

## Welcome and Reminders

Welcome to any visitors and welcome back to the group members. It is important to remember that everything said and done in this group is confidential. The expectation is that there will not be discussion about our conversations to anyone outside of the group that is represented here and now. We understand that sometimes personal insights or information may be shared by someone who feels comfortable doing so in this group and not around others. Let's be respectful of that and carry our commitment to confidentiality as we leave this group. *(Pass out the confidentiality reminder to anyone who has not yet received one).*

## Prayer and Praises

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## Introduction

You will likely be aware through emails and announcements that Valley Ministries is currently facing changes – some that have been implemented and some that are to come. The next two sessions will discuss these changes and the concept of change in general. The hope of this session is that you would be aware of why the changes are being made, have a voice in the future implementation of changes, and feel confident that the change will not serve to break-down relationships, hinder one's spiritual journey, or threaten the spiritual paths of any member of our congregation. On the contrary, we are hoping to increase the individual mission, aid to the individual journey, and create new opportunities for other sojourners in their faith.

Having gone through the confidentiality agreement already, we will have a time at the end of the last session for each individual to offer open and honest communication to the leadership of the church. There will be further discussion of how this will take place, but know that any discussion in this and all studies unless outright and obvious in introduction, will be held in confidence.

## Change of our recent past

Let's talk for a few minutes about changes that have taken place in the last years and decades in our culture. With each topic, discuss what has changed in the last century or less.

➤ ***What has changed in the area of communications***

**Did You Know?** At the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympics the game that would later be turned into the movie *Miracle on Ice*, where the U.S. Men’s hockey team overcame every odd to beat the unbeatable Russian team, was played in the late afternoon. ABC, however, elected not to show the game until primetime. Much of America watched the game almost 5 hours later completely unaware of its outcome.

➤ *Can you imagine this happening today? Why or why not?*

➤ ***What has changed in the area of transportation?***

**Think about this:** While the car was invented in the late 1880s, the mass production and sales of these cars began less than a century ago. Even then, only the wealthy could afford them. My grandma is often telling of her day-long journey’s to town in the wagon so her parents could buy their monthly groceries.

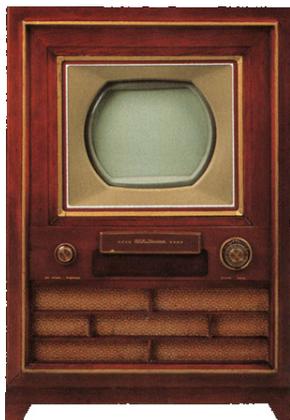
➤ *Who, in the last week, has made a quick trip to the store to pick up a last minute want or need?*

➤ ***What has changed in the area of entertainment?***

➤ **Your best guess:** *What would be the likely fate of a theater today that showed only the silent films of the 1920s?*

## Change and the Church’s Resistance to Change

These changes we just discussed are only a fraction of changes that have taken place in our recent history. There have been changes in production, management, architecture, music, and so much more. Change is an obvious, real, and ever increasing phenomenon. In today’s world, with inventions that have increased the speed and capacity of production and innovation, change is more extreme than it has ever been. “We live in a world that is already in fact very different from the one which we have begun to comprehend, and by the time our comprehension has caught up with the new reality, the world is likely to be even more drastically different in ways that today may seem unthinkable” (Zbigniew Brezezinski).



Imagine if, the light of the changes we have already discussed and the so many more we did not, organizations failed to transform with identified changes. If, for example, Ford only stuck with the Model-T, because of its great success at the time. Or if RCA would have been content with their first color TV (shown to the left) because their customer’s loved it and wanted nothing more.

Businesses understand the need for continual evolution in light of today's technologies, customer's interests and cultural trends. But so often churches fail to see their need for change, which is as equally prevalent.

- *Before we consider the causes of change resistance in the church, discuss why you think change in the church is so difficult.*
- *Are there aspects of change in our church that have been difficult to you... if comfortable please tell us what and why?*

Change is difficult in any arena of life. For many reasons, change within a church environment is even more difficult. Here are some of the aspects that make church change even more challenging than most.

### **Traditionalism:**

Churches, probably more than any other culture or group of people, refuse and often retaliate against inevitable change. This is primarily because churches have rich traditions that interact with deep unchanging beliefs. In some churches, in fact, traditionalism has become so sacred as to hold authority of tradition equal to authority scripture. Traditions are not necessarily wrong, even those that are not directly related to scripture.

- *What are some traditions you are aware of in other churches/denominations that may or may not be founded in scripture?*
- *What are some traditions in Valley Ministries that may or may not be founded in scripture?*

### **Ownership**

Church congregants also form a bond between the practices of church and their spirituality and spiritual growth. When change comes to such an environment people can often feel spiritually threatened. The intimacy of their church family, the personal touch of their church experience, and the comfort of their fulfilled expectations are all potentially threatened.

- *In the light of impending change at Valley Ministries, have you experienced any of these feelings, or others that were not mentioned? Expand on these feelings as you are comfortable.*

### **Change for a purpose**

Traditions are difficult to give up. While one moment in our service might be special to one person something else might be special to another. Securities are difficult not to guard. Resisting change is often defending against exposure to vulnerability. So taking away from, changing an element in, or even adding to our services may, and most likely will, affect the comfort level of some individuals in our church. For this reason it is essential that change at Valley Ministries does not come just for the sake of change itself. Studies show that there are typically three things that bring change: crisis, chance and choice. Valley Ministries is choosing to change (a.k.a. evolve and grow) rather than allowing change to determine the course of Valley Ministries' actions. The leadership of Valley Ministries is choosing to make positive and forward-seeking goals.

The purpose of any church should be light the path of hope for any and all who are hopeless. The purpose of any church should be to open any door and window available to the outside world so that more, even one more, can hear the message that they are divinely created and unconditionally loved. The purpose of any church should be to inspire, teach, grow and love all who are seeking the like. In such a respect, every church should shy away from conformities and traditions that would seek only to build the wall between the church family and those outside.

## **What Change Are You Hoping For, What Are You Afraid Of?**

To conclude this study tonight let's discuss what changes we are hoping to see and what changes we don't want to see. This is the opportunity to voice emotions, cares, celebrations and concerns in confidence or as a message to the leadership of Valley Ministries. If you wish to have your words remain confidential, speak them as you normally would. If you wish to have a thought, idea, or passion related to the leadership of Valley Ministries regarding this change process, say "I would like to communicate to Valley Ministries" prior to your communication.

In other words:

If you want to say I don't like the way the Coffee Card drawing has been changed:

- Confidentially: say, "I don't like the way the Coffee Card drawing has been changed."
  - As a message to the church: say, "I would like to communicate to Valley Ministries that I don't like the way the coffee card drawing has been changed."
- *Feel free to discuss any observations, emotions or anticipations you currently have regarding this current and future process of change at Valley Ministries.*

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## Introduction

Last session we talked about change and its necessity in almost every aspect of life. As the ancient saying goes, "The only thing that is constant is change." It makes up the ingredients of our lives.

Frequently, in business and in life, we get too comfortable. We find solid ground – a place that feels safe – we get comfortable, and we settle in. We're programmed to do it. It's how we operate. Look for safety and stay there. But these days, it's imperative that we act against our programming to truly succeed and find our own greatness.

And yet, when that change occurs in the place in which we seek the sacred and the solace, change can be quite intimidating. For this reason, we are focusing a second week to dialogue specifically about the changes that are taking place in our church. This discussion can, of course, be extended to changes taking place in your individual lives as well.

## Changes in Our Church

There are some major changes taking place in Valley Ministries MCC. Below some of those changes are listed, many of which were mentioned by Rev. Terri at the anniversary celebration. Take a moment to discuss your general feelings about the specific changes answering the following questions:

- *What most excites me about this change?*
- *What are my greatest apprehensions about this change?*

- *How will this change affect me?*
- *How can I affect this change?*

### Changes:

- Changes in the Order of Service
- New programs at Valley Ministries (see ministry map attached)
- Formation of stewardship committee
- Board nominations (nominating committee)
- 2 Sunday morning services
- Seeking to implement a new full-time position at the church
- What other changes have you noticed about which you can continue this discussion?

The mentality of a church or at least many church-goers, can often be heard in the sentiments, "That's just the way we've always done it!" or "We've never done that before, why fix it if it ain't broke?" But the focus and goals of Valley Ministries have always been to reach more people and impact the lives we meet through the radical love and inclusion of Christ.



They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking."

Jesus answered, "Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast."

He told them this parable: "No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.' "



In Luke 5:33-39 Jesus tells the following parable:

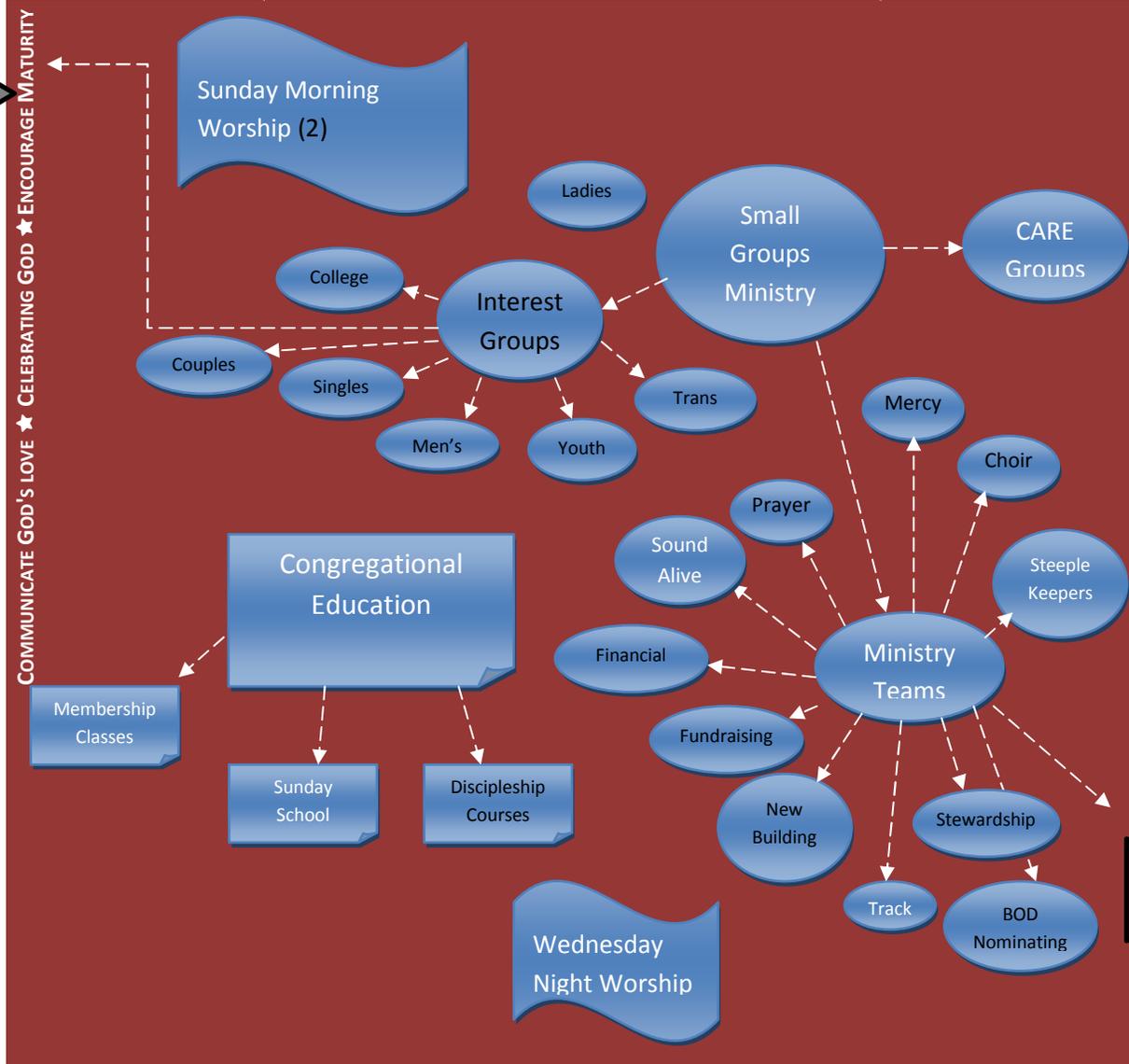
While the old wineskins may feel familiar, we have an opportunity to "carry more wine" as we transition to new wine skins. While the old garments may seem more comfortable, the new garment will be stronger and last longer. Our old traditions are familiar, our previous way of

doing things has its place, but there is always a greater capacity to do something different and increase the impact that God wants to have through Valley Ministries and the members and friends of Valley Ministries.

- Spend the rest of this time together in discussion and fellowship. Feel free to talk within the group or in one-on-one discussions about how you would like to see change implemented, or what other changes you hope to see in the future of Valley Ministries.

# Valley Ministries Ministry Map

- ACCEPT ALL PEOPLE**
- Media Team
  - Web
  - Newsletter
  - Newspaper
  - Campus Flyers
  - Affinity Groups
  - PRIDE
  - AA
  - GLSTN
  - Courage Campaigne
  - P-Flag
  - Inner Faith Gathering
  - Social Activities
  - Dances
  - Texas Hold 'Em
  - Movie Night
  - Book Club
  - Motor Cycle Rides
  - Hiking Club
  - Comedy Nights



- EMPOWER OTHERS TO SHARE**
- Mission: Possible
  - Homeless Backpacks
  - WJD?
  - Prayer Shawls
  - Steeple Keepers
  - Care Bear
  - Social Justice Team
  - Speakers Board