

## WEIRD CHURCH

The world is changing. Attendance is declining. God is alive and well and at work in the world.

Based on the books insights and other sources there are 4 key Concepts:

1. Changing Landscape: Each successive generation has a more intense disaffection, concern or rejection of institutional churches. And new forms of faith communities are emerging and evolving.
2. Know Your Why: Thriving faith communities have absolute clarity on their God given identity, purpose and DNA. It evokes such passion and excitement that people are willing to move out of their comfort zones and status quo.
3. Shift: Thriving faith communities are shifting from institutional maintenance towards mission, vision and purpose. They are filled with a Pentecost dose of God's Spirit.
4. Choice: There are three faithful choices: stay the same being as faithful as possible to God and our constituency knowing this will only last sustainably for maybe another quarter century, evolve to be able to continue ministering in the changing world, birth new forms of ministry and faith communities.

Spiral Dynamics: a color-coded system of evolving (or spectrum) moral and philosophical perspectives. Found in the first chapter of the book, we won't be covering it in this workshop. It does provide a way to think about and reflect on different perspectives, norms and world views. It is built on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory.

Micah 6:8

*What does the Lord require of you but  
to do justice,  
love kindness  
and walk humbly with your God.*

Often a 'Weird Church' will be a movement of people gathering around one or more of these three essential elements from Micah's ancient wisdom.

## SNAPSHOTS OF WEIRD CHURCH

**NEIGHBORHOODS:** Get out and engage in community activities within a neighborhood. Form networks and relationships. This could be geographically based or interest/demographic based. Using community organizing and partnering techniques, develop neighborhood connecting programs and activities based on observed needs and longings and common interests. Through these programs develop communities of deepening relationship, spiritual exploration and meaning making. These are hard to replicate because they are so community based. See Water's Edge Partnership .org in Baltimore. (See also *Divergent Church* by Tim Shapiro with examples such as Cowboy Church at a trail ride camp, Wild Goose steeped around Appalachian arts.)

**THE SIMPLE CELL:** Small groups formed by invitation. Typically 8-20 people gathered for fellowship and faith exploration. Often in a home around a meal. They may form their own rituals and spiritual practices as part of their gathering. The individual Simple Cells may be

connected formally or informally into (or as part of) a larger organization. Churches that do this don't form cells from existing church members, rather they encourage church members to form cells with friends and neighbors outside of church. See ZACC'S house (SpiritSpace) in Portland Or

**THE DINNER PARTY:** Or Dinner church. This is a larger group that gathers for a meal with elements of worship blended into the meal preparation and eating. Often the meal is locally sourced and organic. Numbers typically range from 20 – 50. Much larger than this and it subdivides into multiple settings or time to keep the smaller more intimate feel. It is intentionally intergenerational. It includes conversation and liturgy in a relaxed informal setting. See St Lydias in Brooklyn and Common Ground in Northampton and Simple Church in Grafton.

**THE FAMILY CHAPEL:** The “Small” Church. With worship attendance under 50 people these comprise nearly 50% of churches in this country. Typically, they have always been this size. Deeply relationally focused with a high degree of ownership they value simplicity and intimate kinship above doctrine, denomination or political persuasion. They may outlast many denominations.

**THE SOULFUL VILLAGE:** People intentionally living in close proximity, often an apartment type complex. Includes an agreement to work collaboratively on the facilities and grounds. And a commitment to regular community prayer or spiritually based conversations. In some settings it is called ‘A New Monasticism’. It may be connected to a local church. See [missionalwisdom.com](http://missionalwisdom.com).

**THE COMMUNITY BASED ENTERPRISE:** A faith community forms around and establishes a business to sustain the community. Simple Church in Grafton bakes bread and sells it at farmer's markets. Union Coffee Shop in Dallas sells coffee and gathers for fellowship, worship and faith exploration in their shop.

**THE INNOVATION LAB:** a relatively stable existing congregation has found the inspiration of an entrepreneurial spirit. It gives permission for innovation and offers space and resources to experiment. West Barnstable on Cape Cod is experimenting with a family friendly focused Saturday time of worship: “Its Saturday, Let's Do Church”

**THE PILGRIMAGE:** From walking the El Camino de Santiago to journeying the Holy Land to a youth group mission trip, traveling to a thin place to encounter God in history, nature or in service has a tug on human souls. It gets us out of our familiar world into a place of intentional openness to God's presence.

**SAME TIME NEXT YEAR:** An annual event, gathering or reunion to reconnect to a place of soul encounter and human relationships. Summer Camp has long been this for children and youth. An annual guided silent retreat can be soul refreshing (or challenging) for many.

**THE COMMUNITY CENTER:** An existing church (or new ministry initiative) renovates or develops a space intentionally open to community usage. They seek partners or groups who share their core values and invite them into the space (or collaborate in developing a space)

where everyone's programs and projects can be held. In some cases this may be the development of a community garden. See Valley and Mountain Church in Seattle.

**THE MISSION BASE CAMP:** A church of group develops a passion and gathering around a faith grounded mission or social justice advocacy issue. Space and hospitality are provided. Resources through leadership, strategy and supplies are offered. Typically, the missional church can not survive once its mission is completed. See Village Church in Toledo OH.

**THE GALLANT FORTRESS OF DEFIANCE:** A bastion of deeply conservative or orthodox faith communities devoted to strict adherence to dogma and rules. They stand over and against prevailing cultural norms. Given the decline in overall attendance and membership in all denominations, including conservative evangelicals, their survival depends on maintaining very high quality services, relationships and programs and families willing to offer loyalty to an institutional faith expression. Amish and Mennonite traditions

**THE SMALL VENUE MULTISITE:** Intentionally small in membership to keep the intimate kinship feel, but connected together by mission and identity and brand (and technology and staffing) either as a group or to a larger hub church. They may, or more likely, may not own a building. Some operate as satellites of a large central church. See Urban Village Church, Chicago.

**THE TABERNACLE:** An almost exclusively worship centered paradigm of church. It is intended to create a meaningful, compelling, spiritual experience of God through services of worship in a space developed as a thin space engaging all the senses. Emergent church and warehouse churches are part of this. See Hillsong NY City.

**THE MOMENT OF GRACE:** A short lived community that comes together for a moment of purpose either relational, missional or faith formational. It provides rich meaning and impact in its participants lives during its short lifespan.

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