

Some Causes of Congregational Dysfunction

Dysfunction: Abnormal or impaired functioning

For Discussion: What are some factors that provoke dysfunction?

1. Contextual: inability to adapt to changing community context
2. Crisis: fire, sudden death or resignation of pastor or other key leader
3. Finances: scarcity or sudden windfall
4. Unhealthy relational patterns—often couched in piety, jargon
5. Poor communication; especially keeping secrets
6. Radical change in leadership style
7. Blaming attitudes and behaviors: common enemy as unifier
8. Dullness and boredom: poor preaching, painful music
9. Prejudice, racism, sexism
10. Dependency: the larger church owes us
11. Edifice complex: all energy channeled into preserving beloved building
12. Dysfunctional leader: people always taking care of pastor
13. Unethical and/or criminal behavior: sexual misconduct, financial malfeasance
14. Conflict!

Moving beyond Dysfunction: Factors that contribute to congregational health

1. Sense of mission beyond themselves
2. Ability to embrace and manage change
3. Lively worship life and programmatic balance
4. Balance of tradition and innovation
5. Constant state of low-level conflict (Alban research)

Focusing on the Mission Helps: Characteristics of a missional leader

1. Able to listen, discern and synthesize desires of many into compelling vision
2. Connected in many networks that can import and export resources, ideas
3. Trained or intuitive abilities as a community organizer
4. Ability to foster and sustain adaptive change (Heifetz)
5. Gifted at ministry of affirmation, gifts identification: “The major function of a leader is to help people grow.” (Greenleaf)
6. “Steward of the vision.” (Peter Steinke)

Outline compiled by Michael Cooper-White