

The Adept Church

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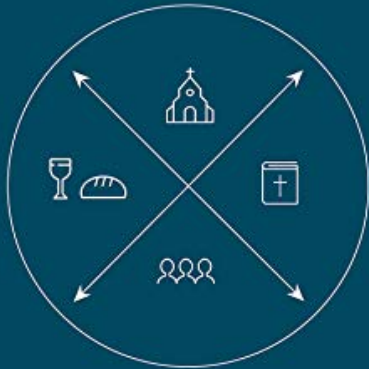
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THE ADEPT CHURCH



Navigating Between
a Rock and a Hard Place

Baltimore/Washington Conference

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WESLEY
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Esther 4: 9-11

⁹ Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. ¹⁰ Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, ¹¹ “All the king’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.”



Current Reality — Pandemic

- Many congregations are still not worshipping in person.
- Others are worshipping fewer people in person.
- Some form of online worship has become a norm.
- Ministry is challenging because of the lack of in-person gathering.



Possible Troubling Trends

- **Decrease** — In-person worship will decrease 10 to 20% when the pandemic ends.
- **Take on** — Online worship will take on a secondary status.
- **Return** — Worship will return to exact same format as previous.
- **Continue** — Continue to make decisions in an echo chamber



Baltimore/Washington

- Online worship is probably helping you to connect with more people — should not stop once pandemic ends
- Need to do more than simply video or stream your pre-pandemic worship experience once pandemic ends
- Our decision making for connecting has to include those who are joining us online



Swamp

- Is your congregation or ministry like a swamp?
 - A place that does not connect with others
 - A place where you hoard resources
 - A place where things decay and do not find life



Reservoir

- Is your congregation or ministry like a reservoir?
 - A place that has available resources for others
 - Be careful not to become a hoarder.
 - A place that takes stewardship seriously
 - A place that has the possibility of releasing what is inside
 - Be careful not to become a place where things decay.



Canal

- Is your congregation or ministry like a canal?
 - A place that is seeking to be a connector
 - Be careful not to stop.
 - A place that channels things away from its main resource
 - Be careful not hold more and more back.
 - A place adept at meeting the needs of others
 - Be careful not to just meet your own needs.



Helping Congregations Take the Next Faithful Step

- What swamp congregations can become reservoirs?
- What reservoirs can become canals?
- How do we keep the canals flowing?



Mission

- The decisions we make should be connected to our mission.
- Every congregation has a mission — “Caring for All with Faith, Hope & Love.” Shape the decision-making process.
- Still need to be adept in how you navigate the decisions.



Decision Making

- Leaders must be adept.
- Imagine a pilot landing on an aircraft carrier.
 - Skill
 - Precision
 - Nimble
 - Awareness
 - Collaboration



Skill

- When being adept start with the question, “What do I need to learn?”
- We build skill around what we need to learn.
- Coming out of the pandemic — How to do hybrid worship



Precision

- Keep the end goal in mind.
- We tend to get distracted and to go down rabbit holes.
- If the end goal is doing hybrid worship, then trying to figure out how to do the church BBQ is a distraction.



Nimble

- We have to be willing to pivot or shift.
- Not see things as set in stone
- The pandemic actually has taught us we can be nimble.



Awareness

- A contextual awareness
- If I am doing a hybrid worship does my community use YouTube, Facebook, etc.?



Collaborate

- Work with others to accomplish the mission.
- Do not reinvent the wheel.
- If you have a media specialist in your congregation, work with them to create the hybrid experience.



Decision Making Questions

- How will you be adept?
- What is your strength in terms of skill set (where you are challenged)?
- How can you use precision to shape and re-shape decisions?
- How do you communicate an openness to being nimble, but keeping the mission in mind?
- How are you continuously building contextual awareness in your congregation and community?
- How will you collaborate with those who are insiders, but also those who are outside of your normal circles?



Missional Characteristics

- Incarnational → Contextual
- Sacramental → Communal
- Creational → Innovative
- Eschatological → Visionary



Contextual

- Be willing to be contextually relevant. →
- Know the context well. →
- Not afraid of connecting with people →
- Seek to build assets. →
- Touch people and let people touch them.



Contextual

Swamp

- In the community, but no real connections with others
- Collect money for a Christmas basket; no contact with those in the community
- Get rid of any online presence.

Reservoir

- The community knows the church exists.
- There is some outreach taking place.
- These churches often have food or clothing closets (touch the community, but the community not touch them).
- Maintain online as a secondary status.
- The community sees the congregation as an agency (e.g., clothing or food).

Canal

- The congregation is integral to the community.
- It participates in the life of the community and the community reciprocates (indispensable).
- Partner with a business to provide meals for those in need. Working with city council to address the systemic issue.
- Truly seek a hybrid presence.



Communal

- We all participate in several communities.
- All of these communities have stories that shape them.
- Stories — Help others to embody the narrative of the community
- The goal is to help God's story connect to the human story.
- The Sacraments are the way we live out the intersection between God's story and the human story.
 - Baptism — We enter into a community for formation and to deepen our understanding of grace.
 - Communion — We are ambassadors of God's grace to a broken world that needs salvation (wholeness).



Communal

Swamp

- The narrative of communion is rote (ritual) and not known beyond the four walls.
- Like the tradition of baptism and communion, but it is not a living narrative

Reservoir

- It is a mixed bag of people doing by rote and others living the story.
- Only a certain few are allowed to influence the narrative.
- The narrative of communion is one of doing for people and not sharing with people.

Canal

- Baptism and communion are being embodied by the community.
- The narrative of baptism is truly a beginning of discipleship that is perceived as a lifelong journey.
- The narrative of communion is dynamic and being experienced in various ways beyond the four walls (bread for others and allow them to be bread for them).



Innovative

- Doing something new, but does not necessarily get rid of the old
 - Add streaming to our current worship service
 - Create an online service that targets audience
- Willing to take risk
- See opportunities where others only see problems
- Willing to think outside of the box
- Not afraid of learning from others



Innovative

Swamp

- There is no risk taking or innovation.
- Operate as if everything is written in stone.

Reservoir

- Innovation focuses on what the congregation wants and not communal opportunities.

Canal

- Innovation and risk taking often move a congregation outside of comfort zone in an effort to address communal opportunities.



Visionary

- Persuasive
- Big picture people
- Promoters of transformation
- Helping others see the not yet



Visionary

Swamp

- There is no real vision beyond survival.
- Focus is on what they used to be and not what they can become.
- A church that continues to advertise itself as the family church, but everyone is over 75

Reservoir

- The vision focuses on getting others (right people) to come to the congregation.
- A vision for the church building and not the community of faith
- A church that advertises what it can do for you when you come to its building

Canal

- More willing to discern where God is leading them
- The vision is about working with the community toward transformation.
- A church that is willing to adapt so that it can follow God's vision and partner with others

