Organizational Systems Theory: Using Organizational Analysis in Congregations
Resource Section

Purpose

To provide participants with a model for analyzing the effectiveness of their congregational systems.

Theological Understanding

We are stewards of the gifts God has given us and are called into ministry by our baptismal covenant. Faithful stewardship requires us to meet the changing demands of God's call and to periodically stop and reflect on the ways in which we hear and respond to that call. Just as the model of one leader which got them out of bondage no longer worked when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, sometimes we need to change "how things are done" in order to stay faithful to our ministry.

Special Instructions

In addition to the handouts, you may want to make copies of the models on PowerPoint slides 3 and 4 to give to participants. If you are facilitating a mixed clergy/lay session, have the participants work in congregational teams to identify the mission area to be used as an example and complete the analysis on Handout 1 (see PowerPoint slides 6 - 8). They can then work as individuals in responding to the questions on PowerPoint slides 10-14 and come back together as a congregational team to discuss what they have discovered (see instructions in Talking Points for PowerPoint slide 14).

Related Modules

- Family Systems Theory
- Planning for Effective Ministry
- Renegotiating Roles and Expectations

Bibliography

Branson, Mark Lau. Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change. Herdnon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004 – gives background and instructions on use of Appreciative Inquiry for discernment and planning in congregations.

Bunker, Barbara Benedict; and Alban, Billie T. The Handbook of Large Group Methods: Creating Change in Organizations and Communities. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006 – an overview of the most commonly used large group methods with many case studies; includes a good resource list for further reading.

Bushe, Gervase and Marshak, Robert J. "The Postmodern Turn in OD." OD Practitioner. Fall 2008: 9-11 – a succinct description of the change in organizational development from an industrial to postmodern model.

Cooperrider, David L. and Whitney, Diana; Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change. San Francisco, CA; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2005 – a terrific introduction to Appreciative Inquiry by two of its pioneers; short, concise and clear; includes good resource list for further exploration of theory.

Holman, Peggy; Devane, Tom; and Cady, Steven, eds. The Change Handbook: The Definitive Resource on Today's Best Methods for Engaging Whole Systems, 2nd Edition. San Francisco, CA; Berrett-Koehler, Inc., 2007 – a veritable encyclopedia of large group methods illustrated with case studies; extensive resource list.

Krueger, Richard A.; and Casey, Mary Ann. Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research, 4th Edition; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2008 – a step-by-step guide to designing and conducting focus groups.

Mann, Alice. "Ministering to the Soul of a Community". Conversations. Online. December 12, 2008. Alban Institute, 2008 (www.alban.org/ -- click on Publishing and under "Find an Article" browse by author's name) – a brief essay on the intersection of location and narrative in creating a congregation's mission.

Mead, Loren B.; and Alban, Billie T. Creating the Future Together: Methods to Inspire Your Whole Faith Community. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008 – case studies of the use of large systems methods in church settings.

Watkins, Jane Magruder; and Mohr, Bernard J. Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2001 – a good primer on Appreciative Inquiry and how to use it.

Weisbord, Marvin R. Organizational Diagnosis: A Workbook of Theory and Practice. Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1978 – the classic description of the six box model with step-by-step guidance on how to use it.

_____; and Janoff, Sandra. Future Search: An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations & Communities, 2nd Edition; San Francisco, CA; Berrett-Koehler, 2000 – a good introduction to engaging the whole system in planning with excellent tips for design and facilitation of the process.

General Outline of Session

1. Opening prayer and meditation (suggested reading Exodus 18:13-27)

2. Check in

3. Introduction to organizational systems theory and the model for organizational analysis (PowerPoint 1 – 5; Talking Points)

4. Identifying a ministry area to use as an example (PowerPoint 6; Talking Points; Handout 1)

5. Clarifying mission (PowerPoint 7; Talking Points; Handout 2)

6. Scanning the environment – overview, general brainstorming, individual work (PowerPoint 8; Talking Points)

7. Sharing with a partner or congregational team

8. Framework for determining response (PowerPoint 9; Talking Points; Handout 3)

9. Filling in the remaining boxes – brief introduction to each followed by individual work (PowerPoint 10 – 14; Talking Points)

10. Sharing the analysis with a partner or congregational team

11. Large group debrief

12. Impact of culture (PowerPoint 15-16; Talking Points)

13. Large group discussion

14. Summary (PowerPoint 17; Talking Points)

15. Closing prayer (PowerPoint 18; Talking Points)

Organizational Systems Theory
Handout 1

Mission/Purpose of Ministry:

Resources (list people, funds, partners, etc):
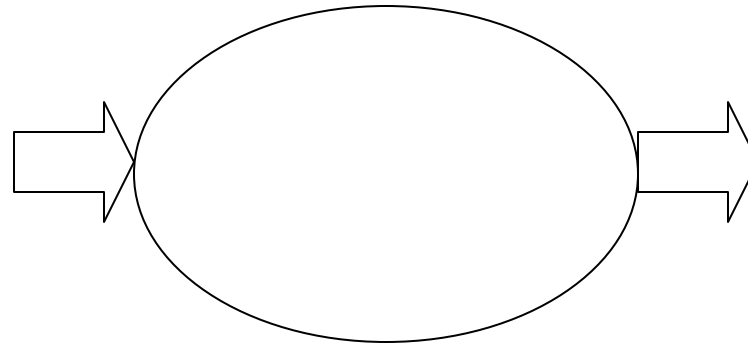
Ministry Outcomes (list):

External Environment:

Note: Put name of ministry area in oval; list resources for ministry to left and outcomes to right; list outside influences (e.g., changing demographics) in center below.

Organizational Systems Theory
Handout 2

<u>Mission:</u>

<u>Structure:</u>

<u>Relationships:</u>

<u>Rewards:</u>

<u>Leadership:</u>

<u>Helpful Mechanisms:</u>

<u>Stakeholders:</u>

8/1/2011

Organizational Systems Theory
Handout 3

Branson, Mark Lau. <u>Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change</u>. Herdnon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004 – gives background and instructions on use of Appreciative Inquiry for discernment and planning in congregations.

Bunker, Barbara Benedict; and Alban, Billie T.; <u>The Handbook of Large Group Methods: Creating Change in Organizations and Communities</u>. San Francisco, CA; John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2006 – an overview of the most commonly used large group methods with many case studies; includes a good resource list for further reading.

Cooperrider, David L. and Whitney, Diana; <u>Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change</u>. San Francisco, CA; Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2005 – a terrific introduction to Appreciative Inquiry by two of its pioneers; short, concise and clear; includes good resource list for further exploration of theory.

Holman, Peggy; Devane, Tom; and Cady, Steven, eds.; <u>The Change Handbook: The Definitive Resource on Today's Best Methods for Engaging Whole Systems</u>, 2nd Edition. San Francisco, CA; Berrett-Koehler, Inc., 2007 – a veritable encyclopedia of large group methods illustrated with case studies; extensive resource list.

Krueger, Richard A.; and Casey, Mary Ann. <u>Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research</u>, 4th Edition; Thousand Oaks, CA; Sage Publications, Inc., 2008 – a step-by-step guide to designing and conducting focus groups.

Mead, Loren B.; and Alban, Billie T.; <u>Creating the Future Together: Methods to Inspire Your Whole Faith Community</u>. Herndon, VA; The Alban Institute, 2008 – case studies of the use of large systems methods in church settings.

Watkins, Jane Magruder; and Mohr, Bernard J.; <u>Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination</u>. San Francisco, CA; Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2001 – a good primer on Appreciative Inquiry and how to use it.

Weisbord, Marvin R.; <u>Organizational Diagnosis: A Workbook of Theory and Practice</u>. Reading, MA; Perseus Books, 1978 – the classic description of the six box model with step-by-step guidance on how to use it.

_____; and Janoff, Sandra; <u>Future Search: An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations & Communities</u>, 2nd Edition; San Francisco, CA; Berrett-Koehler, 2000 – a good introduction to engaging the whole system in planning with excellent tips for design and facilitation of the process.

8/1/2011