates a willingness to face the loss or adjustment of the previously precious.

Desire comes as people gain a sense of going on together in God's will.

Desire deepens as people become excited about the possibilities this change could produce for them or for others - seeing how they will benefit.

Step 2: UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES

Research yourself, the issues and the alternatives .

Know where God may be calling you to go.

1. Successful change requires skilled leaders.

Understand the way you function; what is important to you; why you want to introduce things; how you suggest possibilities. Often leaders get in the road (hopefully unintentionally).

- Am I prepared to change - letting go of what I thought was important to me?
- Are these just my ideas or a necessary step for the future of the church? Is it what God wants? Now? The right change at the right time?
- Am I clear about the need and the solution?
- Have I/we prayed enough? Consulted enough?
- Are we submitting these ideas to others?
- Have I listened carefully to those who really do know the issues and have experience in this issue?
- Will the people I discuss it with question me enough so I can discover the issues?
- Am I rushing - pushing the change too fast?
- What are the limits of my understanding and ability?
- What do I need help in? Where will I get it from?

- Will I have the energy to follow this to completion?
- Will I stay long enough for the positive fruit of this change to be seen and the actions to be firmly in place - or will it fall over if I leave and therefore make it difficult for others to introduce change?
- Will I welcome advice and help without feeling threatened or a failure?
- Am I prepared to face the legitimate costs of this change?
- Where will I/we get support - especially if the going gets tough?

2. Change should not normally be suggested until leaders have studied all of the issues.

- Do I/we fully understand what I am wanting to suggest?
- What have others done?
- What has happened here in the past?
- Why do they do it this way?
- What do articles, books, fellow leaders or consultants suggest about the issue?
- Do I have the biblical justification - regarding the principles?
- What are the implications of going this way?
- What resultant obstacles or opportunities will occur?
- What are the underlying principles?

The principles may apply in many situations - but there are a variety of outworkings - often specific to specific places and times. Am I dealing with the principles, or copying an outworking that worked elsewhere but may not be the right outworking for this situation?

3. There are usually more alternatives than 'one way' forward.

There will be different things that could be done and a variety of ways of introducing them.

- Have I/we sought the advice and reactions of enough people, prayed enough and thought enough to discover all of the alternatives? Or did I/we just talk to those who will say what we wanted to hear, or to those without a broad enough experience to know, to check out our ideas and challenge us?
- Am I dismissing some alternatives for the right reasons?
- Is it possible to find a **'both/and'** approach rather than an **'either/or'** approach - so that we can keep what we are doing while adding other things alongside?
- What is the best way forward?
- Are we clear about what will be done - but flexible enough to change as alternative approaches become more appropriate.

Step 3: SELL THE VISION

And Keep Selling The Vision.

Vision needs to be kept on the boil.

1. Vision points to the future - taking people on from the present to build on the past.

Vision focuses on what the Lord is wanting to do and is doing (in this situation and elsewhere).

Vision paints a picture of a better future and the benefits it will bring - and how we can cope with it together. **The better future does not take down the past or the present** - rather it builds on our experiences as we follow the Lord's leading on our Church's pilgrimage. We are less likely to achieve a great future if we take down past leaders, past achievements, past hopes – even if they were not as good as they could have been.

Vision needs to be updated. Response to vision reshapes it; success, failure, new opportunities, completing a part of it - all create the need for a new vision.

2. Vision requires leaders - to see, sell and shape it.

Leaders - by virtue of their role - have a responsibility to **see the vision, sell it to others and then shape the church so the vision is achieved** (by encouraging people to implement aspects of the vision, helping the church find ways to overcome obstacles and pick up opportunities).

Successful leaders lead change boldly - not as bulldozers - but clearly and decisively; as gentle loving shepherds who know where it is necessary to go.

Leaders of change **choose words**, titles and descriptions carefully - so people do not misunderstand what is meant nor confuse this change with some previous disliked or failed attempt.

Sellers of vision use words carefully and paint the picture **as big as the people can handle** - being careful about some aspects of long term vision which may be too 'big' for people yet.

3. Vision acknowledges people's feelings & hopes.

People take time to understand and accept the vision - so keep selling it. We need to keep explaining it - alluding to it in sermons, newsletters, conversations and reports. Some people get on board with vision and changes at a slower pace than others.

Those who have joined recently are not aware of the history, the reasons and those parts of the vision already sold.

Vision inspires people to **face the need** for change (because people will not change if they do not sense a need to).

Vision faces concerned feelings and the **negative critics** by drawing their concerns into the total picture.

4. Vision is earthed in reality.

Vision keeps the church **aware of the needs** of all those currently involved - and those who are not yet involved but who the Lord may wish to draw into the midst of our church.

Vision about change finds ways to explain what could happen if we do not make these changes.

Vision encourages **feedback**, letting people know there is room for modification.

Vision keeps people **aware of progress** - what ideas are around; how discussion is progressing; what will be tried out (when and why); when feedback is required; when decisions might be made; the outcomes aimed for; issues of prayer; results achieved, etc.

Step 4: GET PEOPLE ON BOARD.

We cannot assume everyone is as keen as us

1. Get on board those who will guide you - who will help you understand and explore the issues.

Never 'go it alone'

Find out ahead of time how people are likely to react if the change actually took place. Know the people with whom you can **test the waters** at the very early stages of thinking through the possibilities.

Such people help you shape the change (and the way of presenting it) into a more acceptable format. You will understand which areas to 'go slow' on and what not to change because the price would be too high.

Reactions show which ideas are likely to upset people, need further thought, require adapting or should be presented differently. We are alerted to people who may have special concerns.

2. Get on board those who will enthuse others.

Get individuals on board before trying to gain acceptance by groups. If people say 'no' publicly they are unlikely to change their opinion - but a 'no' privately can be changed on further thought.

Look for significant people who are prepared to **endorse the possibilities** - people who will know, will be trusted and will be positive.

Key leadership people are critical. Patriarchs and matriarchs **influence a lot of people**. Such people should not be seen as problem people. Spend time with them - seeking their ideas and responses. Often they will be prepared to introduce the suggested changes.

People want to know who else is enthusiastic

Perceptive people, long term members and influential leaders need time spent with them explaining, allaying fears, answering concerns and obtaining feedback.

Make sure you can answer all the issues they raise - not in a take down way - but to put them and others at ease.

3. Get on board those who will be affected by the changes.

We want them to accept and hopefully own the change.

Get people on board by sowing the seeds of ideas - often people then water the ground, grow the ideas and reproduce them.

Saying things like *"has anybody ever thought about . . .," "did you hear about the church that . . .," "I can see we will need to find some way to build on the success of . . .," "I heard a parishioner suggest . . .," "I have been wondering if that could ever happen here," "I have an idea but I am not sure if it is very relevant for our situation . . ."*

Often these ideas will come back from other people as if they are their ideas – which is really good.

We can share informally and formally about what is happening in other churches; ask questions about why things are done; discuss people's ideas and their consequences; listening to and highlighting the questions and suggestions parishioners raise.

It is important to enthuse people and encourage them to go with the change - if it directly affects the whole parish, then seek to get all on board; if it directly affects one group, work with them (while keeping others aware of what is happening).

Look for ways to **encourage people to express ideas/concerns**. Help them listen to the concerns of others. Encourage **feelings** to be verbalised and explored.

Encourage people to raise **possible difficulties**. Warn of the difficulties you can see. Look for **solutions** in advance. Help people see that these obstacles can be realistically expected - they are not road blocks saying "don't do it."

Work hard with those who may resist the change. Listen - they are likely to help you identify and deal with all the issues - making you aware in advance of potential misunderstandings, mistakes and problems. Being aware we can then be ready to deal with such issues.

4. Get on board those who will make the decisions.

Obtain permission - working through the normal oversight channels. Do not bypass standard procedures or established systems (committees, parish meetings, etc.).

Remember that the **first reaction** people often give to suggested change is to say **'no'**. Therefore in most cases don't immediately look for affirmation or approval for the change. Begin by floating ideas so that people have time to go away and think about it.

Be clear what changes can be for an **experimental trial period** (e.g. adjustments to services of worship) and what changes are irreversible (e.g. new buildings, spending money). Know where the points of 'no return' lie.

5. Get on board those who will implement the change.

If you connect to the right networks it will cut down the implementing workload.

As you implement have systems in place to care for those for whom this change is painful.

Plan carefully - setting appropriate priorities, goals and strategies .

Don't try to do everything. Remember 'the good can crowd out the best'.

A Question:

What happens to those we cannot get on board

- even though we have tried hard and done all the right things?

Keep relating to everyone

- including the strongest critics of the change (or of us).

We should never reject people.

Sadly we may lose some - but never drive them out.

Step 5: IMPLEMENT THE CHANGE - Carefully And Creatively

1. Be creative over trial periods.

Change can often be **temporary or conditional**. The idea of a trial period (after which the experiment could be dropped if it doesn't work) often helps people try out new things. After trying them they sometimes find *'it is not as bad as we thought it might be'*.

Find ways to help people **take risks** and experiment - encouraging the realisation that we can learn from our mistakes.

Make the **review date** and process clear from the beginning.

2. Be creative when giving reasons for the change.

For some changes it may be helpful to have a '**scapegoat**' - the someone else who encourages us to go this way (that 'someone' may "carry the can"). For example: *"other churches are finding this Helpful," "the bishop has encouraged . . . ,"* *"it has been suggested we should."* However - always own your own ideas.

Growth and past success can be the reason for further change. For example *"there is now not enough room for new people - so we must push the wall out, build a new church, start a new service or send people away"*.

Note this also lays out the alternatives which helps people see that some options could be worse, more expensive, etc.

3. Be creative when explaining and introducing.

Use good articles in newsletters and special leaflets (prepared for the purpose of explaining this change and introducing the people involved).

Use positive encouraging people to reassure others - especially those feeling threatened.

Create a sense of 'some will find it difficult, but we know that together we can do it - helping each other.'

4. Be creative when handling the critics.

Always listen to and **honour the opinion** of those who disagree with the idea. Allow those who disagree to disagree - but keep positive relationships with them.

Visit, talk and **spend one to one time** with people who may struggle with the need for this particular change. Be careful not to over react nor to constantly be on the defensive.

Creatively handling the critics does **not include** take downs or manipulation.

Think carefully about the ideas of others - avoiding speedy value judgements - they then at least will feel you have honoured them enough to think about their opinion.

Encourage critics to **include their ideas** (positive, negative and alternative ways) in discussions - getting their concerns in the open and placed alongside reasons for the choice.

Help people think laterally.

Be creative when thinking through **people's reactions to change** .

5. Be creative when beginning.

Give positive focus on all sides. For example when beginning a new service positively focus on the new service **and** on the continuing service - so both groups are encouraged.

Step 6: EVALUATE AND RESHAPE –

And Continue Evaluating And Reshaping.

Check progress - keep up the impetus.

1. Once the change is implemented it is not the finish.

- Most changes do not work one hundred per cent smoothly - there will be **stumbling blocks**, obstacles to overcome and problems (normally minor) to solve. Adjustments are likely to be needed.
- Not all **people will be reacting** positively. We need to be aware of ongoing and new concerns - address these.
- Evaluation provides additional information and **clarifies** misunderstanding and helps people work through related issues.
- It keeps lines of communication open - especially for those who are struggling with or against the change.
- Evaluation can **quieten those who were resisting** change - especially if they know their viewpoint is heard, understood, appreciated and taken into account.
- Even things going well can probably be improved.
- **Successful change** will often require more change - new priorities, goals and strategies.
- Keep up the **momentum** - while not rushing people faster than the pace they can cope with.

2. Evaluation is both casual and structured.

- Evaluate **week by week** by listening, making analytical observation.
- Also set down specific evaluation **dates**.
- Find evaluation **methods** suitable to the issue.
- Give **everyone an opportunity** to contribute to the evaluation - attending meetings, filling in evaluation forms, writing letters - allowing all types of comments.
- **Report back** the results of this evaluation - explaining the feedback received, the action taken, the changes to be made, and the reasons.
- Develop evaluation skills.

3. Evaluation accepts that 'it may not work'.

- Failure needs to be dealt with.
- Help people to see that failure is not the end. If the experiment fails we can try it another way. There are always lessons to learn from the experience.
- *Experience alone may not teach us but evaluated experience can!*

4. Evaluation looks at progress.

- It distinguishes between what is **immediately** being seen and what is being **progressed** towards.
- Realise there may be a **time delay** before the results are seen. Are we on 'track' or is something wrong which will prevent the desired end result?
- As we evaluate we can be safeguarding the continuance of the change (assuming it is right to continue!)

5. Evaluation knows how to distinguish the different 'voices'.

- Be careful **not to be put off** for the wrong reasons.
- Be alert to **sweeping generalisations** which may or may not be accurate: *"Most of the people are against this," "It isn't working."* Encourage evaluation which uses facts. Ask people to explain their generalisations - for example *"most people" - how many does this mean, who?"*

6. Evaluation asks why people are reacting (positively or negatively) in the way they are.

Is it because of the **person** presenting the change?

- and someone else would create more confidence

Is it because of **the way** it is being presented?

- and they are not really objecting to the change itself

Is it because the change is **wrong**?

- and should not be continued with.

Is it because it is **new**?

- and people are not yet used to it.

Is it because it is being **done badly**?

- and the change is right but the people's lack of skill is causing a reaction against *the way* it is being done rather than *what* is being done.

Is it because they do **not understand why**?

- and further explanations would get them on board.

Is it because they are **perceiving something** important?

- and their judgement is alerting us to something we need to hear.

7. People react differently

To evaluate evaluative comments keep in mind that people react differently. Learn to understand the background of the positive or negative critic and what value to place on their criticism. Work out which of the groups below they may be 'speaking from'. Without care you can dismiss comments too lightly or place too much weight on them. There are various groups:

Those who are totally immediately for something - 2%

The earlier adopters - 18%

The silent majority who go along with change - 60%

The late adopters - 18%

Those who remain totally against it - 2%

Remember it does not matter what 'it' is! Responses occur roughly in these percentages - unless the change is ridiculously simple (in a good or bad sense).

Step 7: INSPIRE HEALTHY CELEBRATION

Celebrating achievements **helps people feel positive**. It builds up the self esteem of the church and encourages us "to go forward to the new things the Lord has for us".

Celebrating can **focus on the people** who have provided so much; went before us; gave a basis for us to step into these areas; led the way; invested time; contributed the resources; prayed for the outcomes; supported the leaders; participated in the events; sacrificed their desires; coped with the change; gave feedback; did the research; trained the leaders; accepted important roles; worked behind the scenes;

Celebration does not just appreciate people - even more it acknowledges our **great dependence on the Lord**. It rejoices in the work of the Spirit through us. It praises Almighty God who makes all things possible.

Celebrating is not just done at the end. **Initial and progress** times are important and can go alongside special concluding events. It is good to rejoice as new steps are taken.

Celebrating can be done in **little and large ways**: brief prayers of thanks; praying for people up front; mentions in newsletters and reports; comments to the individuals concerned; thank you letters or cards; special times of worship celebration; special events, dinners, suppers ; "celebration cakes"; photos and posters;

Celebrating can have "**spin offs**": People feeling appreciated; others encouraged to understand the changes better; more may get on board; greater risk-taking in the future; increased giving; more volunteers for other events

APPLYING CHANGE

1. This booklet has encouraged you to **examine your approach to change** and **develop a system** that would work for you.

2. Continue to think about your approach.

- List the ideas which you could use.
- Lay out a step by step process to use.
- The following two exercises may help you test the relevance of the above 7 steps and/or the usefulness of a system you have developed.

3. Take a change that has happened.

Exercise 7:

List what you did, the actions taken, as they fit under each of the steps.

- Analyse how appropriate each action turned out to be.
- What problems occurred? What worked well?
- Brainstorm, under each heading, what could have been done differently and additional things that could have been done.
- Would this (or another) approach have been more successful?
- Why?

4. Take an imaginary area.

Exercise 8: Take an **imaginary area**, which has not yet been acted on, but which is a possible change for your situation.

- Brainstorm - as creatively as the group can - all the possible things you could do.
- Note: Allow all suggestions without criticising them or saying 'that will not work'. One major enemy of change is prejudice (as pre-judging).
- What do these suggestions tell you and your group about introducing change in your situation?



APPENDIX

Appendix 1:

UNDERSTAND AND USE SOCIAL DYNAMICS

The more we understand people, the way they work and relate to one another then the easier it is to bring about change. Connect into the right networks. If we use our parish's approved and acceptable channels we will cut down our work load. If we understand where someone is coming from, it will help us state our case in a way that they will understand and be able to receive.

WHEN IT COMES TO CHANGE, PEOPLE GENERALLY FIT INTO ONE OF FOUR GROUPS:

1. Radicals - proponents of extreme change.
2. Progressives - proponents of moderate change.
3. Conservatives - disposed to maintaining the status quo.
4. Traditionalists - opponents of any change.

Groups 1 and 4 are often driven by emotion

Groups 2 and 3 are usually more rationally driven. They are the ones who carry out most changes.

1. Radicals

Radicals are a good source of ideas. They get the thinking started. However they do not make good leaders because they tend to be all over the place, they upset people and burn out rather quickly, and often do not have much staying power.

2. Progressives

They are forward looking people who can anticipate needs. They see what is required to bring new life into an organisation. They can take the excitement and vision of the radicals and organise it into some workable form. They live on the growing edge. They know the importance of good planning. This being so they will spearhead new directions. They often know how to talk to the conservatives and bring them on board. They are risk takers.

3. Conservatives

They see the value of the status quo, and prefer things the way they have always been, because that is comfortable. They do not always see the consequence of that choice until it is too late, but they can be persuaded. They will need real answers to real questions. They are useful for asking awkward, but important, questions. This will put some people off, but does keep the leadership honest.

4. Traditionalists

They are resistant to any change. They say no, before you have started. They are as irrational about their refusal to change as the radical is in their inability to grasp why people are reluctant to change. They will get all emotional about it and if they can't get what they want, they may make life pretty uncomfortable or leave.

FUNDING CHANGE

The conservatives often pay most of the bills - because they are usually the only ones with money. The radicals often throw it away, many progressives spend what they have got. The conservatives, because they are not risk takers may well be your main backers. The traditionalist often will not give anything.

THE PROGRESSION

When a church begins there is frequently a high percentage of radicals and progressives, a few years on there will be a high percentage of conservatives and traditionalists then a few more years on the church can become immobilised by the weight of non-moving members.

Richard Dyer's adaptation of John Wimber's "Pastor as the Change Agent"

Appendix - 2:

HOW DO WE COPE WITH THE CRITICS

WHO OPPOSE AND RESIST CHANGE

Realise that maybe 10% of any group will find the change so difficult that they will do all that they can to prevent the change or they will leave. It is important to keep this in perspective and do not allow the negative voice to overwhelm you or intimidate you.

There will be another 10% who will think that the idea is wonderful and will go all the way with you, and sometime try and get ahead of you. They can also be a problem. At the end of the day 80% will go with you (but not necessarily agree with it entirely although they will not give up).

WHEN YOU ARE CRITICISED

1. **Identify the source clearly.** Do not respond to hearsay. Evaluate the competence of the critic - where are they "coming from".
2. **Make contact.** Take the initiative to approach the person(s). Do so with an open mind. During the initial contact, avoid being drawn into an argument. Do not set out to justify yourself. Listen to what they have to say. Listen carefully - have you really understood? Can you accurately repeat their case?
3. **Set a time.** For further discussion - following further reflection and fact gathering.
4. **Clarify the issue.** Be willing to listen and gently find out what is upsetting the person. Pay attention to the feelings that lie behind what is being said to you. Be aware of your self so that you can honestly identify your own feelings (at least to yourself). Do not be dominated by your critics nor try to dominate them. Provide an objective outlook for a mutually helpful discussion.
5. **Ask yourself whether you have heard the criticism before.** Is it valid? Push it away from you so that you can examine it carefully before making any decision about what you will do with it. Then take on board what is appropriate, or leave it to one side until you can talk the matter over with an adviser. Never let yourself be destroyed by the criticism. You are more than the issues under discussion. Get the issues into perspective.
6. **Ask questions.** Critics, when confronted will tend to wander off the subject. Ask them to be more specific. Prod them to tell you what they would like you to do. Questions bring wider understanding and open up potential answers that neither side had considered. Always allow the critic the dignity of withdrawing affirmed.

7. **Measure other people's ideas and criticism against the real underlying essential principles - not just against your preferred outworking.** Maybe their ideas would be a better outworking of the principles. To do something differently is not necessarily to do it wrongly.
8. **Watch your behaviour.** Keep a sense of humour. Keep calm. Be constructive. Do not blame or attack. Try to build up as Jesus did.
9. **Evaluate.** Do not make immediate commitments to change plans. Do not agree just to placate. Take advice. Accept responsibility and where necessary ask for forgiveness. Take every situation as an opportunity to grow. Let it make you better not bitter.
10. **Thank the critic.** Ask them to let you know about other ideas, suggestions and responses they have. Keep a warm fellowship. Ask God to bless them.

Richard Dyer's adaptation of "Criticism - bane or blessing"

Richard J V Cooper. Published in Ministry September 1991

TITLES IN THE SERIES:

- Number 1 "Visitor Friendly Worship"
- Number 2 "Worship - Who is it for?" – 2001 edition.
- Number 3 "Leading Worship - The Prayers"
- Number 4 "People Helping Skills"
- Number 5 "Preaching and Teaching"
- Number 6 "Stewardship - The Financial Area"
- Number 8 "Healing - Prayer Ministry"
- Number 9 "Informal Worship - Designing and Leading"
- Number 10 "Incorporation - Helping Newcomers Into Membership"
- Number 11 "Change - Introduce New Things Successfully"
- Number 12 "Youth Ministry For the 21st Century"
- Number 13 "Handling Hurts in the Church"
- Number 14 "Managing Conflict in the Church"
- Number 15 "Every Member Ministry – Making It Work"
- Number 16 "Criticism – How Do We Respond?"

Note: Number 7 "Planning for a Great Future" is not available in the electronic series.
