

Handout No. 1
Conversation in the Spirit¹
Revised May 10, 2024

Background

“Conversations in the Spirit” is a methodology used in the 2023 Synod on Synodality's small-group discussions. The method involves shared prayer and personal reflection and meditation to help participants discern and gather fruit. The fruit of the conversation includes recognizing convergences and intuitions, identifying obstacles, discordances, and new questions, and allowing prophetic voices to emerge

The Process

Deciding on the Focus Question

Facilitators of the Conversation determine the Focus Question for the Conversation.

Personal Preparation

By entrusting oneself to the Father, conversing in prayer with the Lord Jesus and listening to the Holy Spirit, each one prepares his or her own contribution to the Focus Question about which he or she is called to discern.

Silence, prayer and listening to the Work of God

Taking the Word and Listening

Each person takes turns speaking to the Focus Question from his or her own experience and prayer, and listens carefully to the contribution of others

Silence and Prayer

Making Space for others and the Others

From what the others have said about the Focus Question, each one shares what has resonated most with him or her or what has aroused the most resistance in him or her, allowing himself or herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit: “When, listening, did my heart burn within me?”

Silence and Prayer

Building Together

Together we dialogue on the basis of what emerged earlier in order to discern and gather the fruit of the conversation in the Spirit: to recognize intuitions and convergences; to identify discordances, obstacles and new questions; to allow prophetic voices to emerge. It is important that everyone can feel represented by the outcome of the work. “To what steps is the Holy Spirit calling us together?”

It is important to develop a written summary of the conversation

Final Prayer of Thanksgiving

¹ This is a summary of paragraphs 32-42 of the Instrumentum Laboris for the Synod 2023.

Handout No. 2
Elements of Adaptive Leadership
Revised: May 6, 2020

The Technical Problem - Adaptive Challenge Continuum

Technical Problems

Technical problems (even though they maybe complex): 1) the problem is well-defined, 2) the answer is known, and 3) the solution can be imposed by a single organization.

- Can be solved by one person or team
- Are usually an expected part of operations
- Are clear and understandable, even if they aren't easy to solve
- Are fixable with the resources you already have

Adaptive Challenges

Adaptive challenges are unexpected, more complex and multifaceted, with impacts reaching across an organization. They don't have an obvious solution, and they often live outside the scope of what a single leader could realistically solve.

- Can be difficult to identify and understand – usually complex
- Aren't solvable with existing knowledge and resources
- Require collaboration from everyone facing the challenge
- Indicate solutions involving changing beliefs, values, and approaches
- Might require radical change within the organization

Adaptive Decision Making

Reflect critically on your own thinking, with guidance from these principles.

- Keep focused on your Vision to navigate your journey
- Seek out divergent sources of information on the problem and seek feedback on your ideas.
- Act in a more complex way: take various actions to achieve the same goal.
- Identify where the real sources of the problems lie and address them first.
- Generate hypotheses about the effect of your actions and then test them out before applying them.
- Remain focused on addressing the most difficult problems by trying various tactics to address them
- Make your behavior transparent and predictable as possible

Handout No. 3

Adaptive Leadership Framework ²		
Get to the Balcony		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A place from which to observe the patterns in the system, its wider environment, and what might be coming in the future (prerequisite for the following principles)		
Identify the Adaptive Challenge		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A challenge for which there is no ready-made technical answer• A challenge that requires closing the gap between the desired future of system and the current state of the system. This challenge requires a change of values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of the people in the system		
Create a Holding Environment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A sequence of constructive conversations in which the adaptive work is to be accomplished		
Cook the Conflict	Maintain Disciplined Attention	Give Back the Work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create the heat• Sequence and pace the work• Regulate the distress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work Avoidance• Use conflict productively• Keep people focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delegate responsibility• Use their knowledge• Support their efforts
Managing Yourself as a Leader		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having the social and emotional skills to live with the disequilibrium that you create• Listen to Voice at the margins• Resist being a hero. Adaptive work is a team effort		

² A Schematic Summary of key ideas on change process in Ronald A Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Stating Alive through the Dangers of Leading*, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002)

Description of the Elements in the Adaptive Leadership Framework

1. **Get to the Balcony to Identify the Adaptive Challenge**
 - a. **Get to the Balcony** -- Taking a distanced view. The mental act of disengaging from the dance floor, the current swirl of activity, in order to observe and gain perspective on yourself and on the larger system. Enables you to see patterns that are not visible from the ground.
 - b. **Identifying the Adaptive Challenge** – What is the gap between our desired future for thriving as a system and what is our current situation.
 - i. Whose values, beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors would have to change in order for progress to take place? What shifts in priorities, resources, and power will be necessary? What sacrifices would have to be made and by whom?
 - ii. Are there conflicts key parties within the system that may give us a clue to the adaptive change
2. **Create the Holding Environment** -- The holding environment is the social “container” in which the adaptive work is done. The holding environment has the cohesive properties of a relationship or social system that serve to keep people engaged with one another in spite of the divisive forces generated by adaptive work. Holding environments give a group identity and contain the conflict, chaos, and confusion often produced when struggling with complex problematic realities.
3. **Manage the Holding Environment**
 - a. **Cook the Conflict**
 - i. **Assessing Ripeness of an Issue** -- The readiness of a dominant coalition of stakeholders to tackle an issue because of a generalized sense of urgency across stakeholder groups.
 - ii. **Pacing the Work** -- Gauging how much disturbance the social system can withstand and then breaking down a complex challenge into small elements, sequencing them at a rate that people can absorb.
 - iii. **Focusing Attention** – A critical resource for leadership is the ability to direct attention. To make progress on adaptive challenges, those who lead must be able to hold people’s engagement with hard questions through a sustained period of disequilibrium.
 - b. **Maintain Disciplined Attention**
 - i. **Regulating the Heat** – Raising or lowering the distress in a system to stay within the productive zone of disequilibrium.
 - ii. **Reality Testing** -- The process of comparing data and interpretations of a situation to discern which one, or which new synthesis of competing interpretations, captures the most information and best explains the situations.
 - iii. **Mediating Conflict among Stakeholders**-- Designing and leading the process of getting parties with differences to work them through productively, as distinguished from resolving the differences for them.
 - c. **Give Back the Work**
 - i. **Delegate responsibility** – Working through an adaptive challenge requires that members of the team take on specific tasks. These tasks should be clearly defined and a process of accountability specified.
 - ii. **Use their knowledge** – The process should enable team members to contribute important knowledge and information they have to address the adaptive challenge.
 - iii. **Support their efforts** – Team members make their best contributions when their efforts are recognized and supported.

4. **Manage Yourself as a Leader in the Midst of Change**

- a. **Living into the Disequilibrium** – As a person leads adaptive change, they will create a great deal of disequilibrium within the system. The leader has to have the social and emotion skills to working in this disequilibrium. The leader must undertake the gradual process of easing people into an uncomfortable state of uncertainty, disorder, conflict, or chaos at a pace and level that does not overwhelm them yet takes them out of their comfort zones and mobilizes them to engage in addressing an adaptive challenge.
- b. **Listening to Voices at the Margins** – In order to maintain a sense of order in the midst of the chaos leaders are often tempted to ignore voices at the margin of the system.
- c. **Resist being a Hero; Giving the Work back to the People** – The action of an authority figure in resisting the pressure to take charge and instead mobilizing the responsibility of the primary stakeholders in doing their share of the adaptive work.

Virtues for Constructive Conversations: The University of Dayton Pledge³

Revised: May 16, 2020

As a member of the University of Dayton community informed by the Catholic and Marianist traditions of education, I pledge to seek the truth and to create a culture of encounter through constructive conversations where truth can be more fully known and serve the common good. Constructive conversations focus on a question and provide a space where persons can exchange their arguments and conclusions that address the question within an environment of respectful listening, thoughtful advocacy and a mutual commitment to learning from one another. As I participate in political, social, economic, cultural and religious conversations, I pledge to practice, to the best of my ability, to practicing these virtues. I especially commit to practicing these virtues in my exchange with those whose views and values differ from my own.

Creating a Culture of Encounter: I will create opportunities for conversations on important questions that shape our society with persons, who not only share my perspectives, but also with people who hold different perspectives. In these encounters, I will respect the dignity of each person in the conversation.

Respectful Listening: I will listen carefully and thoughtfully to arguments that are different from mine. I will temporarily suspend my judgments in an effort to understand the experiences, perspectives and logic of the others arguments. I will ask questions that help me empathically understand their experiences, perspectives and logic and I will endeavor to understand their arguments before I argue against them.

Thoughtful Advocacy: I will endeavor to grasp the issues involved in the question being considered. I will make arguments based on my experience and perspectives and formulate arguments in a logically coherent manner. I will realize that others have different experiences and perspective on the question and I will endeavor to respect and incorporate as much as possible these experiences and perspectives in my arguments. I will invite others to test my arguments and the experiences and/or the facts contained in my arguments.

Engaged in Learning: I engage in conversation with others so that we together can enrich our personal and shared experiences, perspectives, and insights into the truth and the common good.

Intellectual Humility: I will always consider the possibility that my arguments may be deficient or wrong. When I come to the realization that my arguments are deficient or wrong, I will readily acknowledge it.

Staying at the Table: When the conversation is difficult and I am tempted to exit the conversation, I will deepen my commitment to stay at the conversation table. I will reflect on the conversation and ask what constructive moves I might undertake to improve the quality of the conversation.

Prophetic Courage: When called for, I will speak clearly and forcefully for premises and arguments that I believe to be true but may be unpopular or even reviled. I will persist in speaking for my arguments even when mine is a minority voice.

Practical Wisdom: I will work to develop the wisdom to know which virtues to apply in which situations, and how my arguments may ultimately contribute to the common good.

³ Please give comments for improvement to Bro. Raymond Fitz, S.M. at ray.fitz@udayton.edu

Characteristics of an Adaptive Pastoral Planner

Revised: May 9, 2024

- **A Partner in Building a Synodal Church** – They have knowledge of the vision of a Synodal Church. They have an appreciation of the partnerships needed to undertake the changes and transformations needed for the journey Synodal Church,
- **Goal-Oriented** – They create a sense of shared purpose and a culture that supports this purpose.
- **Emotionally Intelligent** – They aware of their own emotions and able to manage them in a constructive manner. They are also have empathy for the emotions of others and can manage social relationships in a constructive manner. They value relationships and invest time in building trust and listening to multiple perspectives that differ from their own.
- **Manages Uncertainty** – They know that uncertainty is an integral part of the change process and they are comfortable with not having all the answers at all times.
- **Experimental** – They focus on experimentation and learning as a way to get to the best possible solutions to adaptive challenges.
- **Reflective Learner** – They take time to reflect on their failures and successes. They do not shy away from admitting and correcting mistakes when they make them.
- **Patient** – The know the journey to a Synodal Church takes time and can be painful. They stay patient and persist until they get the desired results for journey to Synodal Church.