

Leading with Vitality Council Reflection: Movement vs. Institution

How to use the Leading with Vitality Council Reflection: Share this document with the Council members prior to the Council meeting and add 15 minutes to the beginning of the agenda for shared reflection. Prior to the meeting, invite one member of the Council to lead the discussion. Here's a simple outline for how the shared reflection might go.

First, the reflection leader reads the scripture passage aloud. Second, the reflection leader highlights one idea from the reflection that the reflection leader found meaningful or challenging. Third, the reflection leader uses one or more of the reflection questions below to encourage discussion. When the discussion draws to a close, the reflection leader closes the time with the prayer using the prayer below or another prayer they create.

Scripture Reading

Luke 13:10-17 (NRSV)

Now Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your ailment.' When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, 'There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day.' But the Lord answered him and said, 'You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?' When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

Movement vs. Institution

We live in a time of movements. We live in a time when people gather around a cause or unite around an idea over social media. We live in a time when the informal, grassroots leader may have more power and legitimacy than the formal, elected leader. We live in a time when passion and adaptability are more highly valued than duty and dependability.

Not long ago, we lived in a time of institutions. Institutions value organization and structure. Institutions promote duty and obligation. Institutions develop policies and procedures to ensure that the institution endures into the future. The church of today was born in a time of institutions.

People today are drawn to movements, not institutions. Movements focus on people, mission, and action. Institutions focus on organization, policies, and programs. Both movements and institutions can be helpful approaches to life, but when was the last time you heard someone say:

"The thing I love most about this congregation is serving on a committee. I hope I get re-appointed when my term expires."

Dr. Kennon Callahan suggests that movements think, plan, act and live in certain ways. As you look through the lists below think of yourself and your congregation. Which characteristics describe the way you think, plan, feel, dream, act, behave, and live?

Movement

Relational
Informal
Relaxed
Being

Spontaneous
Flexible
Loosely developed
Casual gatherings

Love
Encouraging
Forgiving
Sharing

Hope
New life
Present
Forward

Grace
Possibilities
Discoveries
Yea-saying

At edge of resources
External, in world
Mission
Resourcing

Service, serving
Short-term mission teams
Helping people discover power
God's missionaries together

Institution

Functional
Formal
Systematic
Doing

Organized
Bylaws
Planned
Regular Meetings

Obligation
Correcting
Duty
Loyalty

Memory
Old ways
Past
Back

Law
Policies
Procedures
Naysaying

Conserving, holding
Internal, in church
Maintenance
Retrenching

Survival, self-serving
Long-term committees
Accumulating power
Caste system of laity and clergy

Reflection by Pastor John Wertz, Jr. Movement vs Institution characteristic list adapted from lectures by Dr. Kennon Callahan (Feb. 2008)

Questions for Reflection:

1. Share a time when you have been a part of a movement?
2. How might living and acting like a movement change the way you do ministry?

Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. Blow through our lives and our ministries filling us with grace, hope, and possibility. Inspire us to share the story of your presence with us and to see your presence in the lives of others that together we might live in your abundant love. Amen.