



Creating Space for Grace

God's Power in
Organisational Change

Rick James

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Swedish Mission Council

The Swedish Mission Council, SMC, is an ecumenical organisation whose membership is made up of 32 Swedish Churches and Christian development organisations. The members collaborate between themselves and with other national and international actors worldwide. Within this broad ecumenical base, SMC's mandate is to be a forum for reflection and dialogue on the meaning and implications of Christian mission in our present time and the responsibility of Churches and Christian organisations with regard to international solidarity.

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Foreword

Love is a constructive power. Without love no human endeavours will be sustainable.

In our common reflection, between Swedish Mission Council members and partners in different parts of the world, it has become apparent that we often have dismissed the spiritual, moral and cultural dimensions of human well-being in our work for change.

It is obvious that most people are guided by deep underlying moral and spiritual values when reflecting on realities of life and taking important decisions. These values include such things as: love of other, one's commitment and responsibility to family, clan and community; self-worth; one's sense of dignity, honour and respect; relationships etc. This is also what the Bible teaches and what Jesus said and practised. Therefore, Swedish Mission Council believes that by articulating the implications of our faith for our work, we will be able to build a more holistic practise.

This publication argues that organisational change must be both professionally excellent and spiritually passionate. It highlights ten practical ways for how this can be implemented in the complicated realities of organisational life. By publishing this booklet SMC seeks to contribute to a discussion on spiritual aspects of change in general and organisational change in particular. This publication is the result of a research consultancy led by Rick James from INTRAC¹ Malawi.

Swedish Mission Council
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¹ INTRAC supports non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations around the world by exploring policy issues, and strengthening management and organisational effectiveness, see www.intrac.org. The views expressed here are not necessarily shared by INTRAC.

1. Introduction

I was inspired to explore the spiritual dimension to organisational change by the remarkable transformation of the Tangababwe Christian Fellowship (TCF)². Riven by division and corruption, it existed only in name. It had lost all credibility with its members; its donors had long-since departed. Yet at an amazing workshop I observed new life breathed into an all-but-dead organisation. The leadership and membership repented deeply of their faults, forgave each other and received a renewed vision for the organisation. They developed a new strategy, much more relevant to the needs of society; and participants pledged sufficient finances to cover the next six month's operating costs. Immediately afterwards, TCF made a public apology to other churches for its past behaviour and was later able to bring these same churches together to positively influence the revision of the national constitution. Such a radical organisational transformation was, to my mind, nothing short of miraculous – the outcome of 'creating space for grace'.

Our experience of organisational change is usually quite different from this. Research reveals that as much as 75 % of planned organisational change efforts fail (Cameron 1997, quoted by Quinn 2000:198). Efforts to change people through brute sanity – logical, rational change programmes – are not proving effective. In fact, these efforts frequently lead to further conflict and demotivation. Much of the organisation development (OD)³ work with Christian NGOs (non-government organisation), churches and congregations is not significantly different. Many change processes in Christian organisations are also fraught with frustration and disunity. Why should this be?

Part of the reason at least, is that some Christian OD work is functionally agnostic, if not atheistic. Our strategy or team-building exercises, for example, are sometimes no different from a secular process. We treat them as simply technical processes. By keeping our faith separate from our OD work, we practice OD as if God was not interested or involved in human change. We try to change our church organisations in our own strength alone and end up exhausted and disillusioned.

The corporate, 'secular' management world, however, is beginning to recognise that there is a spiritual dimension to organisational change. Many famous authors on organisational

change are realising the limitations of purely technical processes and are introducing a spiritual dimension to their writings. Mainstream academic journals and leading universities, including Harvard and INSEAD, are increasingly focusing on this spiritual dimension to leadership and organisational change. Many successful firms are also trying to instil a spiritual approach in their corporate cultures and management development programmes.

In the aid world, however, many faith-based organisations appear more hesitant about integrating a spiritual dimension within their partnerships and development work. As a result they may be missing out the vital element for change. Explicitly integrating a spiritual dimension can create more openness for God's grace and power to transform people and organisations. In the OD field, we have a real opportunity to enrich and empower our practice, by 'administering God's grace'⁴ to change organisations.

In my worst moments
I have thought that
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run by sadists and
staffed by masochists
Charles Handy

Many of our churches and Christian NGOs desperately need such transformation. Although well-meaning, such organisations are not always the most effective or happiest places to work and many are highly resistant to change.

Sadly, too many of us can identify with Charles Handy's graphic description: 'In my worst moments I have thought that organisations were places designed to be run by sadists and staffed by masochists – and I'm not just talking about business, some of these things happened in the holiest of places and the nicest of people' (1991:76).

Would someone looking inside our Christian organisations say, 'I know they are Christians by their love'?⁵ We can only be 'good news to the poor'⁶ in the world outside if we are good news inside our organisations too.

Integrating a spiritual dimension into OD can be viewed as part of mission. With the breakdown of societal norms throughout the world, organisations are increasingly an important place where people find community and where personal transformation can occur (for good or bad). Workplaces are filling a gap in society and are therefore an important part of mission. The organisational problems we face as congregations, churches and Christian NGOs may be the very opportunities God has given us to grow and show a world that indeed God's grace is sufficient – that 'his power is made perfect in our weakness'.⁷ Robert Greenleaf challenges churches to provide leadership in the world warning that: 'Unless churches

become more effective, it is unlikely that people and institutions will do much better than at present' (1998:116).

This booklet is aimed at people who want to integrate their faith with their lives in organisations. It is for those who earnestly desire to see the congregations, churches and Christian organisations that they work in (or with) become more effective, for those who yearn to experience more of God's presence in organisational change. You may be a leader wanting to bring change in your organisation; or you may be a facilitator of such processes as an external OD consultant, or an internal change agent or church committee member; or you may be a project officer in an NGO supporting such change processes in other partner organisations. If you are passionate about your organisation fulfilling its mission more effectively, then this booklet is for you.

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This booklet asks:

- ❖ What is the secular, business world saying about spirituality and organisational change?
- ❖ What does the Bible say about human change?
- ❖ What are we learning from practical experiences of a spiritual dimension to organisational change?
- ❖ What does a Christian approach to OD look like? What is different about it?
- ❖ What are the implications for us as:
 - leaders of change in churches and Christian NGOs?
 - facilitators of OD?
 - international faith-based development actors such as SMC (Swedish Mission Council) members?

If we experience more of God's presence and power in our organisational change processes this will better enable us to achieve our missions and extend God's kingdom and justice in the world. Although the main audience of this booklet may be Christian development organisations, the principles of change are just as relevant for congregational, community and social development.

This booklet builds on 'Organisational Development and Capacity Building' previously published by SMC (2002), and addresses some of the questions and fears raised by the CORAT-led

and SMC-supported consultations on OD and churches (TAABCO 2001 and 2002). Participants at the consultations wanted to know how their faith could initiate, enrich and inform their OD practice; and what were the different elements for an OD and faith framework. Some feared that bringing OD into the church would lead to a secularisation of the church by popular management. This booklet will show that far from being used as a veneer, biblical principles are the foundations of good management and organisational change. Chapter 2 begins with an overview of the wider context, describing the shift in secular management theory towards recognising a spiritual dimension to organisational change.

The message of the book is that:

by integrating our Christian faith with our professional OD practice we create more space for God's grace to transform people and organisations.

Chapter 3 then analyses a biblical interpretation of principles and processes of change. Chapter 4 illustrates this approach by describing a remarkable change process that occurred in the Tangababwe Christian Fellowship. Chapter 5 synthesises the lessons from reflective practise, with biblical interpretation and academic insight to outline what a Christian approach to OD would look like, highlighting that it:

1. depends on God's power to spark change
2. believes the gift of grace is at the core of change
3. creates space for God's grace
4. listens to God
5. prays for change
6. focuses on life-giving, spiritual elements of organisations
7. follows a biblical process of change, administering grace
8. internalises change
9. explicitly aims to integrate the spiritual dimension to change
10. is professionally excellent

Chapter 6 then applies these principles to different actors in the OD process including leaders of NGOs, congregations and churches; organisational change facilitators; and international

faith-based organisations (FBOs) supporting such processes. Readers should concentrate on the section of this chapter that is most relevant to them.

As we begin we need to recognise that the subject of spirituality is a personal, sensitive and sometimes flammable subject. Even within the Christian church, our interpretation and understanding of how God works today is a matter of faith. Different theologies give different explanations for the same event. We need the humility to accept that we all ‘see through a glass darkly’⁸. Furthermore, words are a notoriously difficult medium to discuss spiritual issues and can easily alienate. As Wisely and Lynn point out: ‘The spirit cannot be said, it can only be shown’ (in Conger et al 1994:104).

Yet although the spiritual is very personal, it does not necessarily follow that it must also remain private. In any discussion of spirituality and organisation, a difference of opinion and interpretation is guaranteed, but these very differences may uncover new understanding about our work and can be seen as opportunities for new learning. I personally have a strong Christian faith and SMC asked that this booklet focus on an explicitly Christian approach to OD. This paper therefore does not discuss alternative interpretations from those of no faith; nor does it seek to identify the areas of common ground with other faiths interesting though these might be⁹. It is a personal perspective of spirituality in organisational change interpreted through the lens of my own Christian faith and considerably influenced by my recent experiences of OD in Christian parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Although my faith is not tied to any denomination it will undoubtedly have different emphases from yours. I would not claim in any way that my individual perspective is the only Christian view. But I would hope that we use any differences of emphasis and interpretation as a challenge to reflect, discuss, learn and even change our practice. I would be extremely pleased to dialogue and learn more, so please contact me at intrac@malawi.net.

The spirit cannot be said, it can only be shown.
Wisely and Lynn

² Name changed for reasons of confidentiality

³ OD is a people-centred approach to organisational change that aims to increase the organisation’s capacity for learning, awareness and self-understanding, so the organisation becomes better equipped to take control over its situation, activities and future (SMC 6/2002:43).

⁴ 1 Peter 4:9 (all quotes NIV unless otherwise stated)

⁵ John 13:35

⁶ Luke 4:18

⁷ 2 Corinthians 12:9

⁸ 1 Corinthians 13:12 (KJV)

⁹ For further information on inter-faith dialogue on development issues you may wish to visit www.wfdd.org.uk.

2. Current thinking on spirituality in organisations

Spirituality is becoming part of mainstream organisational theory and practice in the secular world. It is no longer viewed as the preserve of a 'new age' or 'fundamentalist' fringe. In the last five years management journals, conferences, academic syllabuses and popular writers have increasingly focused on the spiritual dimension to organisations and change. A number of top companies are making explicit attempts to integrate a more spiritual approach into their management practices. Yet in the literature and practice of NGO organisation development, the spiritual dimension is still largely conspicuous by its absence, despite the importance of faith-based organisations in development.

This chapter explores current management thinking and literature in the following areas:

- ❖ To what extent is spirituality part of mainstream management thinking today?
- ❖ Why is it moving into the mainstream?
- ❖ What do different people mean by the term 'spirituality'?
- ❖ What are some of the key elements of spiritually-based organisations?

2.1 The mainstreaming of spirituality in management

The academic world has witnessed an 'explosion of interest in spirituality as a new dimension of management. The present spiritual trend is probably the most significant trend in management since the 1950s' (Howard 2002:230). Numerous conferences, articles, books, influential websites and courses are springing up on the subject. The American Academy of Management, arguably the most mainstream and venerable professional management association, has recently formed a special interest group on Management, Spirituality and Religion. Harvard Business School now hosts an annual conference on Leadership, Values and Spirituality and there are now at least 12 other conferences each year in the US alone on

spirituality and organisations (Harris 2000). In Europe leading business schools such as INSEAD and Cranfield School of Management have introduced spirituality into their curricula. Major academic journals such as the Journal of Organisational Change Management and the Journal of Management Psychology have had special issues on spirituality in 1999, 2002 and 2003. Levels of interest reached the point of launching a new journal, Management, Spirituality and Religion in 2004.

The interest in spirituality is not confined to the rarefied atmospheres of academia. Organisational consultants and popular writers such as John Adair, Peter Senge, Tom Peters, Peter Vaill, Steven Covey, Charles Handy and Harrison Owen are increasingly explicit about the spiritual dimension to organisational life. For example, Covey states: 'I believe that there are parts to human nature that cannot be reached either by legislation or education, but require the power of God to deal with' (1989:319). While Owen points out: 'Real or lasting change is rarely, if ever, affected by memo and command. Such change occurs when the spirit changes' (1985:7).

These spiritual perspectives on organisations have also permeated the 'real world' of management practice. Wagner-Marsh and Conley observe that 'a great number of highly diverse firms are moving ahead with attempts to instil a spiritual approach to their corporate cultures' (1999:292). They highlight Fortune 100 firms such as TDIndustries, Xerox, Exxon and the Bank of Montreal which 'all have a spiritual dimension to leadership and management development programmes' (ibid 294), and others like Hewlett Packard, Semco, Ben and Jerry's and Toyota as implementing a spiritual approach to management. Ricardo Semler describes an organisational change process in one of Semco's factories: 'The pot soon began to boil and before long the old Hobart plant was unrecognisable. Not just physically of course, but organisationally and, if I may say so, spiritually' (1999:81). Other large firms such as Boeing have Christian, Jewish and Muslim prayer groups while others have what they call 'Higher Power Lunches'. Research in the US revealed an increasing number of managers turning to various types of meditation and spiritual disciplines to cope with their turbulent work environments (Biberman and Whitty 1997:132). Paul Wong concludes: 'The movement to bring spirit and soul to business is no passing fad; it continues to grow and shows no sign of abating. Clearly something significant is stirring the corporate world' (2003:1).

Real or lasting change is rarely, if ever, affected by memo and command. Such change occurs when the spirit changes.
Harrison Owen

2.2 Why is spirituality moving into the mainstream?

We need to find out why spirituality is entering the management arena. The failure of the majority of organisational change efforts have led people to look for more innovative and deeper solutions. Change efforts led by logic and reason do not seem to have worked well.

Roger Harrison points out: 'I have never in all my years as a consultant seen anyone change an organisation in any fundamental way through rational planning'. He encapsulates the dilemma when he says: 'The tools and approaches that have got us where we are today are not the ones we can use to advance to another level. The real answers to our dilemmas lie in the dark, beyond the circle of illumination given by our current concepts and methods' (1995:167).

I have never in all my years as a consultant seen anyone change an organisation in any fundamental way through rational planning.

Roger Harrison

Andrew Kakabadse, one of the leading management thinkers today, believes that one of the reasons for the failure of organisational change 'lies in ignoring the invisible world, the spiritual, the collective unconscious, the underlying order of things' (2002:179). Another writer, Dorothy Marcic, asserts that 'the bewildering organisational problems are rooted at least partially in a lack of awareness of spiritual laws and their relevance to the workforce' (1997:xi). She believes that most organisational change programmes fail 'because they do not go far enough. They do not deal with core issues of spirit and love and ultimately do not deliver' (1997:27). There is a realisation that most change programmes – while attempting to catalyse 'life' and energy – have inadvertently been focusing on inert matter, such as systems and structures.

The recent progression in natural sciences thinking has also had a profound impact in moving spirituality into the mainstream. Insights from the natural sciences have shown the world to be an individual whole, a web of relationships in which any action has complex, non-linear and unpredictable effects. According to Ackerman, as well as Banner and Gagne, spirituality and consciousness are the core of dynamic evolutionary systems and thus must be included in analysis and practice of organisational change and management (quoted by Korac-Kakabadse et al, 2002). Biberman and Whitty identify that 'post-modern management is emerging, one that emphasises spiritual principles and practices and incorporates ideas from quantum physics, cybernetics, chaos theory, cognitive sciences and Eastern and Western spiritual traditions' (1997:130).

Recent socio-economic trends have also pushed spirituality into the forefront of organisational thinking and practice. Increasing insecurity caused by downsizing, mergers and globalisation has made people look for their security beyond their job. Such trends have also increased the stress levels on those left behind. Rapid technological change has been dehumanising to a degree by making people feel both eminently and imminently expendable. As Peter Vaill describes: 'More than ever, individuals find themselves in a world of permanent white water, experiencing a lack of meaning in their lives and an attendant sense of spiritual desolation' (1989 quoted by King and Nicol 1999:234).

Recent socio-economic trends have also pushed spirituality into the forefront of organisational thinking and practice.

In addition, as the West has been enjoying unparalleled prosperity over the last two decades, some people have found an emptiness in affluence and consequently have begun to look beyond the material in search for meaning. This search has been further encouraged by the disillusionment and alienation arising from corporate scandals (termed by some, the 'Enron Effect'). Coupled with a concurrent breakdown of traditional institutions such as the family, the workplace is now seen as one of the most important sources of community (Conger et al., 1994) and therefore an important place for exploring and finding spiritual meaning in life.

2.3 What is meant by spirituality?

Part of the sensitivity and disagreement over spirituality in organisations arises from the wide variety of definitions that people have when using the words spirit and spirituality. Harrison Owen, one of the foremost authors on spirituality in leadership and organisations, admits: 'Although I have written much on the subject of Spirit, I have never been able to define it' (2003:1). People naturally interpret spirituality from a personal frame of reference and belief system, but still need to communicate about it using common language. Just as it is difficult to see the wind, we know it is there because we can see its effects, so it is with the spirit.

From a variety of different definitions of spirituality (McCormick 1994, Stamp 1991, Wong 2003, Korac-Kakabadse 2002, Dehler and Welch 1994, Harris 2000) it is possible to highlight some common themes:

- ❖ an animating life force
- ❖ an inner, intangible experience

- ❖ an awareness of connectedness or relationship with something more
- ❖ concerns the meaning in life

Obviously this is different from religion. Ver Beek puts it clearly: ‘Spirituality is a relationship with the supernatural or spiritual realm that provides meaning and a basis for personal and communal reflection, decision and action, while religion is an institutionalised set of beliefs and practices regarding the spiritual realm’ (2000:32).

The main area of difference in defining the spiritual is whether people are simply talking of the inner human spirit or whether they are also talking about a supernatural and divine Spirit (as ver Beek does above). Many people appear comfortable with the ‘secular’ use of the term spirit to refer to an inner human spirit. This inner human spirit includes things like intuition, emotions and love. We often say someone is in ‘high spirits’ or ‘low spirits’. The human spirit can also be expressed between people, such as with ‘team spirit’ or ‘community spirit’. Christians, as well as those from many other faiths, believe that as well as this human spirit there is something more – an unseen external power that is supernatural – a divine Spirit (sometimes written with a capital ‘S’ to denote the difference from the human spirit). John Adair observes that: ‘In all traditions, there is a deeper tradition, that all inspiration flows from God, named or nameless, just as the sun is the ultimate source of energy in nature’ (Adair 2002:318). While many prefer to keep the Spirit vague and nameless and therefore open to a wide and inclusive variety of interpretations, others believe it is very important to take a leap of faith and define and name God. Interestingly, Sue Howard observes that ‘an increasing number of people in the world of OD are prepared to make this leap’ (2002:233).

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John Adair

Most orthodox Christians believe that God’s spirit works through all people by what is termed ‘Common Grace’ – enabling them to do good to others and change for the better. In this way spirituality includes the operation of the human spirit, but goes beyond to involve a relationship between the inner person and God (even if it is not acknowledged). In this publication, Christian spirituality in OD is defined as: the role of God’s spirit, working through human spirits, in the development of everything that is good in an organisation. A spiritual approach to OD therefore integrates both the human spirit and God’s supernatural spirit.

2.4 What are the spiritual elements of organisations?

Although the word spirituality is defined in a variety of ways, there is a general consensus among management writers on what this looks like when applied to organisations and also to leadership. Some of the major elements that are common to most are an emphasis on:

- ❖ vision and values
- ❖ service and love for others
- ❖ empowering others
- ❖ relationships of trust
- ❖ changing from within
- ❖ courage to overcome fears
- ❖ a divine spark or energy

The first six of these ‘spiritual’ elements are generally accepted as good organisational practice. Humanists may see them as arising from our own human nature and some might be uncomfortable having the label ‘spiritual’ attached to them. Other people from a wide variety of faiths believe that these elements are characteristics of the human *spirit* and also have a divine source (as some of the quotes below demonstrate). They also assert the importance of the vital seventh element – the existence and involvement of a divine power in organisational change.

Strategic planning is a search for meaning rather than a search for advantage.
Roger Harrison

Vision and values

The importance of organisations being visionary and value-led is increasingly recognised in the management world and is seen as a key element of a spiritually-based organisation. As people are increasingly searching for meaning from their workplace, so organisational values become more of a driving factor. According to Roger Harrison: ‘Strategic planning is a search for meaning rather than a search for advantage. Strategic planning says in effect, “Get your values right, listen to the call to serve, decide what you want, go for it with all your heart, and trust in the Lord”’ (1995:177) – an interesting observation from someone who probably would not label himself as a Christian. This is consistent with the growing emphasis on leadership being about creating meaning for people and managing by values. People have a yearning to be inspired with a vision. Bennis and Nanus advise that ‘by focussing attention on a vision the leader operates on the emotional and spiritual resources of the organisation, on

its values and commitment' (Conger et al 1994 referring to 'Leaders' 1985:92). The most effective organisations are seen to be those that have shared values that harness emotional energies of people – belief in a cause can generate considerable commitment and energy. Peter Senge says that real learning organisations 'talk of being part of something larger than themselves' (Wisely and Lynn in Conger et al 1994:122). In a similar vein John Adair states that 'the greatest leaders have been sustained by a belief that they were in some ways instruments of destiny, that they tapped hidden resources of power, that they truly lived as they tried to live in harmony with some greater, more universal purpose or intention in the world' (2002:306). This quote makes a direct connection between vision and something beyond the human, something 'supernatural'. He is saying that it is not just about having any human vision, but that this vision is from something beyond.

Service and love for others

The emphasis on service to others has underpinned many of the quality management change programmes in the last two decades. As organisations are increasingly perceived to be interconnected with stakeholders, so there has been greater attention paid to the needs of the customers and more recently to the needs of the wider community through corporate social responsibility programmes. Within the leadership field, there has been considerable emphasis on the concept of the leader as the servant of others: servant leadership (Greenleaf 1998, Blanchard 1999, Adair 2001) – although some management academics mistakenly attribute it to being 'originated by Robert Greenleaf in 1977' (Daft and Lengel 2000:192).

This focus on meeting the needs of others or wanting the best for other people is described by some as 'love'. James Autry asserts: 'Management is in fact a sacred trust in which the well being of other people is put into your care during most of their waking hours' (quoted *ibid* 95). Dorothy Marcic also relates: 'In my search to understand what has been happening in organisations, I began to see that dysfunctional managers are not the causal factor as I had previously thought, but symptoms of some deeper problem. The root cause is lack of love' (1997:14). She goes on to say that: 'Spiritual power comes from one's being and is the capacity to influence others, not by controlling them as in political power, but through love. Those who have it do not feel arrogant or self-satisfied, but rather gain a greater humility realising that the true source of power comes from a higher power, not from themselves' (*ibid* 49). Once again, she attributes the source of this love to a divine source.

Empowering others

The concept of empowering others is closely linked with the notion of service. As organisations are perceived to be more about relationships and interconnections, so there is an emphasis within 'spiritually-based organisations' on empowering others – enabling people to be free to take decisions, to develop their potential and work creatively with others. David Dotlich put it bluntly when he said: 'Show me a leader who is decisive, fiercely independent, dominant and in control and I'll show you someone who doesn't have a clue about how to lead in today's organisations' (1998:xi). Or as John Buchan pointed out: 'The task of leadership is not to put greatness into humanity, but to elicit it, for the greatness is already there' (quoted by Adair 2002:256).

Relationships of trust

Spiritually-based organisations are perceived to place more emphasis on relationships of openness, trust and teamwork. The Roman historian Livy highlighted the importance of trust when he said: 'Trust being lost, all social intercourse is brought to naught' (quoted by Adair 2002:285). More recently, the guru of organisational learning Peter Senge emphasised that in relation to organisational change: 'There is nothing, nothing, nothing as important as the quality of relationships' (Senge quoted by Lichtenstein 1997:398)

Changing from within

Spiritually-based organisations and leaders believe that we are part of an interconnected whole. If we want to change that whole, we must change ourselves. For an individual or an organisation to be open to such change, they need to be very self-aware, without being self-centred. Key writers such as Kakabadse 1999, Quinn 2000, Adair 2002 emphasise that effective leaders are highly self-aware, as such leaders 'are more likely to move quickly and confidently and in different directions, without needing to be consistently right and in control' (Dotlich and Noel 1999:187). Leaders and organisations need to look at their glasses, rather than just through them.

Courage to overcome fears

Our resistance to change and desire for control are largely a product of fear. In the turbulence of today's world, such efforts at control are proving counter-productive, so

spiritually-based firms emphasise the importance of courage in overcoming fears. Parker Palmer observes that ‘all the great spiritual traditions at their core say one single thing: be not afraid’ (in Conger et al 1994:40). His advice to leaders is: ‘Do not be your fears. Lead from an inner place of trust and hope thus creating a world that is more trusting and hopeful’ (ibid 40).

A divine spark

At the turning point of organisational change is a shift in collective consciousness, what some term the ‘aha’ moment, that then gives rise to a willed response. One recent research project was designed to explore what actually happens in the moment of transformation. Three major organisational theorists and practitioners, Peter Senge, Bill Torbert and Ellen Wingard were interviewed in depth. According to Neal, Lichtenstein, Banner: ‘Spirit was not at the core of any of their change theory /.../ and in each one, the practitioner’s theory proves a rational logic for pushing the organisation to the brink of transformation, and the theory offers logical tools to support the overall effort. Yet in all cases the transformations they helped to generate were sparked, not through rational efforts at all. The actual ‘cause’ of transformation, according to the data, was expressed by these practitioner/theorists in terms of ‘grace’, ‘magic’ and a ‘miracle’. By definition these are phenomena that cannot be scientifically or logically explained, supernatural events going beyond theory and rational action ... The cause of transformation may indeed be spirit, yet the result may indeed be an increase in effectiveness and productivity within the system’ (1999:180).

John Adair asserts: ‘The vital difference, the X-factor, which enables you to transcend limits, is called inspiration ... There is guidance and help available in strategic leadership from God, or as if from a god if you would prefer it’ (2002:266). According to the Christian psychiatrist and author Dr John White: ‘Supernatural influences are the original impulse for any deep or lasting change. It may not always be consciously felt, but it is always present’ (1991:95).

Conclusion

There is a noticeable trend in the management world towards accepting and integrating a spiritual dimension into organisational theory and practice. Reputable business schools, noted authors and successful firms talk about spirituality and management more openly than before. Although a common definition of spirituality is elusive, there is more consensus on

how it applies to organisations. Commentators highlight that spiritually based organisations emphasise: vision and values; service and love for others; empowering others; relationships of trust; changing from within; and courage to overcome fears.

The main area of contention is whether or not there is a divine dimension to these elements and therefore whether or not they should parade the label of 'spiritual'. While some assert that these are all products of the human *spirit*, others believe that there is a divine Spirit that is not only the source of these principles, but also empowers people and enables them to live them out. They believe that at the core of any positive human and organisational change there is a divine spark or breath of life, which comes from 'common grace'.

Christians believe that God is the author and creator of all good things, so it should not surprise us that he appears at the heart of organisational change. To understand more about God's perspective on organisational change processes we must therefore turn to the Bible and interpret what it says about the principles and process of human change. As we understand this more clearly, we can then draw out the implications for organisational change. In doing so we will find they can radically change our OD practice.

3. Towards a biblical approach to change

We know that the essence of any organisation is its people. So when we are involved in organisational change, we are really interested in people and how they change. This is a subject on which the Bible has much to say; in fact some would say it is the whole focus of the Bible. The Bible overflows with stories of human change. When we compare the change experiences of the people of Israel described in the Old Testament with the parables and examples of human change in the New Testament we find a remarkable consistency and congruence. These biblical principles and practices are also mirrored by the experiences of major changes throughout church history, whether reformations or revivals. These principles are also reflected in many experiences of mission work and even in our personal spiritual journeys.

It is important to emphasise that people's theologies vary and that this affects their interpretation of the Bible. Liberation theologians for example may emphasise more the social dimension of change, while evangelical theologians may appear to concentrate more on the individual dimension of change. My own beliefs concur with the Jerusalem Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1928, which pointed out that the Bible 'does not recognise the antithesis, frequently emphasised, between individual and social regeneration' (Kirk 2003:7). Andrew Kirk in the Swedish Mission Council booklet, *What is Mission?* makes it clear that: 'God's salvation can never be understood in wholly individual terms. It is about reconciliation between human beings in the formation of a new community' (2003:9). Individual and social change are inextricably linked and go hand-in-hand. The principles and practice of human change are therefore similar, whether we are talking about individuals, congregations, communities, organisations or even societies.

As I grow older I am pleasantly surprised at how relevant theology has become to the whole of life

Desmond Tutu

My own interpretation of the Bible, informed by my protestant background, highlights a number of key principles and processes of change. As I reflect on these and apply my faith to

my OD work, my practice is changing radically. I am finding, like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, whose work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa led him to realise: 'As I grow older I am pleasantly surprised at how relevant theology has become to the whole of life' (1999:73).

3.1 Biblical principles of change

God's sovereignty and initiative in change

The Bible reveals that change is first and foremost God's process. God is the author of change. According to SMC's theological perspective on organisations: 'It is God, not human beings, who has taken the initiative to show his love to his creation' (2002:10-11). Kirk points out that on an individual level: 'Christians believe that salvation comes from God and not from our own efforts. We are but agents of God's activity' (Kirk 2003:17). Consequently as Myers states: 'A Christian process of change must begin with an affirmation that at the most fundamental level transformation takes place because God wants it and enables it' (Myers 1999:121).

Christians believe that salvation comes from God and not from our own efforts. We are but agents of God's activity.
Andrew Kirk

The sovereignty of God in change is beautifully illustrated by the story of Joshua meeting the angel just before he was to attack Jericho. The Bible says: 'Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come"'¹⁰. God is at the centre of biblical change processes, not humans. We are trying to get onto his side, not endeavouring to persuade God onto our side. As the Psalmist writes: 'Unless the Lord builds the house [or organisation], its builders labour in vain'¹¹.

Biblical change begins with God's vision – a revelation from God. The Exodus vision of escape to a land flowing with milk and honey came from God to Moses in a burning bush¹². Paul too, appearing before Agrippa, identified the source of his vision, saying: 'I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven'¹³. Even Jesus said: 'The Son can... do only what he sees the Father doing'¹⁴.

The Exodus story also illustrates that God can guide and lead the change process¹⁵ and also empower people to change¹⁶. It describes how God intervened in a supernatural way to

change a situation illustrated in the parting of the Red Sea¹⁷ and by the provision of manna¹⁸. When we contemplate organisational change we must remember that it occurs “not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord¹⁹. The need for God to empower change processes was also emphasised by Jesus when he said to his disciples: ‘Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high’²⁰. The power to change comes from ‘on high’. As Paul’s letter to the Philippians says: ‘For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose’²¹.

God’s power is needed in change because there are things outside human control – a spiritual dimension to change. We cannot change everything in our human strength, because ‘our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms’²². While we may not yet fully understand what this means in every situation, it is clear from the Bible that there are evil spiritual forces that may need to be overcome if we, and our organisations, are to change.

Change takes place at God’s timing and his speed. Ecclesiastes 3 illustrates the inevitability of change – a time for everything, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot. But this timing is in God’s hands. Many Old Testament characters like Noah, Abraham, Moses and Joseph had to wait an agonising length of time for God’s promises of change to be fulfilled. But when change does come, it is often sudden and unexpected.

Human responsibility as co-creators of change

Although God is the author of change, a divine paradox is that he has also chosen humans to be co-creators with him of the change. While we must recognise that although we are utterly dependent on God in any change process, he has also given us important responsibilities. He has made human beings his agents of change. He has also given us free will to choose how to respond to this. The parable of the talents²³ emphasises that we have each been given gifts and responsibilities, which we must use productively to bring about change.

The Bible illustrates over and over again how God chooses to work through individuals to catalyse change. All major changes in the Old Testament and New Testament began with God entrusting the work to an individual, whether it was Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Esther, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, David, Hezekiah, Peter, John, Philip, Stephen, Paul or Silas. These

individuals were characterised by their humility and servant leadership that enabled them to be used by God. It is also clear that they were people of courage and human wisdom²⁴. They were people who deliberately and constantly listened to God and who sought his presence to transform situations – as exemplified by Moses’ prayer: ‘If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here’²⁵.

The Bible also shows how God also responds to fervent prayer. When Nehemiah first heard about the destruction of Jerusalem he said: ‘I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven’²⁶. When Elijah prayed earnestly, it did not rain for three and a half years²⁷. The followers of Jesus joined together constantly in prayer before the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost²⁸ – as the letter of James observes: ‘The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.’²⁹

Yet as humans we find this paradox of being both dependent and responsible difficult to manage. Sometimes we tend to simply abdicate all responsibility upwards hoping that God will do everything for us and not taking any actions ourselves. We may feel, as Moses did initially, that we are not up to the responsibilities which God has entrusted to us. Yet at other times we tend to forget our dependence and take responsibility away from God as Moses also did when he tried to solve Israel’s problems in his own strength and frustration when he murdered the Egyptian slave master³⁰. This human tendency to try to do things ourselves, forgetting God’s central role, is highlighted by Paul when he challenges the Galatian church: ‘Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?’³¹

Paul’s example, when he said: ‘To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me’³² gives us an insight into how this is done. The need to live out this paradox of responsibility and dependence is so important that he emphasises: ‘I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me’³³. We must get the horses ready for battle, but know that victory belongs to the Lord³⁴.

3.2 Biblical elements in a change process

As well as emphasising human dependence on God and human responsibility for being co-creators of change, the Bible also highlights a number of key elements in a change process.

While some of these elements may appear more familiar to a process of individual change, they are just as relevant to a process of societal, church or organisational change. They include:

- ❖ a vision for change
- ❖ accepting responsibility for failures
- ❖ turning around by repenting and confessing
- ❖ grace is at the turning point
- ❖ forgiveness and reconciliation
- ❖ taking action to change

A vision for change

Change starts with a vision of a better future. Sometimes change comes from responding to outside changes in the environment that give rise to new opportunities that need to be taken or potential threats that need to be avoided. Other times change comes as a response to recognition of internal inadequacies or failures in the past. What is common to both is a vision of a better future. God gave people like David and Jesus' disciples a sense of calling and purpose; a real hope that things would change – and they should be a part of that change.

Many times this vision comes in the midst of severe challenges.

Many times this vision comes in the midst of severe challenges. God prepares individuals and communities to be his catalysts for change, enabling them to see beyond the problems and to the divine potential to change the situation. Major societal change in the Bible frequently occurred at a time of considerable difficulties. Whether looking at the Exodus from Egypt; the depravity of Ahaz that preceded Hezekiah; the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Nehemiah; or the influence of Daniel in exile; we see that they occurred in times of crisis and moral darkness³⁵. On an individual level the picture is the same: Jesus met the Samaritan woman when she was living an immoral life; Legion when he was possessed by evil spirits; and Zacchaeus when he was corrupt and hated by everyone. Jesus' parable of the prodigal son shows a picture of the son facing starvation and longing to eat the food he was giving to the pigs. This biblical pattern is repeated by the history of major church transformations that have tended to come at a time of deep division and crisis, rather than when things are going well.

The reason that severe problems are a frequent starting point for change is because: 'Ever since the Fall, God has continually worked to cause his people to realise their utter dependence on him. He does this by bringing us to the point of human extremity, where we have no place to turn, but him' (Myers 1999:141).

As Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 1:8-9: 'We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.' Human pride often holds back change. It is often only when we accept our own inability to solve the situation that our pride is broken and we look to God for change. But if we are keenly aware of our limitations and trust in God, we can change without having to be taken to such extremes.

Accepting responsibility for failures – conviction

In situations of severe challenge biblical examples of change occurred when people not only recognised that the problems existed, but also accepted that they were in some way responsible, not just individually, but also corporately. As long as people externalise blame on others then nothing changes. David was convicted by the visit of the prophet Nathan and wrote: 'My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear'³⁶. Nehemiah cried out: 'I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you'³⁷. When the cock crowed and Peter realised he had disowned Jesus three times, he 'went outside and wept bitterly'³⁸.

Accepting responsibility for a situation is directly linked to our consciences. When people realise that a gap exists between who they are and who they want to be, they will do much to maintain the integrity of their personality. As Robbins puts it: 'The greatest leverage you can create for yourself is the pain that comes from inside knowing that you have failed to live up to your own standards' (1999:127).

The greatest leverage you can create for yourself is the pain that comes from inside knowing that you have failed to live up to your own standards.

Tony Robbins

Consequently conviction of error involves recognising truth, however unpalatable. John White points out: 'No-one ever really changes for the better without somehow facing the

truth' (1991:56). It may be painful to face the truth about ourselves or to tell the truth to other people.

Turning around – repenting and confessing

When change is a response to past failure, there is a need for a conscious turning around and letting go of past behaviour, sometimes called repentance. Repentance is an unfashionable word today, not only in the secular society, but even in many churches. It is unpopular because it is so uncomfortable, perhaps because it is the nub of the change process. Repentance literally means 'turning around'. Andrew Kirk says that repentance is 'more than just emotions of sorrow, regret or remorse, but an act of the will, a deliberate turning away from a past life in order to embrace a new one' (2003:19). Repentance is not just an individual process, but also a social one that may need to be undertaken as a group in order to prompt organisational change. As the Bible says: 'If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land'³⁹. Before the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, the Israelites 'stood in their places and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers'⁴⁰.

Grace is at the turning point of change

There is a difficult choice at the turning point. Both Peter and Judas betrayed Jesus, but chose very different responses. Judas condemned himself and took his own life, while Peter repented and was forgiven, reinstated and transformed into the rock on which the church was built⁴¹. The choice is heavily influenced by our understanding of whether we are loved and accepted by God and by other people. As John White points out: 'The relief of knowing that we might be loved and accepted is what brings true change' (1991:115). Romans 2:4 emphasises: 'God's kindness leads you toward repentance.' In the midst of the Prodigal Son's troubles, he 'came to his senses'⁴² as his awareness of his father's love (albeit misty) was enough to convince him he would be treated better than he was at present.

The concept of grace is right at the core of the biblical process of change. Grace, *charis* in Greek, has two related and complementary meanings in the New Testament: unmerited favour through Jesus or divine assistance through the Holy Spirit. Grace is not simply a positive attitude, but it is an attitude that involves positive action. As God said to Paul: 'My

grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'⁴³. As John 3:16 states, 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son...' Grace is active and dynamic. Grace is what empowers people to change. As we have already seen, Paul wrote: 'I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me'⁴⁴. Grace is something that labours. It strengthens our wills and releases us from the paralysis of guilt. Grace can be defined as the divine power that causes me to be what God wants me to be and to do what God wants me to do.

Grace is what Christianity is all about and is what makes Christianity distinct from other religions. According to Acts 14:3, 20:24 and 20:32, the teaching of Christianity can be summed up as 'the gospel of grace'. Desmond Tutu wrote: 'I preached my only sermon – that God loves us freely as an act of grace' (1999:146).

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Another essential element in the biblical process of change is receiving and offering forgiveness. Indeed forgiveness is central to the whole biblical narrative. The goal of Peter's ministry to the Gentiles was 'to open their eyes ... so that they may receive forgiveness'⁴⁵. Even today forgiveness, both individually and corporately, is critical for change. As Desmond Tutu entitled his book on social reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa, 'there is no future without forgiveness' (1999).

Yet forgiveness is not the same as removing the consequences of our actions. Even if we are forgiven, there is still often a price to pay. Neither is forgiveness the same as forgetting, but it is remembering in a different way, in a 'non-toxic' way (Schreier 2003:21) that frees the wrongdoer from guilt and the wronged from bitterness and hatred. But forgiveness militates against human nature – grace appears as a 'scandal' (Yancey 1997:139). It cannot be bought or earned as Jesus demonstrated in his parable of the unforgiving servant⁴⁶. It is not a passive event, but a process that liberates and empowers change.

Taking action to change

If there is no subsequent action taken, then there has been no genuine repentance and no real change. The Bible clearly mandates the importance of making restitution where this is possible. Numbers 5:7 says: 'He must make full restitution for his wrong.' In the New

Testament, Zacchaeus offered to pay up to four times whatever he had stolen from people, as well as giving half his possessions to the poor⁴⁷. Taking action to change may also involve making peace with other people. In Matthew 5:23-25, Jesus commands us to reconcile ourselves with our brothers and sisters before offering a gift at the altar. It also involves putting into practice Jesus' words to the adulterous woman: 'Go now and leave your life of sin'⁴⁸.

Change also is an on-going and incomplete process – a journey rather than a destination.

Change is a costly process as it involves giving up ingrained habits and ways of thinking that have become very comfortable, if not indeed 'second-nature'. The Exodus story relates how often the people of Israel complained in the wilderness and wanted to remove Moses as leader⁴⁹. All but two or three gave up. Change is often opposed as the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls by Nehemiah illustrates⁵⁰. Change also is an on-going and incomplete process – a journey rather than a destination. While the turning point may be instantaneous, the process of transformation takes a lifetime and may never be fully realised. The Kingdom of God is not yet here – creation is still groaning in expectation⁵¹. Paul himself admits himself: 'For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do'⁵². He uses the continuous active verb when he says, literally: 'Continue to let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind'⁵³.

Conclusion

There are a number of key lessons that can be drawn from this biblical interpretation of change. God is the author of change. He is not our agent, but we are his. There is therefore no simple theological formula that enables us to bring about change. There are principles to follow, but God is not like a vending machine, whereby we press certain buttons and change happens.

God initiates the vision for change; he leads and he empowers change. As change agents we need his power, otherwise it is like pushing a car with the handbrake on, rather than turning the ignition. Grace is at the heart of change. Grace is a distinctively Christian concept that empowers the change process, whether we are talking about individuals, congregations, communities or societies. God's grace is common grace. It is not confined to the church and there is no Christian monopoly on God's power in change processes. As individuals we have also been given responsibility to make change happen. Throughout the Bible God uses

individuals to bring about change. But while the turning point is instantaneous, the process of transformation takes a lifetime. Change is not a one-off event, but a long-term and costly process.

This biblical pattern of change is in fact a universal process of human change. Many secular organisational theories of change reinforce this biblical interpretation, even if they use different language. As we saw in Chapter 2, current organisational theory is also increasingly recognising that there is a spiritual dynamic to organisational change. Ultimately our theology determines our understanding of human change and therefore our practice of organisational change. When we consciously apply this biblical understanding to our OD work, we will find this can radically change our practice, as we shall now see. The following case study illustrates how one such process occurred, though in no way suggests that this is the blueprint that has to be followed.

Change is not a one-off event, but a long-term and costly process.

¹⁰ Joshua 5:13-14

¹¹ Psalm 127:1

¹² Exodus 3:7-8

¹³ Acts 26:19

¹⁴ John 5:19-20

¹⁵ Exodus 13:18 & 21

¹⁶ Exodus 3:19-20

¹⁷ Exodus 14:21

¹⁸ Exodus 16:4

¹⁹ Zechariah 4:6

²⁰ Luke 24:49

²¹ Philippians 2:13

²² Ephesians 6:12

²³ 1 Matthew 25

²⁴ Daniel 1:17, 5:12 or Acts 6:3

²⁵ Exodus 33:15

²⁶ Nehemiah 1:4

²⁷ 1 Kings 17 and James 5:17

²⁸ Acts 1:14

²⁹ James 5:16

³⁰ Exodus 2:12

³¹ Galatians 3:3

³² Colossians 1:29

³³ 1 Corinthians 15:10

³⁴ Proverbs 21:31

³⁵ 1 Exodus 12; 2 Kings 17:40-41; 2 Chronicles 28:1-4 and 22-25; Nehemiah 1; Daniel 5

³⁶ Psalm 38:4

³⁷ Nehemiah 1:6

³⁸ Luke 22:62

³⁹ 2 Chronicles 7:14

⁴⁰ Nehemiah 9:2

⁴¹ Matthew 16:18

⁴² Luke 15:17

⁴³ 2 Corinthians 12:9

⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 5:10

⁴⁵ Acts 26:18

⁴⁶ Matthew 18

⁴⁷ Luke 19:8

⁴⁸ John 8:11

⁴⁹ Numbers 14:4

⁵⁰ Nehemiah 6

⁵¹ Romans 8:22

⁵² Romans 7:15

⁵³ Romans 12:2

4. When the bishops repented the resurrection of an organisation

I knew from the very start that it was not a rational decision to accept the consultancy with the Tangababwe Christian Fellowship (TCF)⁵⁴. The off-hand mention in the terms of reference that the secretariat ‘was closed about three years ago due to resource constraints, weak leadership and lack of a clear direction at the time’ set alarm bells ringing. What could I offer an organisation in such severe crisis? Yet my attempts at polite refusal by asking a barrage of negative questions failed to deter TCF and a few weeks later I found myself on a plane wondering, ‘What have I let myself in for?’ In fact it turned out to be the most remarkable experience of my professional life as I observed an all-but-dead organisation transformed in what seemed to me a supernatural way.

The initial interviews with key leaders confirmed my worst suspicions. I had never come across an organisation that was so sick. The destructive internal fighting in TCF meant some leaders refused to sit in the same room as others and one had even burnt down another’s church. For the last few years TCF had been little more than an instrument of the State President to counter any opposition to his increasingly autocratic misrule. As soon as the mainstream churches made a statement about human rights, TCF would react with a partisan defence of the government. The chair and the vice-chair of TCF were having regular meetings at the State House and there were strong rumours that they had received gifts of money and farms. One of the TCF leaders was reportedly involved in a high-profile land-grabbing incident. I was later told: ‘You were selected on the basis that you could not be intimidated by powerful political authorities’ – though even in the preparatory interviews I was threatened with deportation should the workshop not turn out well. I was relieved that I had insisted on working alongside two local consultants who knew the sensitivities and volatilities of the context much more intimately than I did.

‘You were selected on the basis that you could not be intimidated by powerful political authorities.’

Not surprisingly donors had long since departed from TCF. In the words of the General Secretary: ‘No-one wanted to be associated with TCF. We wouldn’t pay our rent. We had no

projects. We should have been buried.’ But this recently appointed part-time General Secretary refused to accept that TCF be buried. He felt ‘certain that God wanted to revive TCF and restore it to integrity, honesty and fellowship’. But the ongoing ‘shameful behaviour’ meant that he had reached the point where he felt that if God did not do something he would quit. He had done all he could. As a last resort he had the idea of a capacity building workshop. He was encouraged in this by the regional adviser from a donor agency (which had supported TCF in the past) who believed in the importance of such church consortia, but also understood the political dynamics of the country. Together they persuaded a highly sceptical donor to finance the workshop.

At the same time a small group of women from one of the TCF churches felt inspired to pray for TCF’s revival. They organised regular prayer meetings in the capital and took a team to the workshop venue three weeks beforehand to spend three days praying for the event.

As the facilitators sat down to plan the workshop we wondered what on earth we could do. We were acutely aware of our inability to do anything about TCF in our own strength. We believed we had to depend on God’s intervention to change people’s hearts. The day and a half we had spent on initial interviews had quickly revealed the extent of the problems. Disillusionment and fear were rife. We too contemplated the week ahead in fear and trembling, comforted only by the fact that TCF was so sick that we had nothing to lose. The corruption at senior level was so acute that we felt that probably the best options would be to facilitate them to allow TCF to die without bringing more shame on those involved.

Participants’ fears were further exacerbated by the selection of a remote hotel owned by the President as the venue for the workshop. Many were reluctant to come for fear of the rooms being bugged. On the bright side, I hoped this meant that only the board and General Secretary would attend, as it would be much easier to handle the difficult issues in a small group. As it turned out, my hopes for a small attendance were dashed. 37 participants from many different churches were there, including more than ten bishops, almost every board member and some highly respected church leaders. On arrival people were very suspicious and quite anxious to leave. Many were expecting confrontation, condemnation and conflict.

We had decided it would be best to concentrate for the first day on less threatening topics to

“No-one wanted to be associated with TCF. We wouldn’t pay our rent. We had no projects. We should have been buried.”

try and reduce the level of fear. We started by asking participants what they thought was God's vision for TCF. The vision exercises enabled participants to explore their environment and out of it 'came a realisation that as evangelicals we were existing in a world of our own, out of touch with issues of poverty, HIV and democratic politics', according to one participant. They saw that if they were to tackle these issues they had to collaborate with other groups and become less isolated. The exercise encouraged the diverse participants to unite in defining a common vision.

"What brought this change was when the leaders were honest enough to own up to their failings."

A shared understanding of TCF's history was developed in the afternoon by using a 'river of life' exercise, whereby groups of participants drew the history of the TCF as if it were a river; events were represented as rocks, crocodiles, rapids along the way. This exercise allowed many of the current issues (which were a product of their history) to surface and to be discussed in a non-threatening way. This was important because fears were still prevalent. Yet despite the unrelenting tension, the exercise proved very illuminating. It enabled a candid examination of the past, but in a surprisingly light-hearted way. According to one: 'Somehow there was a willingness to reckon with the history. It can only have been the Holy Spirit that removed this defensiveness.' After the different pictures were explained, participants filed past for a gallery walk, in a way that inadvertently resembled the viewing of the dead body at an African funeral.

The chair had to leave the next morning, but before doing so, publicly acknowledged his failings and accepted responsibility for many of the errors that had left TCF in such a state. This set the tone for the short biblical devotion that followed. The message was that law and judgment are like a mirror, they have no power to change people. Transformation comes by accepting God's grace and forgiveness. At the end of the message there was a long silence, before, one by one, each participant fell on their knees. Many major church leaders were openly weeping and confessing how they, as TCF, had failed to be an authentic evangelical voice. As one participant described: 'When the Bishops repented, God showed up.' Another explained: 'What brought this change was when the leaders were honest enough to own up to their failings. They realised that they had been a hindrance and repented.'

As facilitators we felt this marked a spiritual breakthrough. Spiritual conviction took centre stage and the highly charged emotional pressure was vented.

But what was I to do next? The following session was planned to be a cerebral process of prioritising internal issues using cards, but it did not seem appropriate. Instead we decided to deepen and personalise this corporate, emotional confession by asking each person to specify what past patterns of behaviour they needed to turn away from and to ask for forgiveness from each other. We sent participants off individually to pray and think of how their own behaviour had contributed to TCF's downfall, insisting that they should not judge anyone else.

After this reflection, people formed four different peer groups and confessed their failures to each other. We assigned a 'pastoral facilitator' to each group, who was highly respected and not significantly involved in TCF previously. The small groups prayed together before reconvening. These pastoral facilitators then presented the content of the confessions to the group as a whole. There was a strong sense that TCF had been 'adulterous' in its affairs with the President and a time of prayer seeking forgiveness from God and from each other followed.

It was astounding. In just one morning all the dirt and dross had been unearthed, confessed, repented and forgiven. To me this was nothing short of miraculous. I was the most surprised person there. Rather than lead facilitator, I felt I had been observing an amazing experience of God transforming people's hearts in a way that was to bring about the resurrection of TCF.

After lunch there was a clear sense that TCF should have a new birth, not a funeral.

After lunch there was a clear sense that TCF should have a new birth, not a funeral. In the afternoon participants answered the question in groups of why TCF should exist. The different mission statements were discussed and synthesised into a new TCF core purpose. The final day was devoted to developing TCF's strategy. Participants initially prioritised different potential roles for TCF and then tried to convert the good intentions into a practical action plan for the following 12 months. Task forces volunteered themselves and time-frames were given to each under the oversight of an elected change-management team. The final difficult question was asked: how would these activities be paid for? Initial responses pointed to the need for recruiting new members and approaching donors. But some challenged the group to make their own commitment, saying: 'In the Bible Jesus usually asked people what resources they had.' Workshop participants pledged money quickly amounting to more than US\$5,000 – enough to keep TCF alive for the next six months.

What has happened since?

After such a seemingly miraculous experience 18 months ago, it was with some trepidation that I returned to Tangababwe recently to find out whether all the excitement at the workshop had made a difference in practice.

It goes without saying that TCF was still an organisation of human beings and had not been perfected overnight. A lack of capacity remained a major weakness; they still had just one part-time general secretary and one young, energetic, but largely voluntary, lawyer. This ongoing situation could partly be attributed to the fact that donor trust, once lost, takes a long time to recover. Furthermore some of the action points prioritised at the workshop had not been fully implemented or taken a long time, including the review of TCF's constitution which delayed the necessary changes in the governance structure.

But these limitations are minor compared with the remarkable changes in TCF that have taken place. TCF has become much more relevant to the environment in which it operates. It has become considerably more involved in social issues – HIV and drug abuse in particular. TCF has enabled many of its church member leaders to be trained in issues of HIV awareness and home-based care for AIDS sufferers. They have even been able to channel funding support to some members for HIV projects.

More amazingly, soon after the workshop, TCF offered a public apology to the mainline denominations in Tangababwe and asked them for forgiveness. Having a clearer sense of their own identity from the workshop has enabled TCF to engage more productively and less defensively with others. As one of my co-facilitators commented: 'We have seen over and over again the new willingness of evangelical leaders to work together with other churches of all denominations, way beyond traditional boundaries.' In a similar vein, one participant stated: 'The traditional isolationism of evangelicals is gone. TCF is sitting in forums in which they would not have been seen dead before.'

The TCF change process coincided with a review of the National Constitution. TCF played the pivotal role in awakening all churches in Tangababwe to the need to be involved and advocate in that process. Initially TCF called a national day of prayer for the country, and later brought together all major churches to a meeting to discuss the state of the nation. Church

leaders who had previously refused to sit together now cried together and a new pressure group uniting all the churches was born. This group has since met every week and produced a comprehensive set of recommendations, many of which were integrated into the constitutional review. As one commented: 'A move that began under the umbrella of TCF has now grown to bring together the whole Christian body in Tangababwe.' The unity between churches that has been attained has had a very far-reaching impact. When a new coalition government took office after the recent elections, a prominent Cabinet Minister came to the national thanksgiving service and said that the coalition 'took the example of working together in unity from the church.' A remarkable statement, especially when compared with the conflict and corruption that characterised the church less than a year earlier.

⁵⁴ Names have been changed for reasons of confidentiality.

5. A Christian approach to OD

In the light of this theory, theology and actual experience, can we discern a distinctive Christian approach to organisational change and development? How can we integrate and apply this understanding into our organisational lives?

This chapter synthesises my interpretation of a biblical approach to change, current management thinking on spirituality in organisations together with practical organisational change experiences to highlight ten key elements of a spiritual approach to OD from my personal Christian perspective. I believe a Christian approach to OD...

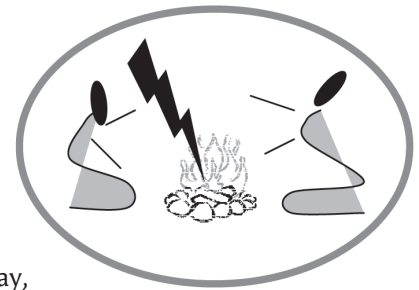
1. depends on God's power to spark change
2. believes the gift of grace is at the core of change
3. creates space for God's grace
4. listens to God
5. prays for change
6. focuses on life-giving, spiritual elements of organisations
7. follows a biblical process of change
8. internalises change
9. explicitly aims to integrate the spiritual dimension to change
10. is professionally excellent

Although the focus of this booklet is on organisational change the same elements are just as relevant for other social entities, such as congregations or communities. Individual change also follows a similar pattern. Indeed, there is an inextricable inter-relationship between social change and individual change. Differences of opinion about which should precede the other (as well as different theological emphases on the primacy of individual or social salvation) have sometimes created a false distinction between the need for internal change in the individual or external change in society. The reality is that both are absolutely essential; that they are mutually reinforcing and mutually inclusive (in that you cannot have one without the other).

Some of the elements highlighted are not unique to Christian OD. Many people who do not have a Christian faith also recognise many of these elements as good professional practice too. Good secular OD practice emphasises, for example, the need to create space for change, and the benefits of empowering people. Good OD practice may even identify the spiritual OD elements that relate to the human 'spirit' that is in all of us. That good professional practice reflects centuries-old spiritual principles and underlying spiritual laws should not really surprise us (Milliman et al MSR Newsletter 2003; Marcic 1997). I believe that spiritual OD is the role of God's spirit, working through human spirits in the development of everything that is good in an organisation. A Christian approach to organisational change therefore builds on, but goes much further than good professional practice by integrating both the human spirit and also God's divine Spirit.

1. Depends on God's power to spark change

An explicitly Christian approach to OD begins with the understanding that change is first and foremost God's process. God is the ultimate author of change even when this may not be immediately visible. The spark for change does not necessarily always, or even often, work in an obviously super-natural way, but usually works by empowering human concerns and ways of reasoning. But as well as accepting our human dependence, a Christian approach concurrently emphasises human responsibility for change: we are co-creators with him in his work of organisational change.



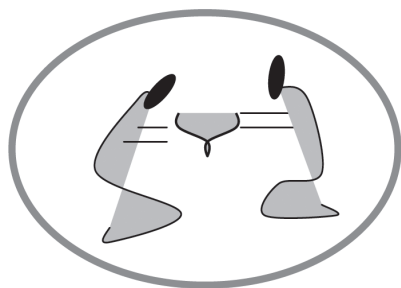
We find this paradox of being simultaneously both dependent and responsible difficult to manage. As soon as we begin to take some responsibility, we often fall into the trap of believing that we can do it in our own strength and lose the dependence on God. This is why so many change efforts do not take off until organisations and churches have reached the end of their human strength, give up on themselves and put their trust in God again. As the General Secretary of the TCF described: 'I reached the point where I felt that if God did not show up I would quit. This was the last chance. This was a bargaining point with God – if you want me to stay you do something.'

A Christian approach to OD depends on God to spark and inspire the change process. In Greek, Latin and Hebrew, spirit originally meant 'breath' or 'wind', and inspire literally

means ‘to in-breathe’. At the heart of organisational change the Spirit is breathing life into the dry bones⁵⁵, even if we do not acknowledge it. The outside spiritual force that provides the breath of life – the spark, aha moment, shift of collective consciousness, synergy, synchronicity, flow (call it what you will) – is attested to in the Bible as we saw in Chapter 3. Recent research by Lichtenstein, Banner and Neal reinforces this position as summarised in Chapter 2. Other research in the UK by MODEM has also investigated this. Using in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions with 30 UK managers, they examined spiritual energy at work in individuals and organisations. They concluded that participants described a sense of empowerment by a ‘contagious energy’ that was ‘exceptional and often unexpected’ (Pettifer 2002:5&19). This enabled them to achieve far more than they had anticipated would be possible. This force was left mostly undefined by participants – as a mysterious and elusive phenomenon – but can ‘best described as spiritual’ (ibid 2002:3). While the source of energy may be hidden, the research concluded that a spiritual force ‘can be relied on and is available to anyone if they are open to it’.

Such research will never be able to prove something that ultimately is a matter of faith, but many practitioners active in such fields believe that it exists. Harrison Owen, who developed the concept and practice of Open Space technology, entitled one article: ‘Open Space and Spirit Shows Up’. He observes from his 15 years’ experience with Open Space, ‘the most significant occurrence could not be seen with the eyes of flesh. Spirit showed up. Call it inspiration, inspired performance – call it what you like, but in some indefinable way the group becomes electric’ (Owen n.d.:4).

2. Believes the gift of grace is at the core of change



This divine spark is a gift of God’s grace. Conger describes organisational change arising when ‘an outside event comes along and awakens us to our potential. This is the gift of grace. It comes to us as a gift’ (1994:211). In a similar vein, Scott Peck says: ‘We do not come to grace, grace comes to us. Grace – there is no answer to who, why, how. It is part of God’s mystery’ (1978:307). Ellen Wingard described the turning point in organisational change as a ‘moment of grace’ (ibid 397). The management guru Charles Handy acknowledged the centrality of grace in organisational change when

he said: 'It may sound odd for a professor of business to say this, but I reckon that our organisations could do with a deal more loving, a bit more forgiveness and a lot more faith in other people. Such things, however, in organisations are only possible if we feel we are in the grip of something bigger than ourselves' (1991:78).

A prime distinctive feature of a Christian approach to organisational change therefore is that it believes that any significant human breakthrough is the result of God's grace. Those of us involved in organisational change are actually being 'stewards (or administrators) of God's grace'⁵⁶.

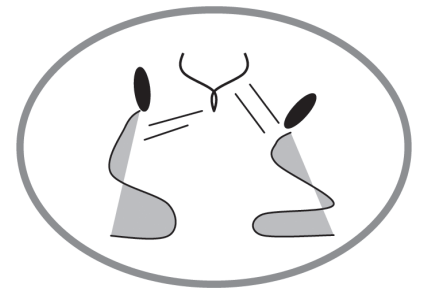
Grace at the turning point

It was not the exposing of the corruption and conflict that triggered the TEF Bishops to repent, but a simple and straightforward message of grace – that each of us is a child of God, loved by God 'while we were yet sinners'. The missionary brought in to lead the devotions on grace turned out to play a major role in the OD facilitation team – though more by 'accident' than design.

It must be emphasised that God's grace is not confined to the church. Many Christians believe that 'common grace' (or pre-eminent grace) is how God works with all people irrespective of their beliefs. All people and organisations can change for the better through the operation of God's common grace. Secular organisations also change positively and this is the product of the God-given human spirit and his grace, even if it is not understood or acknowledged. As SMC states: 'God's initiative is directed towards everyone, regardless of age, gender, social status, ethnic or religious affiliation' (2002:11). God's grace can therefore be the spark to transform any organisation.

3. Creates space for grace

A Christian approach to OD therefore ultimately requires creating space – space for reflection, for listening, for relational conversations – space for God's grace. If our OD processes are packed too tight with activities and exercises we leave no opportunity for God's spirit. Just as the value in a cup is the space it contains, so the greatest contribution to a change processes is to create space to reflect, share, trust and incubate ideas (Kaplan 2002:108).



In a world characterised by an almost violent rush and pressure, spiritual OD involves cultivating places for disciplined reflection – clearings in the organisational jungle in which members can converse and reflect together (Wisely and Lynn in Conger et al 1994). These reflective spaces can be, in the words of T.S. Eliot, ‘the still point of the turning world’, where the noise of organisational life is temporarily silenced and the temptation to flee into action is resisted. Reflection is a critical step in spiritual development. Without it we remain caught in an external world of material distraction of insecurities. Dotlich and Noel in their study of business leaders ‘found that one reason people in business do not change is that they do not take time to reflect’ (1998:47) – their very busyness precludes serious questioning. As an early issue of Psychology Today proclaimed on its front cover: ‘Don’t just do something, stand there’.

These spaces should be both individual and corporate if relationships are to change. A significant change process in Mexico described creating ‘a common space for communal reflection – not us and them but all together. We needed relational conversations, not classic teachings /.../ In the midst of the conversations, thanks to our dear Lord, transformation started to occur’ (Saúl and Pilar Cruz, in Chester 2002:96).

Such spaces need to be safe and ‘hospitable’ spaces, where fears are managed. It is impossible to change if the atmosphere is emotionally unsafe and you do not know when you will be criticised or hurt (Chester 2002:98).

Organisational retreats as sacred space

When the youngest Anglican Bishop in Kenya was recently appointed, it went against the will of many of the powerful church leaders in the Diocese. Instead of embarking on the expected process of ‘opponent cleansing’, the new Bishop first organised a spiritual retreat for the leadership. Two separate weeks of contemplation and meditation (often silent) enabled individuals to put right their relationships with God and provided opportunities to reflect on personal relationships. These retreats proved transformational in healing the conflicts and renewing friendships.

In a Christian approach to OD we need to create space to wait on God’s timing. The Spirit does not follow and fit conveniently into our workshop timetables. Turning points come at

unexpected times – with one client things suddenly changed during a more informal evening session, not during the scheduled ‘reflection’ time. Although we cannot neatly plan turning points into our timetables, we need to create ample space to allow them to happen at their own time. God’s ways are certainly not our ways⁵⁷ and his timings not our timings. We do not fit God into our timetable; it is the other way round. This was certainly the case in the Bible where it says ‘wait’ 43 times in the Old Testament alone.

It is not just a matter of creating discrete spaces in OD interventions, but is actually an overall approach of relinquishing control of the process, while still being responsive to changing circumstances. This is tantamount to heresy in the management world – where if there were a single sacred word it would be ‘control’ (Owen 2000:15). But according to Harrison Owen: ‘If we open up space there is the strong possibility, indeed the absolute certainty, that things will get out of control’ (ibid: 4). Certainly this is risky and things might go wrong, but as CDRA discussions on organisational change conclude: ‘There is a loss of control in the turning points. Indeed until you lose control for a while it is not a turning point’ (CDRA 1999:15).

4. Listens to God

A Christian approach to OD involves considerable listening to God, both before, during and even after the intervention process. If we believe that organisational change really is God’s process it is necessary to find out his vision and purpose for the organisation and what changes are needed.



Strategic listening

When asked by a small church organisation to facilitate a one-day strategy process for them, I thought it was probably too short a time. Professionally I felt more time should be spent in both preparation and discussions. I was then informed they did not need me in the morning at all as they were going off to pray about their strategy. We only began the formal strategy process after lunch, but in three hours they had reached a clear strategic direction for the future with some major and difficult decisions taken. A process I thought should take at least three days had been finished in only three hours!

The need for listening is also paramount for leaders. Korac-Kakabadse et al. write: 'The spiritual leadership approach finds the solution in contemplation, to approach situations with an attitude of discernment rather than one of intervention; acceptance rather than control; letting go rather than holding on; lightening rather than doing; and in humility rather than competence' (2002:168). Organisational revival comes from our capacity to listen to God and to each other. As Sue Howard noted from her research with UK business leaders: 'In the midst of high-flying business careers participants talked explicitly about prayer and reflection upon wisdom literature as the foundation of their ability to have discernment' (Howard 2002: 237).

Listening prayer is a central element of spiritual OD processes. The Director of Tearfund, a large UK NGO, related that in a major organisational change process, spending time listening to God and encouraging people to feedback 'words, prophecies and impressions... gave God an opportunity of speaking into our situation, which he did a number of times' (Iszatt 1999:24). There are a myriad of different ways that God uses to speak. He can speak as people meditatively read the Bible, listen to messages in church, see signs and circumstances, hear the advice of friends or others, see a 'burning bush' or hear a still small voice, hear prophecies or words of knowledge, dream or see visions, walk in the woods, watch a movie, hear a song... The list is almost endless. What is most important is that people are open to listening and hearing from God.

Listening for a change

Two of the most significant interventions in a change process with a large church involved creating space to listen to God, both individually and corporately. The leader of the church with some 400 congregations was understandably busy, almost too busy, to stop and think through questions of future leadership in the church; a situation that was giving rise to internal conflicts. When he asked for my recommendations, I just about resisted the strong temptation to tell him and instead suggested we went away together to a mountain to spend a half-day prayerfully listening to God. By the end of that day we both felt we now had a clear and shared direction from God about the future leadership.

Another time the eldership of the church went away to think through strategically how to achieve the church's vision. Before engaging in discussion, we spent 45 minutes individually asking God to reveal his strategic priorities for the church in the coming year. Remarkably, despite having more than 50 people present, the feedback from everyone concentrated on just four issues.

Closely linked with listening to God is the next element of praying for God to change the situation.

5. Prays for change

Prayer and faith that God is able to bring about change in a situation is in some ways inseparable from listening prayer. But asking (petitionary) prayer is different from listening prayer as it involves crying out for God to change that situation. Praying with passion and even desperation can be very powerful.

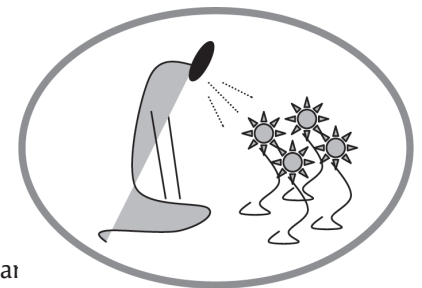
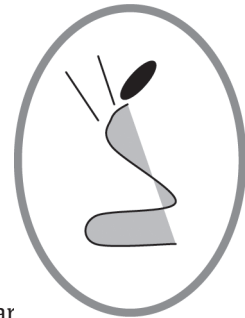
Walter Wink (1984) believes that that spiritual powers, both good and evil, are embodied in the cultures of an organisation. He argues that the organisational culture is an outer expression of a deeper spiritual aspect, such as a culture of fear reflecting an underlying spirit of fear. If this is the case, then as Myers says: 'No Christian process of change can underestimate the opposition or deny itself the spiritual tools with which to do battle against Satan' (1999:121). Christian OD involves fervent prayer.

Prayer undergirds OD processes that integrate a spiritual dimension. A major change process at Tearfund UK illustrates this well: 'The change team had daily prayer meetings at lunch. Sixteen voluntary prayer groups from across the organisation set up to meet regularly for the duration of the process... There was a day of prayer and fasting as well as a week of prayer for the restructuring' (Izsatt 1999:23).

Praying involves an element of faith that God can change a situation. There is a degree of expectation that even if it looks bleak in human terms, God is able to do much more than we can even ask or imagine⁵⁸.

6. Focuses on life-giving 'spiritual' elements

A spiritual approach to OD focuses on organisational elements that 'give life'. Too often OD processes are problem focused, highlighting all the areas that need to change. Such a problem-oriented approach does not breathe life into an



organisation, but leaves people feeling frustrated and unable to change. Recent approaches to OD, such as Appreciative Inquiry⁵⁹, instead emphasise the need to get people to focus on peak organisational experiences. By telling such stories of energy and success, people identify and analyse the unique factors that contributed to the peak experiences. The energy created by this process is able to drive organisational change.

The life-giving spiritual elements of organisations identified in Chapter 2 by management writers as the key elements of a 'spiritual organisation' include:

- ↻ vision
- ↻ values
- ↻ servant leadership
- ↻ relationships
- ↻ challenging the chains of fear

Vision

Organisational change processes need to be driven by the energy that is elicited when there is a sense of vision. Change processes are significantly more effective when they are part of an inspiring dream. This stirs up the heart and elicits passion and commitment. This is directly linked to hope. People and organisations only change if they have hope that they are able to change and that if they do it will bring improvement.

Genesis stories

There appeared little energy for change at the start of a recent strategic planning process with a coalition of civil society organisations promoting economic justice. The staff and board were overstretched trying to fulfil a plethora of donor contracts and some were not fully convinced that a strategy process would assist. But when the original founders were asked to tell about why the organisation had been set up and relate some of the pivotal incidents in the early days, participants suddenly became fired-up and excited. They decided to write up these 'Genesis stories' as they revealed the original vision and values of the organisation in a way that renewed energy.

Often a key part of a spiritual organisational change is a (re)connection with the original calling and purpose of the organisation, often through the medium of telling stories. According to Katherine Tyler Scott, through stories we tell the language of our hearts, not facts, and create and maintain organisational meaning (in Conger et al 1994:83). Stories give flesh to the early spirit of the organisation. The practice of storytelling, particularly of personal stories, can create conditions of openness where more formal procedural efforts have failed (Wisely and Lynn in Conger et al 1994:106). In the TCF example, telling the TCF story through a pictorial 'River of Life' enabled sensitive issues to surface in a non-threatening and even positive way.

Values

People and organisations change when they realise that they are not living up to their own standards. Recent research on why leaders change (James 2003) revealed that change occurs at the level of values. When people realise that a gap exists between who they are and who they want to be, they will do a lot to maintain the integrity of their personality. As we saw in Chapter 3, the greatest leverage for change comes from knowing that you have failed to live up to your own standards (Robbins 1999).

This is the same for organisations too. Longitudinal research by Collins and Porras on 18 visionary companies which have been leaders in their industries for more than 50 years, shows that each company's success was due to a focus on core values, not solely on the bottom-line (1997). If an organisation can realise that they are not living up to their own values then their likelihood of change is immense because the primary human motivator comes from values and beliefs, not reason and logic. A spiritual approach to OD therefore very often deals with the difference between an organisation's stated values and its actual behaviour – its organisational conscience.

What are the virtues the Bible teaches us to practice?

In Christian organisations the Bible is clearly the source of powerful values, but their importance is not restricted to Christian organisations. An extensive University of Chicago research project into essential organisation values in more than 40 countries and with 17 million respondents concluded: 'The list seemed too easy, too obvious – almost like sitting down with a zealous Bible student and asking, "What are the virtues the Bible teaches us to practice?"' (Lebow and Simon 1997:xxv). The values they came up with were: truth, trust, mentoring, openness, risk-taking, giving credit, honesty and caring.

Missing out values

An external review of a short board/staff conflict resolution workshop I led revealed that although the process came up with action points to change on the level of improving communication, it did not address the underlying differences in values. The review concluded: 'It did not fully manage to bring to light the shadow of the conflict between the members of staff, nor tackle head-on the conflict between staff and the board. Although on the surface pledges to change were made, these were done as a group and individuals did not really take responsibility for their own personal change.' People were not brought to the point of being able to see a painful contradiction between what they believe they are and what they truly are.

The example above also reveals the importance of truth as a biblical value necessary in any change. As Myers points out: 'A Christian process of change must focus on truth-telling and the promotion of justice and righteousness' (1999:123). It does not tolerate or condone fault, but is able to differentiate between passionately hating the sin, while still loving the sinner. Confrontation is an important part of many change processes, not only in the Bible, with Jethro and Moses⁶⁰ or Nathan and David⁶¹, but also in organisational change. The important thing is to confront people and groups in an appropriate way that prompts change, not defensiveness and denial.

Servant leadership

A third element of spiritual OD processes is the promotion of servant leadership. If organisations are to change, then this must often begin with the leader. As Larry Bossidy, Jack Welch's deputy at General Motors, said: 'I can only change this company as quickly as I can change myself' (MSR Newsletter 2003:6). But servant leadership is not only confined to the individual leader, but encompasses the leadership, which may include members of the board and senior managers. The direction that leaders often need to take is towards servant leadership. According to Covey, humility is the mother of all virtues (1994:3) and by implication pride is the mother of all problems. In fact it was pride that was identified by executives at a NASDAC conference as the major cause of leadership failure. Pride is so damaging because it leads to impatience, an unwillingness to build consensus, inability to receive criticism and unwillingness to endure periods of trial and uncertainty (Delbecq 1999:348). Roman generals had an understanding of the destructive potential of pride, for

when they were being carried on chariots in triumphal processions, they had a slave constantly whispering in their ear: 'Remember you are only human' (Carr 1998:28).

Humility and service was at the core of Jesus' example of leadership⁶². A movement towards this approach to leadership is not only advocated by current management thinking, but is also a core part of becoming a more spiritual organisation. The example of leaders is vital. According to Sue Howard: 'Leaders can transform organisations by seeking to create the conditions that free organisational energy, promote positive relationships and which encourage personal growth by liberating individual responsibility for choices and actions' (Howard 2002:235).

Reconciled relationships

A fourth element to spiritual OD processes is the focus on reconciliation – restoring relationships. Recent research on organisational change processes found that 'building relationships as a container for change' was the first stage in any change process (Lichtenstein 1997). According to SMC's previous publication on OD, 'relationships are the starting point for God's work' in organisations (2002:11) – for we change out of our interactions with other people, not alone in isolation. Without improved relationships in organisations there is unlikely to be much organisational transformation.

Restoring relationships through data gathering

One African OD consultant related how she was working with a government department that was in the process of becoming autonomous. There were considerable tensions in the organisation due to the prevailing uncertainties. As a result, she says: 'I made sure I asked questions in a positive and healing way. When particularly difficult people were merely throwing stones at others, I asked them: How are you responding to such difficulties? and: What is your responsibility in this situation? As a result, some of the interviews became like a counselling session and people were able to realise their own responsibilities to change, even during the data gathering process.'

A spiritual approach to OD therefore involves building love, trust and healing in organisations. It involves 'shalom', the presence of right relationships, not simply the absence of conflict.

Challenging the chains of fears

A spiritual OD process also deals with people's fears that are holding the individual and organisation back from change. Most of us, even though we would prefer to deny it, are shackled by our fears. As Dorothy Marcic points out: 'Fear is one of the greatest diseases of mankind and it is rampant in organisations and group decision-making processes' (1997:110). In many cases organisational cultures are more characterised by fear and insecurity than by love and hope. Fear can be a very negative spiritual phenomenon, which paralyses organisations and leaves people discouraged and feeling powerless to change. A spiritual OD process recognises the power of fears and therefore allows people to surface their fears in such a way that they are then able to courageously face those fears. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the strength of will to overcome fear.

Naming the giants

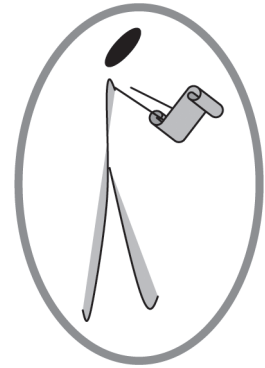
One OD process had reached deadlock. The organisation had been talking about shifting its strategy from implementation to facilitation for the last three years, but with no discernible change. Fine intentions remained at the level of rhetoric. People were clearly held back by their fears, but were unwilling to change. The turning point came when participants were told the Exodus story from the Bible and were asked imagine themselves looking into the Promised Land. But there appeared to be giants in this new land. When participants were then asked to 'name the giants in their Promised Land' suddenly all their fears poured out on pages and pages of flip chart. This unlocked the potential for change and the organisation was able to move forward.

A spiritual approach to OD does not in any way negate the importance of also working on more 'nuts and bolts' issues of structure and systems. In bringing about organisational change these may be key elements to work on and indeed prioritise. But a spiritual approach to OD is different in that it links changes at these structure and systems levels with the 'higher' spiritual levels of vision and values in order to tap into the energy for change that these spiritual elements elicit.

7. Follows a biblical process of change

A Christian approach to OD follows a biblical process of change outlined in Chapter 3. Consequently it would consciously help the organisation to move through the process of:

- ❖ developing a vision for change
- ❖ accepting responsibility for failures
- ❖ turning around by repenting and confessing
- ❖ receiving the gift of grace
- ❖ forgiveness and reconciliation
- ❖ taking action to change



As we saw in the previous section, vision is an essential precondition for change and a focus area in a spiritual change process. A Christian approach to OD seeks out and works with the key individuals and groups who have a positive vision for change. But Christian OD also accepts that severe organisational problems are often the precondition for major change. It may even highlight such issues more clearly to create a greater sense of urgency to change (or help an organisation accept that there is also a time to die⁶³). Just prior to creation the Bible describes the Spirit of God brooding (hovering) over the formless chaos and darkness⁶⁴. In the same way he hovers today over the chaos and darkness in our organisations.

Where change is necessary to overcome past organisational problems (as opposed to responding to new opportunities), a spiritual OD process will encourage people to take responsibility for the problems by acknowledging failure. We must own our weaknesses if we are to change, both corporately as well as individually. A spiritual OD process would therefore not shy away from the difficult but often-ignored step of repenting and confessing. Repentance refers to the inner revolution – the combination of changed perception and willed response – that must take place before lasting change is possible (White 1991:13). We have to become conscious of the negative effects of our past ways of behaving and articulate (or confess) them if we are truly to let go of them and take on something new. William Bridges asserts that the starting point for organisational transition is not the outcome, but the ending that you will have to make to leave the old situation behind. He states that ‘the failure to identify and be ready for endings and losses that change produces is the largest single problem that organisations in transition encounter’ (1995:5).

Repentance in action planning

The first time I noticed the importance of repentance in change was during the daily action planning session of a training course for East African OD practitioners working in Sudan. Instead of outlining their action commitments, they first, very personally and powerfully, described to the group how they had been behaving before and how this had been detrimental to their performance. It was only after this past behaviour had been identified and articulated that participants were able to move on to their plans and describe how they wished to act in the future.

This repentance is not merely an individual phenomenon. For an organisation to shift there is often a need for a communal acceptance of failure and turning away from past actions that people have done together. According to Wisely and Lynn: 'Appropriate public admission of failure can lead a community into acknowledgement of its shared humanity, maybe even an experience of grace' (Wisely and Lynn in Conger et al 1994:106).

Acknowledgement of shared humanity is not enough to promote change. The clear and certain possibility of forgiveness is needed in order for a sense of weakness to be transformed into a springboard of hope. The defining moments in a change process are the ones of finding hope (CDRA 1999:7). Change comes about through love and acceptance – an understanding of grace. Somewhat paradoxically if people feel accepted as they are, they have the security to be open to change. What is needed for people to change is often reassurance.

Forgiveness is a vital element in the change process. Dysfunctional organisational behaviour creates grudges and bitterness, which can only be dealt with through forgiveness. Desmond Tutu, the former Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, points out that a lack of forgiveness leaves the unforgiver in prison, weighed down by bitterness and anger that do more harm than good (1999). SMC themselves experienced the importance of forgiveness recently, when in the midst of an organisational review to address major internal issues, the General Secretary took the initiative to ask people to stop and take some moments to reflect on what issues they felt they needed to leave behind – grudges held against present or former colleagues. People wrote these down on separate pieces of paper and put them in a jar in the middle of the group. As this was done, a common prayer was said to leave the hurts to the grace of God and offer forgiveness. According to staff, 'this short symbolic exercise was a moment of change'.

Forgiveness is neither cheap nor easy. It is a gift of grace. It is not a natural human process and may even appear unjust as it chooses to overlook very real offences. It is not sentimental, but an act of faith that the other person can change. Doug Reeler says that to learn and change 'boils down to accepting the antidote of forgiveness' (2001). In a similar vein, Charles Handy asked a personnel manager why his development programme was so successful. 'In one word he said, "Forgiveness. We give them big jobs. They make mistakes. We correct them, but we forgive them. They learn and grow"' (1991:124).

Forgiveness in organisational change

The importance of authentic forgiveness in organisational change is also illustrated by an experience of two OD colleagues who were facilitating a very intensive and challenging culture-change process with a large NGO. In the middle of the workshop a significant breakthrough occurred and 'fingers that were pointing at each other, suddenly started pointing at themselves and healing and forgiveness took place'. But at the end of the workshop, the more inexperienced of the two facilitators surprised everyone by saying that he believed there were still people in the group who had 'unfinished business with each other'. He went on: 'And what I want to say to you now is that you have one week before the annual holiday begins. Go to that person and work through the issues between yourselves before you go on holiday.' There was a loaded silence in the group. But then he went further: 'In fact, I think it is so important that you should not even allow this weekend to go by before you have talked through the issues and forgiven each other.'

On Monday lunchtime my colleagues received an e-mail from the director of the organisation, thanking them and elaborating on how amazing the process was. He went further: 'But I think the most powerful part of the process was Peter's final words on Friday that people should not allow the weekend to go by before they have addressed their issues and forgiven each other. People spontaneously got together over the weekend and talked through their issues – issues that have been there for a very long time.' He mentioned a number of very specific examples. In the days that followed they continued to receive e-mails from staff, many of which said: 'It feels as if I am working in a different organisation; I have hope to continue.'

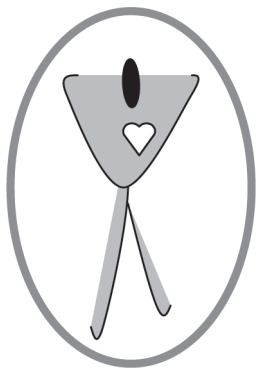
The final stage involves taking actions to change and then maintaining that change. If there are no outward actions taken to change, than it is questionable whether any real change has taken place at all. Forgiveness, however, does not mean freedom from accountability or the need to accept painful consequences of past actions. Where mismanagement, abuse of power or corruption have taken place consequences and indeed restitution is often necessary, as this incident illustrates:

Restitution in organisational change

When widespread corruption was discovered in a Cambodian NGO, the OD change agents involved advised calling in the auditors immediately. They explained to the staff what had happened and said that anyone who admitted their complicity and repaid the full amount would be forgiven and their jobs retained. All but two of the people implicated responded positively and the amounts they admitted to stealing (and agreed to repay) soon tallied with the auditors' findings.

Perhaps the TCF experience may have been even more transforming if it had put more emphasis on the need for restitution.

8. Internalises change



A Christian approach to OD recognises that for organisational or social change to occur, people have to change. At some point in the process people have to internalise change – personalise it for themselves – as recent research has shown (James 2002:46). Otherwise we experience the common scenario of organisational (or societal) structures altering, but behaviour fundamentally remaining the same. This personalising change is not confined to an individual level. If we want other organisations to change, we have to be prepared to change our own organisation.

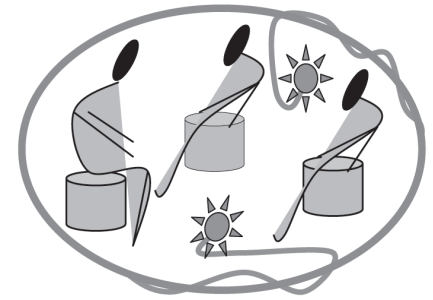
If we are involved in organisational change we have to personalise it for ourselves, whether we are a staff member, part of the leadership or even an external consultant. This involves a considerable degree of self-reflection and awareness. According to Margaret Wheatley: 'The source of change and growth for an organisation or an individual is to develop increased awareness of who it is, now. If we take time to reflect together on who we are and who we could chose to become, we will be led into the territory where change originates' (Wheatley 1996 quoted by Quinn 2000:100).

This particularly applies to leaders, for as Parker Palmer points out: 'A leader is a person who has an unusual degree of power to create the conditions under which other people must live

and move and have their being ... A leader must take special responsibility for what is going on inside himself or herself, lest the act of leadership does more harm than good' (Parker Palmer in Conger et al 1994:25). For all change agents, if they are not very secure in themselves, then it is likely that they will bring their own needs and baggage to the organisational change process. As Jung pointed out, it is only what you are that heals, not what you *know* (quoted by Kaplan 2002:165). Desmond Tutu, reflecting on his experience of massive societal change post-apartheid, concluded: 'I have come to realise that perhaps we were effective only to the extent that we were in Henri Nouwen's celebrated phrase, "wounded healers"' (1999:233).

9. Explicitly aims to integrate the spiritual dimension

We will create space for grace much better and more frequently if we consciously aim to. A Christian approach to OD therefore articulates and makes explicit its aim to integrate a spiritual dimension to change. It is not an add-on, nor an after-thought, but a 'fourth-dimensional quality' (Wagner-Marsh and Conley 1999:300) that pervades every aspect of an OD intervention. It is not an instrumental approach whereby integrating the spiritual is simply as a means of increasing people's adaptability and making OD more effective. Treating spirituality or God merely as a means to an end puts organisational self-interest at the core and would undermine the whole purpose of the process. It is not a question of fitting God into OD, but finding out how OD fits God.



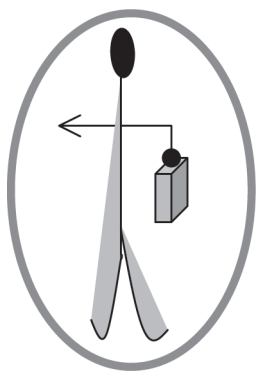
At a recent SMC-supported workshop on OD and spirituality in Kenya, participants stated: 'Our aim is to make God the centre of an OD process in a way that is appropriate and acceptable to the context, culture and beliefs of the organisation'.

If such an aim becomes the foundation of the OD approach, rather than a superficial veneer, then it serves to help avoid some of the real dangers of abusing a spiritual approach. There is a temptation for leaders to use spiritual language as another tool with which to exert human power. They might say, for example, that 'we need to change in this way because it is God's will', which lends a spiritual weight to what may actually only be their personal opinion. Iszatt

has observed that integrating a spiritual dimension can be interpreted as ‘an attempt by management to gain divine sanction for their strategy’ (1999:24). We must beware of an overly romantic view of human nature – the Bible teaches that man is created in the image of God⁶⁵, but also that the heart is deceitful above all things⁶⁶. Checks and balances are needed to ensure that spirituality is not abused.

Taking a Christian approach to OD also runs the risk of offending people. If not done well, it can be seen as manipulating people and might even be perceived as an underhand form of proselytising. This is why the participants in the above-mentioned workshop felt it important that the spiritual dimension should be integrated in a way that is ‘appropriate and acceptable to the context, culture and beliefs of the client’. It matters whether the organisation we are working with is Christian or not and also how free people are to express their faith in public. It also matters whether the organisation works in a predominantly Christian context or not. Certainly it is much easier to be more explicit about believing in the value of a spiritual dimension to organisational change in some parts of Africa – where even secular organisations are not averse to praying during meetings – than it is in Europe.

Sensitivity to different faiths and those of no faith is vital to avoid doing more harm than good through superficial attempts to integrate the spiritual. It is possible, however, to articulate a spiritual approach that uses non-religious language: talking of ‘letting go of past behaviours’ rather than ‘repentance’, for example. If done with sensitivity, there are considerable opportunities for integrating a spiritual approach even with secular organisations.



10. Is professionally excellent

Taking an explicitly spiritual approach to OD must in no way compromise its professional excellence. If anything, by ‘working for the Lord’⁶⁷, it should be even more professional. We have been given responsibility as co-creators in the change process and are expected to use our talents to the full. A spiritual approach to OD therefore learns from and integrates professional wisdom. It in no way eschews the ‘technical’ knowledge of OD, built up over decades of experiences.

Much has been written about good practice in OD. Swedish Mission Council has

published a number of booklets related to this theme (2002, J Taylor, 2002; B Britton, 2002). OD authors such as (Walters 1990, Kotter 1995, Kaplan 1996, 2002 and James 1998, 2002) have also highlighted elements of good OD practice including for example:

- ❖ ownership of the need for change
- ❖ the individual ability and willingness of leadership and staff to change
- ❖ identifying and working with political 'power points' in organisations
- ❖ a participatory intervention process that develops ownership
- ❖ a flexible process that is given enough time and involves sufficient follow-through
- ❖ understanding the context of the whole organisation and its changing environment

It is not the purpose of this publication simply to repeat what can be found elsewhere, but to emphasise the need to build on professional and technical wisdom. A spiritual approach to OD should be humble enough to learn from all that is best from the accumulated human experience of organisational change. Many churches or even Christian NGOs fear that being professional is tantamount to becoming secular. It is not a question of either being professional or being spiritual, but of being both professionally excellent and spiritually passionate at the same time.

⁵⁵ Ezekiel 37:4-5

⁵⁶ 1 Peter 4:10

⁵⁷ Isaiah 55:8

⁵⁸ Ephesians 3:20

⁵⁹ Appreciative Inquiry is a co-operative search for the best in people, their organisations and the world around them. Instead of focussing on the problems in organisations, it involves people discovering for themselves what gives life to their organisation (peak experiences, aspects that are most valued); dreaming what might be and designing how that might come about. It uses stories and other narrative-rich processes to create a hopeful future.

⁶⁰ Exodus 18:1

⁶¹ 2 Samuel 12

⁶² Matthew 20:25-27

⁶³ Ecclesiastes 3:2

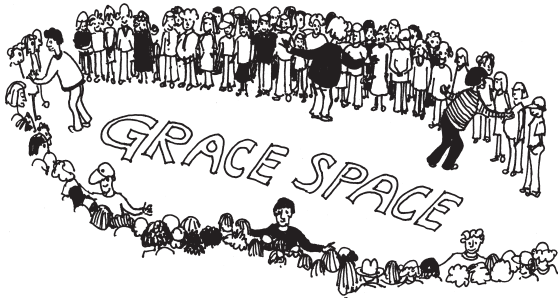
⁶⁴ Genesis 1:2

⁶⁵ Genesis 1:27

⁶⁶ Jeremiah 17:9

⁶⁷ Colossians 3:23

6. Creating more space for grace



So how do we actually integrate these principles into our day-to-day organisational lives? How can we create more space for God's grace – in our congregations, churches or NGOs? Whether we are leaders, staff, members, external consultants or donors to a local organisation, we are all change agents in different ways. It is not enough for us simply to acknowledge that a spiritual dimension to organisational change exists and not do anything about it – for faith without works is dead⁶⁸. Unlike the respondents in the MODEM research (see section 5.1) who identified a spiritual dimension to organisations, but did not deliberately try to harness

it (Pettifer 2002), we need to realise there is much we can do to consciously create more space for God's grace in organisational change. In this way we can become better stewards of God's grace in our different organisational roles and contexts.

I believe we can do this by applying the ten elements outlined in the previous chapter to our work as leaders (section 6.1) and facilitators of organisational change (section 6.2). These same elements also raise important questions for international faith-based organisations (FBOs) that are discussed in the final section 6.3.

6.1 Implications for leaders

Leadership is difficult. It is a divine, but daunting calling that almost always involves considerable hardship and sacrifice. Many leaders feel tired, frustrated and alone. Some feel that they are carrying the full load of organisational responsibilities, while their followers are not pulling their weight. Others feel isolated and lonely as colleagues have elevated them to such a degree that awe and even fear have replaced past friendships. Many leaders experience that their well-intentioned efforts to make their organisations more effective are strongly

resisted. Machiavelli starkly illustrated these dangers some 500 years ago when he concluded: 'There is nothing more difficult to execute, nor more dubious of success, nor more dangerous to administer than to introduce a new order of things, for he who introduces it has all those who profit from the old order as his enemies, and he has only lukewarm allies in all those who might profit from the new' (The Prince 1513, reprinted 1995).

Yet Machiavelli's pessimism may arise because he specifically excluded a spiritual dimension to change. He believed that necessity, not morality, should be the sole guide of a leader and he therefore saw Christianity as irrelevant to the task of governing people (Adair 2002:286). Christian leaders today, who experience similar frustrations when trying to change their organisations, may inadvertently be failing for the same reasons as Machiavelli – because they have not fully appreciated the need to integrate a spiritual approach to change.

But if leaders do take a spiritual approach to change, then they have amazing potential for transforming their organisations. As Conger stated: 'If any single catalyst in an organisation is likely to bring a spiritual presence into the workplace it is a leader' (Conger et al 1994:6).

If any single catalyst in an organisation is likely to bring a spiritual presence into the workplace it is a leader.

Jay Alden Conger

How can this be done? I believe it is achieved by creating more 'space for grace' by leaders:

1. Depending on God's power to spark change

"Graceful" leaders depend on God's power to breathe life into change and accept that this divine spark is not something they can control or create. Professor John Adair's extensive study of leadership revealed that, 'a spiritual faith has always been realised by those leaders we call great or the greatest' (2002:307). He quotes Ordway Toad who wrote back in 1935 that: 'A good leader has faith. There is unfortunately not other word that might be less objectionable to some readers to convey what is meant' (ibid 305). Graceful leaders believe that they 'can do nothing without God'⁶⁹ but that they, 'can do everything through him who gives (them) strength'⁷⁰.

A common failing of Christian leaders is to take onto themselves God's responsibility for changing their organisation. With great commitment and well-meaning determination they try to change their organisations, but quickly find that this ends in frustration and failure.

One of the most important steps in a change process is when the leader realises that he or she really cannot do it, gives up on themselves and gives responsibility back to God. As one church leader said: 'Our job as church leaders is to recognise a wave of God's spirit and ride it. It is not our responsibility to make waves, but to recognise how God is working in the world and join him in the endeavour.'

- ❖ How do I cope with the paradox of being both utterly dependent on God for change, while at the same time being responsible for making it happen?
- ❖ In what ways could I depend more on God's power to spark change?

2. *Administering grace*

This biblical process of change does not stop with self, but extends to administering grace to others in the organisation. Biblical change emphasises love and grace, not judgment.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up.

Paul

Zacchaeus' amazing act of repentance was a response to Jesus love and acceptance (even though Zacchaeus was corrupt and cruel). Similarly, Peter was transformed not by condemnation but by Jesus' forgiveness. As Goethe said: 'Treat a man as he is and he will remain as he is. Treat a man as he can and should be and he will become as he can and should be' (quoted by Covey 1992:57).

At the heart of good leadership is love and forgiveness, being stewards of God's grace. According to John Adair, 'no-one can be a really good leader who does not love members of their team or organisation' (2002:291).

- ❖ Is my treatment of staff really 'full of grace and truth'⁷¹?
- ❖ In what practical ways can I better love the people I work with?

3. *Creating space for God's grace*

Good leaders create safe organisational spaces for people to reflect, listen, pray and discuss openly about the organisation. 'In the process of transformational work, the person with authority is meant to create – or better be the principle agent in creating – a holding environment – a psychological space' according to McDermott (in Conger et al 1994:145). Without the general secretary of TCF persuading a donor to support and other leaders to attend the organisational revival workshop, then TCF would not exist today. Creating a safe

space can be quite a challenge for an insecure leader, who may be worried and defensive lest they be criticised in public. But it is absolutely essential in order to allow God's grace to transform lives and organisations.

- ❖ How can I create more and safer spaces for people to reflect, listen, pray and discuss openly about the organisation?
- ❖ What defensiveness and desire for control do I need to let go?

4. Listening to God

To find out where God is leading, leaders need to listen to God. This is extremely difficult for busy leaders. As Douglas Steere puts it: 'The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form of its innate violence ... It destroys the fruitfulness of one's work because it kills the roots of inner wisdom which make work fruitful' (quoted by Kaplan 2002:187). The Bible teaches us that: 'In quietness and trust is your strength, in repentance and rest is your salvation'⁷². Like Jesus, leaders benefit from withdrawing to lonely places⁷³. We can only hear from God when we create personal space for reflection; for prayer; for waiting on God. To hear the still, small voice, we need to get away from the cacophony of activities in our organisation. To create such spaces requires careful planning and determined prioritisation. One leader of one of the largest UK NGOs takes one workday every month out of the office for reflection and listening to God.

To find out where God is leading, leaders need to listen to God.

- ❖ How might I create more time to listen to God about my organisation?
- ❖ What is he saying and what is his vision for the organisation?

5. Praying for change

One of the great mysteries of God is that more can be achieved through prayer than we can ever ask or imagine. Graceful leaders pray fervently for their organisations and their staff. When crises occur, they pray rather than panic. They ask for wisdom in how to respond, rather than get angry or despairing. As the Bible says: 'If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to him'⁷⁴.

- ❖ How fervently am I praying for God to bring change?

6. *Focusing on life-giving, spiritual elements of organisations*

Leaders have considerable influence over the spiritual elements of organisations – vision, values, servant leadership, empowerment and relationships – in promoting change. If leaders want motivated staff, they have to create meaning for their followers. Effective Christian leaders consistently inspire followers with the vision that God has given them and also use organisational values as the driving force of change. Leaders can ensure that the organisational values are made explicit and constantly monitored. As Jack Welch emphasised to his staff: ‘You can’t get fired here for not making your numbers, but you can get fired for not living the values’ (quoted in MSR 2003:6). Leaders of integrity embody these values themselves.

I believe that the first test of a truly great man is his humility.

John Ruskin

Great leaders follow Jesus’ very clear teaching and example of servant leadership⁷⁵. At the core of servant leadership is humility. As John Ruskin put it: ‘I believe that the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility a doubt in his own power or hesitation in speaking opinions ... All great men not only know their business, ... but they have a curious sense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not in them, but through them; that they could not do or be anything else than God made them’ (Adair 2002:105).

Taking a servant leadership approach involves empowering staff, which releases energy into organisations and prompts change. The essential role of a leader is to draw out the best in their staff. Although we know that we are just one part of the body⁷⁸, leaders sometimes imagine they are the most important part.

- ❖ To what extent am I inspiring people in this organisation?
- ❖ How am I ensuring we live up to our values?
- ❖ To what extent am I following Jesus’ example of being a servant leader?

7. *Following a biblical process of change*

Great leaders recognise the importance of admitting where they have gone wrong and turning around their behaviour, humbling though this may be. On an individual level, like King David in the Bible, effective leaders listen to rebuke, accept their error and allow

themselves to be transformed by God's forgiveness. They even have the humility to offer restitution where that is appropriate.

This requires a deep sense of security. As Parker Palmer writes: 'One of the biggest shadows inside a lot of leaders is the deep insecurity about their own identity. Therefore they deprive other people of their identities as a way of dealing with the unexamined fears in the leaders themselves ... The greatest spiritual gift that comes when one takes the inward journey is to know for certain that who I am does not depend on what I do' (in Conger et al 1994).

- ❖ Are there any aspects of my leadership that I need to appropriately turn away from?
- ❖ How much is my self-identity caught up in what I do?

8. Internalising change

Nelson Mandela pointed out: 'You can never change society, if you have not changed yourself'. He goes on: 'If I had not been in prison I would not have been able to achieve the most difficult task in life and that is changing yourself' (quoted by Bennis and Thomas 2002:17). If a leader wants to change their organisation, the only person in that organisation they can actually change is himself or herself. To be a human catalyst for change requires that the catalyst itself changes. Robert Quinn writes: 'When I discuss the leadership of organisational change with executives I usually go to the place they least expect. The bottom line is that they cannot change the organisation unless they first change themselves' (2000:106).

The bottom line is that they cannot change the organisation unless they first change themselves.

Robert Quinn

Leaders cannot simply decree new thinking by fiat from above – instead leaders first have to change themselves. Leadership commitment to organisational change is in reality synonymous with their commitment to their own personal change – if leaders cannot shift then no significant organisational change process will succeed. If leaders are to help organisations to change they must take the plank out of their own eye first. Leaders must go first in the game of change. As the Bible points out: 'From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded'⁷⁶.

- ❖ How much do I really accept that I may be a big part of the organisation's problems?
- ❖ How willing am I to go through the painful process of change?

9. Explicitly aiming to integrate the spiritual dimension to change

Effective Christian leaders integrate the spiritual dimension into their leadership and management of change processes. Charles Handy pointed out to leaders that, 'if we try and live our lives in separate compartments, one for doing, one for being, why then for part of the time we are living a lie and the truth is not in us' (1991:13). Leaders must, however, integrate the spiritual dimension with great care and humility to avoid the real dangers of over-spiritualising non-spiritual issues and of sub-consciously manipulating people to do what they want, by claiming that this is in fact God's will.

- ❖ What difference does my faith make to my leadership?
- ❖ How can I differentiate my personal desires from God's will and vision?

10. Being professionally excellent

Few Christian leaders are trained and experienced in leadership and management before they are promoted into leadership responsibilities. They tend to learn on-the-job through trial and often error. Many have unexpressed fears that they do not really know what they are doing as a leader and manager. Graceful Christian leaders are wise in the very difficult task of managing organisations. They have an insatiable fascination with learning and new knowledge. As Proverbs 4:7 encourages: 'Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost you all you have, get understanding'. Professionally excellent leaders learn as much as they can about management, leadership and organisation. They learn in many different ways, through reading and study, seeking out a mentor or adviser, or finding appropriate training, for example.

- ❖ What am I doing to keep learning more about leadership, management and organisational change?

6.2 Implications for organisational change facilitators

In the past, much OD work has relied almost exclusively on merely technical change processes and has failed to touch the spiritual core of the organisation. This may be one important factor why many OD interventions have left the client largely unchanged. To live out our faith at work as Christian OD facilitators, we need to look beyond the instrumental rational

processes and integrate a spiritual dimension into our professional practice. There is a lot that we can do to create 'space for grace' in change processes, not just as outside consultants, but also as internal agents of change.

1. Depending on God's grace to spark change

As Christian OD facilitators we need God's power to spark change in organisations. We benefit from trusting in the Lord with all our hearts and leaning not on our own understanding⁷⁷. Having faith that God can transform a seemingly impossible or difficult situation, makes us more effective agents of change. In the midst of organisational crises we need to trust in a God of love and power, who broods over chaos, and is waiting for the right moment to create new life.

When God does spark change it is all too easy for us to take the credit. We pray very easily 'Thine be the power and the glory', but frequently we behave in the opposite way. Taking God's glory for ourselves is a serious problem and it feeds our pride and destroys our humility. A practical way in which a Kenyan OD provider is attempting to prevent this is by having a thanksgiving service after every contract.

- ❖ How much am I relying on God to spark change?
- ❖ How do I handle the praise if my OD work has made a noticeable difference?

2. Administering grace

Our ultimate goal as Christian OD facilitators is 'administer God's grace'. We are stewards of this grace that is at the core of the gospel and of human change. Facilitating organisational change is about enabling people and organisations connect with God's grace.

Yet how often as OD facilitators we also fall into the trap of judgment, despite Jesus' uncompromising command: 'Do not judge'⁷⁸. As consultants we are especially vulnerable to this danger as we are often asked to take an expert approach to change – to evaluate (judge) the client and recommend to them how they should change. Even during the data gathering process we are tempted to judge people and often inadvertently take sides in internal conflicts. We frequently leave the client with an expert judgment, but rarely with the gift of grace – sufficient hope and encouragement that they can change. We would do well to follow Apostle Paul's advice: 'Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only

what is helpful for building others up according to their needs⁷⁹ or as he exhorted the Colossians ‘Let your conversation be always full of grace’⁸⁰.

- ❖ How am I administering grace to this client?
- ❖ Are my conversations and reports full of grace and helpful in building others up?

3. *Creating space for God's grace*

To create the opportunity for God's grace to transform organisational lives, we need to first clear and then maintain a safe and sacred place. According to the leaders of a Mexican NGO:

‘The practitioner's responsibility is primarily creating a space in which people can have significant relational conversations among themselves and with God. We are not the architects of change’ (Saul and Pilar Cruz quoted by Chester 2002:98). In creating space for grace, we first reduce people's inherent fears and do all we can to create an atmosphere of acceptance. Change processes benefit from starting gently and getting people into a place of greater openness. Peter Senge observes from his vast experience of organisational change that ‘relationship building happens before we go anywhere’ (Lichtenstein 1997:398).

There is only one way to mess up – to think you are in charge of what happens, or worse yet, to act that way.

Owen

Once this space has been created we must resist the temptation to fill it with activity. This means we have to let go and wait for God. This can be a very challenging. But as Owen points out: ‘The facilitator must keep letting go. There is only one way to mess up – to think you are in charge of what happens, or worse yet, to act that way. Truthfully the facilitator has little if anything of a substantive nature to contribute’ (n.d.:5).

I believe that the most important contribution I made to the TCF change process was to create the conditions in which God might work and then to get out of the way with my planned exercises. Sometimes, as with the TCF example, we will have mountain-top experiences of seeing God's power miraculously transform situations – we will feel like we are soaring like eagles and running and not growing weary.⁸¹ But as Isaiah 40 also reminds us, at other times it will be more a question of walking and not fainting. Sometimes we will even simply have to stand⁸² and patiently wait – an incredibly challenging, but essential, ‘activity’ for an OD facilitator.

- ❖ What opportunities exist for creating safe spaces for individual and corporate reflection and listening in this organisation?
- ❖ What do I need to let go of to allow God to breathe life into this organisation?

4. *Listening to God*

To discern God's will for a client, OD facilitators must consciously create space to listen to God. As we enter the maelstrom of organisations we do well to follow God's command to 'be still and know that I am God'⁸³ and resist the temptation to rush in. As we find out more about the problems within clients, we should try and see the organisation through God's eyes of love and compassion. Sometimes our work as OD facilitators is ineffective because deep down we do not love people enough to want the very best for the organisation.

When we hear about the client's problems, we may be more effective if we avoided our normal initial response of looking for who to blame. Instead we should stop and ask: What is God's purpose here? What is his will in this? Where is he leading? Where does he want this organisation to go? In order to become an OD facilitator, who is 'as one speaking the very words of God'⁸⁴, we need to find out what God is saying.

- ❖ How much time am I spending listening to God about my clients?
- ❖ To what extent do I have a sense of what God is saying about his vision and purpose for this organisation's change?

How much time am I spending listening to God about my clients?

5. *Praying for change*

A Christian approach to OD, involves praying for the organisation. We plead with God to intervene and change their situation, as Nehemiah prayed for Jerusalem when the walls were in ruins⁸⁵. We can pray for our clients on any occasion; for example I have sometimes found it useful to pray during the times when participants are in discussion groups.

We can also ask God for the spiritual gifts we need for our work in organisational change, In order to discern the core organisational issues and how the client should change, we need God's gifts of knowledge, understanding and wisdom.

- ❖ To what extent does my commitment to clients involve praying for them?

6. *Focusing on life-giving, spiritual elements of organisations*

In addressing the spiritual dimension of organisational life it is vital to concentrate on life-giving elements. We often have to awaken an organisation's conscience by revealing the difference between their stated organisational values and their actual organisational behaviour. The emphasis on the importance of grace in change does not in any way preclude truth, but

rather the reverse. They must co-exist together. Grace requires truth. Jesus was described as full 'of grace and truth'⁸⁶. We have to love the organisations we work with enough to confront mistakes with truth in love, but not by judging the people involved (there is an important distinction between a professional judgment of a situation and judging people). Like Nathan, Jethro, and Daniel, Old Testament advisers to national leaders, we have to convey truth without fear. This may be a very painful process. As Paul tells the Corinthians: 'Even if I

"What I most appreciate about CORAT is that they are prepared to tell us the truth even if it is hard".

caused you sorrow by my letter I do not regret it. Though I did regret it – I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while – yet I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance.'⁸⁷ The same should be said of our OD consultancy reports. As one client of CORAT said: 'What I most appreciate about CORAT is that they are prepared to tell us the truth even if it is hard' (personal communication with YWCA). We must 'speak the truth in love'⁸⁸. Speaking the truth in love means speaking with wisdom and sensitivity. We need to choose the time, the manner and the place with care, and remember we are speaking to another human being with emotions.

As well as emphasising values and truth, we also need to inspire the change process by engaging with the organisation's vision. Trying to change organisations without reference to the vision will often leave the change process without energy or life. Organisations are also more likely to change significantly if the leadership also changes in a way that reinforces this change. In many change processes, the healing of relationships is essential and for organisations to behave in different ways requires that relationships between people also shift.

Obviously not all organisational issues are to do with these elements and we must avoid the danger of over-spiritualising OD (and always interpreting spiritual issues as priority issues). But even if spiritual elements initially appear quite peripheral, linking the main change process into things like vision, values, servant leadership and relationships can bring necessary energy into the process. To enable us to focus on life-giving forces also means that we have to consciously address the major life-sapping force in organisational change – people's fears.

- ❖ To what extent am I focusing on life-giving forces to inspire change?
- ❖ How am I dealing with people's very real fears?

7. Following a biblical process of change

A biblical process of change starts with a vision, though frequently in a context of considerable problems. As OD facilitators we may need to accept such crises as part of the necessary solution for change, not just a problem to be fixed. If we are really following a biblical process of change, our interventions are designed around a process of conviction, repentance, forgiveness and restitution. We ensure that individuals have their consciences challenged, but in the context of feeling accepted; that they take responsibility for failures and turn away from past behaviour (repent); and that they forgive each other and consider whether restitution is needed – and if so how it might be offered.

The Bible is also useful in our preparation to be change agents. As Bishop James Ochiel of Kenya says: 'The Bible still remains the best library for preparing change agents in church and church organisations' (2004:2). In the last couple of years I have found that almost any passage in the Bible has some relevance for organisational change work. The Bible can also be pivotal in the process itself. In the TCF example it was the devotion on grace and forgiveness that triggered the repentance and change that followed. The devotionals that start the day at many church workshops should not be separate but be an integral part of the OD process.

The Bible still remains the best library for preparing change agents in church and church organisations.
Bishop James Ochiel

- ❖ To what extent does the intervention design follow a process of conviction, repentance, forgiveness and restitution?
- ❖ What am I learning from the Bible about organisational change?

8. Internalising change

As OD facilitators we cannot help organisations to change if we do not have the courage, self-discipline and integrity to work on ourselves. It is very easy to let ourselves get in the way of God's grace. According to OD specialist Peter Block: 'Our ability to facilitate the learning of others is absolutely dependent on our willingness to make our own actions a legitimate source of inquiry'.

He goes on further to say: 'Our need for privacy and our fear of the personal are the primary reasons why organisational change is more rhetoric than reality. Real change comes from our willingness to own our own vulnerability, confess our failures and acknowledge that many of our stories do not have a happy ending' (in Roger Harrison 1995:xii).

If we as OD facilitators have the audacity to intervene in an organisation's life to assist it to change, we have a duty first to look inside ourselves and ensure that we do not inflict our baggage onto our clients. The Bible says that 'we speak out of the overflow of our hearts'⁸⁹ and we therefore have a responsibility to clients to make sure our hearts overflow with God's words and challenges, not our impatience and petty frustrations. Our own personal relationship with God will make the biggest difference as to whether we release God's power in organisational change processes.

- ❖ How willing am I to be challenged to change my own OD practice?
- ❖ How is my own relationship with God affecting this change process?

9. Explicitly aiming to integrate the spiritual dimension to change

Many OD facilitators benefit from articulating the aim of integrating the spiritual dimension to change more specifically. Clarifying our Christian approach may avoid potential misunderstandings. CORAT, a pan-African OD provider based in Kenya says: 'We state our Christian commitment in the initial contact. We say: "This is our approach and this is why we do it this way". Not only does this clarify our identity to clients, but also by publicly stating these values, we are forced to live up to them' (personal communication with William Ogara). Even working with secular organisations does not preclude taking a spiritual approach to OD, though to implement it well requires considerable understanding, sensitivity and adaption.

- ❖ What do I believe to be the place of spirituality in my OD practice?
- ❖ Have I made my spiritual approach clear to the client in appropriate language?

10. Being professionally excellent

Spiritual OD is both professionally excellent as well as spiritually passionate. In our enthusiasm to integrate a spiritual dimension, it is essential not to ignore the need to be 100%

professional. Adding a spiritual dimension to our OD practice is in no way an excuse for inadequate preparation for example. We still need to use wisdom to look below the organisation's surface to understand the political and cultural dynamics at play and also involve people at different levels throughout the client organisation. Nor can we ignore the importance of clear sequential planning with indicators, budgets and timeframes and having systems for constant communication about the change process. A spiritual approach to OD still involves regular follow-through to ensure that the change process is implemented and becomes embedded in the organisation's behaviour. In short we would do well to be like the OD consultant Ellen Wingard who was described earlier as someone who, 'used her theory, while at the same time was open to moments of grace' (Lichtenstein 1997:398).

- ❖ How am I developing my understanding and professional skills in encouraging organisational change?
- ❖ How well have I prepared for this assignment? Am I clear what the client expects?

6.3 Critical questions for faith-based international NGOs

But what does all this mean for international development agencies? What implications might this have for them, particularly those calling themselves faith-based? The history of promoting the organisation change of partners in developing countries is not a particularly positive one for international development agencies. It is more characterised by attempts to force partners to change in order to comply with donor requirements than by authentic empowerment (Carr 1998). Some faith-based organisations (FBOs) are also guilty of resorting to coercive power to force partners to change.

Such a control-oriented approach to change contrasts starkly with the spiritual approach we have been examining in this booklet. The difference raises fundamental questions for FBOs, not only about their OD work, but about their development work more generally. Our understanding and approach to change and development should be consistent whether we are talking about change in our beneficiaries, change in our partners, change in our own organisation and change in our relationships with our own congregations. Critical questions resurface: Where does our faith fit in our development work? Is there a spiritual dimension to development? If so, how do we work with it in a non-proselytising manner?

These questions have been debated internally by FBO staff for some years, but often without reaching consensus. What is different today is that the donors, particularly governments, are now asking these questions of FBOs. Donors are beginning to look for a different dimension to development, beyond the secular materialistic approaches that have created today's concurrence of abject poverty and irresponsible wealth. As Pierre Beemans of IDRC writes:

Only the most ingenuous or wilfully blind would pretend that after a half century of sustained effort and many, many billions of dollars international development agencies have at last got it right. There is a pervasive sense that in some very real way we have failed' (2000:vii).

Only the most ingenuous or wilfully blind would pretend that ... international development agencies have at last got it right.

Pierre Beemans

Donors are seeing faith-based institutions as critical actors in the civil society they are trying to promote. Mike Edwards identifies 'a resurgence of interest in the developmental role of faiths, even in such non-spiritual organisations as the World Bank' (2002:46). In 2001, the World Bank invited representatives of nine of the world's religions for consultations in producing the World Development Report. According to those present: 'It was not a question of inserting our paragraphs into the report, but of making a fundamental contribution to the thinking behind it' (WFDD 2002:2). Government donors, like SIDA (Sweden) and DFID (UK), who have been traditionally very suspicious of religion are publicly asking: 'Can religion contribute to development?' through dialogue workshops and funded research. Official funders want to know what positive difference faith and religion make to FBOs' development work. This is forcing international FBOs to re-open vital, but contentious, questions about their identity, their underlying beliefs about change and how this affects their work in the field. The different elements of a spiritual approach to OD discussed in this booklet raise important challenges, questions and dilemmas that FBOs face in looking, not just at their OD work, but their development work more generally.

What do we believe about the spiritual dimension to development?

What we believe about our role and God's role in change (our theology of change) has fundamental implications for how we practice development work with partners. It affects the sort of development projects we support, the types of partners we work with, the ways in which we relate to those partners and how we work internally. FBOs need to better articulate for themselves and others their underlying theology of development and then apply this more

consciously and systematically to their work with partners. If we believe that God's power is what sparks change and that this comes as a gift of grace, then how does this affect our development work? If we believe something else, what implications does this have? There is a need for developing a shared understanding within the organisation, however difficult this is, so that FBOs take a coherent organisational approach, rather than simply letting individual beliefs guide organisational practice. Given the diversity within organisations such a process takes considerable sensitivity, humility and also boldness.

In the past many FBOs have used the term 'holistic' to describe their approach to development. The problem is that the meaning of holism has been often left undefined and made extremely elastic in order to accommodate a very wide diversity of belief. As a result the term holism may have camouflaged more than it revealed. Critical and contentious issues, such as the balance between material and spiritual development, the relationship between structural change and personal change or the role of God's spirit in societal and individual change, are glossed over in order to remain inclusive to all staff, donors and partners. Avoiding articulating a coherent and practical theology of development has resulted in many FBOs de facto perpetuating a dualistic approach of separating the development role of the church from the pastoral role of the church. They can then be criticised for merely dressing up what they do with biblical texts and theological language without really affecting the substance of what they do, becoming in effect an 'Oxfam with hymns' (Taylor 1995). Have FBOs simply 'a form of godliness, but denying its power'⁹⁰?

If we believe that God's power is what sparks change and that this comes as a gift of grace, then how does this affect our development work?

There is a need for FBOs to get to grips with the uncomfortable task of defining in practical terms what their faith-based approach to development means, even if some people who do not share their faith might not now share their approach either. Roger Riddell pointed out ten years ago that recent theological approaches of church-related agencies in Europe 'can best be described as eclectic; incorporating elements from a wide cross-section of different sources as well as different approaches to theology. Whilst such a wide trawl ... enriches the theological perspective of the agencies, it has its drawbacks' (1993:31). It dilutes the thrust of what is said and weakens the potential use that the agencies might make of theology in their work. Instead Riddell points out that: 'If theology were to take on a more active role in the agencies then the potential at least would exist for theology to assist the agencies better answer the

perennial questions of what they should be/do and where their priorities lie' (ibid.:31). But this theology is not an abstract theology for professors, but a practical theology that is broadly shared by staff and informed by partners.

The development world is increasingly open to, indeed consciously searching for, new approaches that may better address the pressing questions of poverty and conflict. As faith-based organisations we have an opportunity to clearly articulate our alternatives. We need a process that leads to a coherent and practical theology of development that our organisation believes in. The obvious sensitivities and differences that such a process involves may cause many agencies to refrain from attempting it out of fear. But, as this booklet has emphasised, to make a difference in the world, we need to overcome our fears and be led by vision. We may need to answer important questions such as:

- ❖ What is the role of God's spirit in our development work?
- ❖ If we believe in change coming as a gift of grace how does this affect our approach?
- ❖ How can our faith become more central to our development practice?

The implications of such a theology would then need to be worked through at a number of different organisational levels. For development partnerships it may involve answering questions including:

- ❖ What strategic alliances would we need with other agencies to promote a coherent and competent approach, given that we cannot do everything?
- ❖ What implications does our theology have for our partnership strategy?
- ❖ How are we stewards of God's grace in our partnerships with others?
- ❖ How much space can we give each partner?
- ❖ How much time in our partnerships is focused on discussion of spiritual elements of organisations such as vision and values as compared with activities and budgets?
- ❖ To what extent do we model servanthood in our dealings with partners?
- ❖ Are we prepared to be as open with our partners as we require from them?
- ❖ How do we balance love and judgement in the context of having to evaluate impact and account for donor funds?

- ❖ To what extent do our donor partners share our understanding of and approach to development?

There would also be a number of questions at the level of systems and internal processes:

- ❖ How can we develop systems to be able to indicate the positive difference that integrating the spiritual makes?
- ❖ What safe spaces do we create for listening, reflection, and dialogue within our own organisations?
- ❖ What is the role of corporate listening and praying together as an organisation, rather than privatising it for individuals?
- ❖ To what extent do we model servanthood in our dealings with each other?

Ultimately it will involve FBOs internalising change themselves and answering both internally within their organisation as well as externally with others:

- ❖ What do we need to change to allow more ‘space for grace’?

⁶⁸ James 2:20

⁶⁹ John 15:5

⁷⁰ Philippians 4:13

⁷¹ Isaiah 30: 15

⁷² 1 Luke 5:16

⁷³ James 1:5

⁷⁴ Luke 22:25–27; Matthew 20:20–28; John 13

⁷⁵ 1 Corinthians 12

⁷⁶ Luke 12:48

⁷⁷ John 1:14

⁷⁸ Proverbs 3:5

⁷⁹ Matthew 7:1

⁸⁰ Ephesians. 4:29

⁸¹ Colossians 4:6

⁸² Isaiah 40

⁸³ Ephesians 6:13

⁸⁴ Psalm 46:10

⁸⁵ 1 Peter 4:11

⁸⁶ Nehemiah 1

⁸⁷ John 1:14

⁸⁸ 2 Corinthians 7:8

⁸⁹ Ephesians 4:15

⁹⁰ Luke 6:45

⁹¹ 2 Timothy 3:5

Abbreviations

CDRA	Community Development Resource Association
CORAT	Christian Organizations Research Advisory Trust
DFID	Department for International Development
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
NGO	Non Government Organisation
OD	Organisation Development
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SMC	Swedish Mission Council
TAABCO	TAABCO Research and Development Consultants
TCF	Tangababwe Christian Fellowship
WFDD	World Faith Development Dialogue
YWCA	Young Women Christian Association

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Dedication

To Alison, Bim, Jamie, Harry and Angus – that you may 'grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge'.

"I was inspired to explore the spiritual dimension to organisational change by the remarkable transformation of the Tangababwe Christian Fellowship (TCF). Riven by division and corruption, it existed only in name. It had lost all credibility with its members; its donors had long-since departed. Yet at an amazing workshop I observed new life breathed into an all-but-dead organisation."



Rick James

This publication argues that organisational change must be both professionally excellent and spiritually passionate. It highlights ten practical ways for how this can be implemented in the complicated realities of organisational life. By publishing this booklet SMC seeks to contribute to a discussion on spiritual aspects of change in general and organisational change in particular.

"The publication is of great interest."

Roland Stenlund,
SIDA, Sweden

"It is a unique book. I believe it will be a pathfinder. It is the first book that I have read that has adequately satisfied the fusion of OD and uncompromised spirituality."

Chiku Malungu,
OD Consultant, Malawi

"It has been one of the most amazing articles I have read in a very long time! I am convinced your research has already, and will continue to make a very valuable contribution to leadership.

Dirk Marais,
Founder CDRA and Vision Quest,
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