

1

The Human Side of Church: Group Processes in Congregations

We begin with a story. This story – within a story – was first told by Ivan in Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*. It takes place in fifteenth-century Spain, at the height of the Inquisition.

One day, Jesus comes back. He wanders through the streets and squares of a southern town, where just the day before 100 so-called heretics had been burnt at the stake. The story-teller narrates, ‘He appeared quietly, unostentatiously, and yet – strange, this – everyone recognizes him. Saying nothing, he passes among them with a smile of infinite compassion.’

People who touch his garment are healed, a blind man’s sight is restored. He even raises a small girl from the dead. The crowds erupt, shouting and sobbing. At this very moment, the Grand Inquisitor, a man of ninety, emerges from the cathedral. The crowd meekly parts, and they bow their heads to the ground. He then has the Visitor arrested.

Later, receiving the Prisoner, the Grand Inquisitor says to him, ‘I know who you are.’ He accuses the Prisoner of meddling. The old man sentences the Prisoner to being burnt at the stake the next day.

The gist of his accusation against the Prisoner is that whereas the Prisoner has acted to ensure humanity’s freedom, the Grand Inquisitor acts to ensure humanity’s happiness. He ensures their happiness by providing them with bread, with certainty, and with belonging. The people, claims the Grand Inquisitor, cannot bear the freedom that Jesus has left them with; it was uncharitable of him to attempt this. All those centuries ago, by refusing the temptations in the wilderness, Jesus had said no to buying people’s loyalty with bread, or with a display of miracles on demand, leaving them only their free

wills and consciences from which to act. ‘But the people are mere sheep,’ said the Grand Inquisitor, ‘and you have asked too much of them. This freedom is an intolerable burden, which we have toiled for 15 centuries to remove.’

The only response the Prisoner makes is to draw near to the old man, and kiss him on his bloodless ninety-year-old lips. The old man shudders and cries, ‘Go, and do not come back . . . do not come back . . . ever!’¹

A fanciful story? Perhaps. Yet this story about Christian freedom undermined by human organizations taps into something that we know about ourselves, something that social psychology has demonstrated through numerous experiments: we prefer to have our loyalty bought with the bread of certainty and belonging. We struggle to act and think on our own. In churches, as elsewhere, we conform in order to feel secure about our thoughts and our actions.

The sociologist Max Weber observed a cyclical process among religious movements that he called ‘the routinization of *charisma*’.² Weber argued that any great vision requires a human process to carry it through time, sometimes in the form of ‘a man, a mission, a movement, or a monument’.³ Even with the Body of Christ, the life-giving *charism*⁴ has to be embodied in a routine – in some form of human organization. Yet, life-giving visions do not fit easily into neat boxes. So, the very process that gives the vision continuing life also begins to kill it. When the maintenance of the institution (which protects the *charism*) becomes the institution’s primary purpose, the death of the *charism* is on the horizon. Only a spiritual revival or reform will re-ignite the gift. In our era, fresh expressions of church⁵ and the re-traditioning of familiar forms of church march alongside many initiatives to re-ignite the gift.

It may be hard for pioneering expressions of church to imagine that, some day, they too may host the unwelcome process of routinization. Imagine a multi-faith chaplaincy that aims to meet the pastoral needs of a new community.⁶ Everything about the project is vibrant and challenging. This chaplaincy for people working in construction companies is already under way; eight volunteer chaplains are involved. Stage two will involve the development of chaplaincy to people using a sports and music arena; and stage three will involve managing a building for worship and community development, with pastoral care of new residents and employees in offices and shops. This multi-faith project envisions the faiths worshipping separately, in no way denying differences, but doing chaplaincy work in a shared community. A fabulous, far-reaching vision like this seems an unlikely candidate for ‘the routinization of *charisma*’. Any such entrenchment is likely to be some years away. But the sheer enormity of the workload, and the human need for a bit of peace and quiet, may be enough for normal social processes to interact with the vision in unanticipated ways.

As we move with the church into the twenty-first century, whether through

traditional or fresh expressions of church, leaders need to be aware of the ambiguous role all human organizations play: they both enable and constrain. Yet, we cannot do without them. Any network of relationships, however fluid, requires some organizational context in order to survive long-term. The church as an organization, in whatever form, is here to stay. We write this book for a ‘hinge’ generation – a generation on the cusp of both old and new forms of church. Our message is that we need to learn the social psychological lessons from both past and present experiences of church. Without this understanding, we will blindly replicate the processes that kill the gift, resulting in crippled versions of the church’s own ideal. Whatever ecclesiology or other perspective you bring towards emerging and traditional forms of church, the topics discussed in this chapter apply. Whatever *else* the church is in spiritual terms (and we as authors believe in that ‘more’), at the very least the church is a human organization. It is worth looking at what happens when human beings gather together.

To help you to recognize group processes in your faith community, through examples, empirical research in social psychology, and exercises,⁷ you will learn in this chapter about:

- Conformity:
 - Five factors.
 - Curbing undesired conformity.
- Not conforming or dissenting.
- Social identity:
 - Reducing inter-group conflict.

Conformity

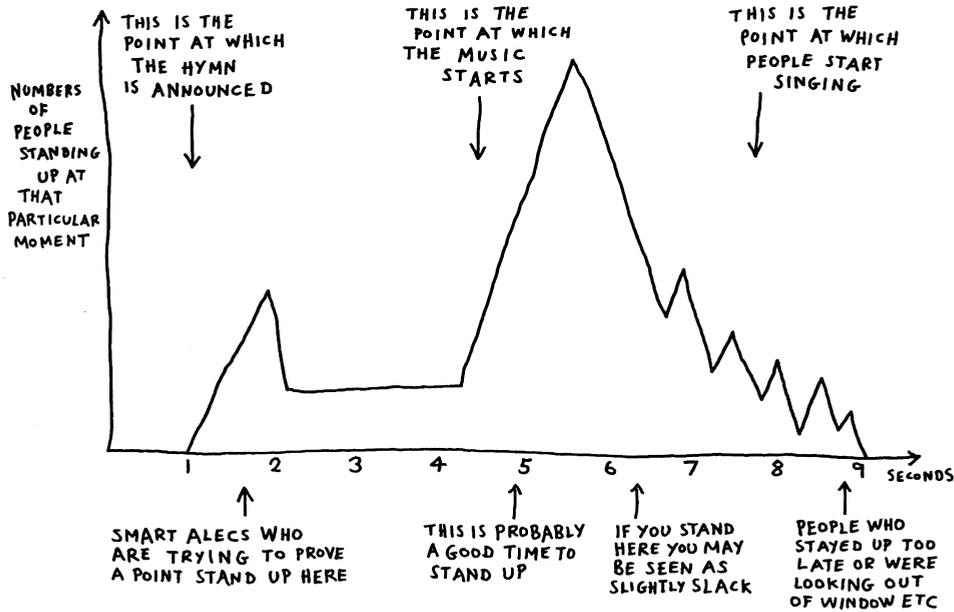
Discussion Point → Churches are conforming places

We all would like to think that we are immune to the kind of group pressure illustrated by the cartoon on p. 6 by Dave Walker (2006). After all, no direct request to comply has been made. Surely we can stand or sit when we choose? Yet, next Sunday, if we are in church, the odds are that we will stand up to sing when everyone else does. How deep does this tendency towards conformity run?

Try this. Stare at a tiny pinprick of light in a completely dark room. Very soon the light will appear to move erratically, even though the light source actually remains stationary. This is called the *autokinetic* effect. Back in 1936, an experimenter put participants in a darkened room with only a pinprick of light, and asked them to tell him what they saw. The experimenter, Muzafer Sherif,

WHEN TO STAND UP FOR A HYMN

(IF YOU DO NOT WANT TOO MANY PEOPLE TO LOOK AT YOU AND SHAKE THEIR HEADS)



NOTE: IF THE INTRODUCTION IS LONG AND RAMBLING YOU WILL HAVE TO MAKE AN ADJUSTMENT

Cartoon by Dave Walker (www.cartoonchurch.com).

tested participants both alone and in groups of two or three.⁸ Alone, participants reported widely divergent amounts of movement. In groups, participants invariably reached a common point of view about how much the light ‘moved’. Responding out loud in the group, the participants conformed to one another’s responses. The experience of being in a group produced a consensus, without any explicit pressure so to do. Even in subsequent testing, in which the participants were again alone, each participant’s response conformed to the previous judgement arrived at while in the group, no matter how different their initial, solitary judgement had been.

In a church gathering, there is an implicit agreement about when to stand for a hymn. This is benign; why sing in chaos? However, an implicit pressure to conform can seep into all areas of church life, eroding the life-giving charism. We tend to notice conformity more readily in others than in ourselves. Visit a church of a different persuasion. The first thing that is likely to spring to mind is: ‘Oh, they are all like that’ (be they endlessly genuflecting, happy/clappy, frozen in formality, doubtfully dissecting, or Bible thumping). Of course, in our *own* church we are distinct individuals, involved in the proceedings from a deep sense of our own integrity. We prefer to think of *ourselves* as inviolable, rational individuals.

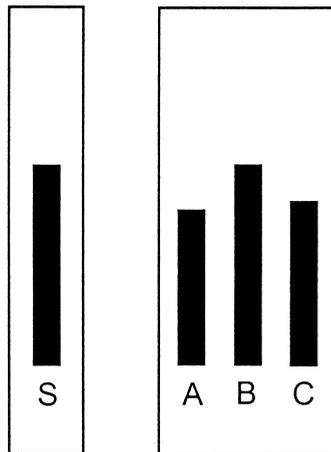


Figure 1.1. Asch's test of conformity.

Sherif's autokinetic experiment is often regarded as a signpost in the history of social psychology. The prevailing view of human nature in the West had been to focus on the individual, as if people are self-contained entities. Social psychology began to unveil the inherently social nature of the human personality. We all exist in a matrix of relationships, and this affects something as 'biologically based' as visual perception. A later series of classic experiments conducted by Solomon Asch demonstrated the power and pervasiveness of conformity.⁹ Asch asked eight participants to make correct judgements about which line in a group of three was identical to another or fourth line (see Figure 1.1).

The task was easy, with only one line of the three actually matching the fourth (s) line. However, seven of the eight participants were undercover 'confederates', in league with Asch. Only one person was the real ('naïve') participant (and he was placed second to last among the other seven participants). Asch secretly instructed the confederates to give correct answers on the first and third series of lines, and to give an incorrect answer on the second series. The real aim of the experiment was to see how the 'naïve' participant responded when everyone else gave wrong answers.

Over many repetitions of the task, many conformed to the group's *wrong* answers, even though the correct answer was obvious. 28% of the 'naïve' participants conformed to others' judgements much of the time. 47% conformed some of the time, and 25% never conformed. So, there are individual differences, but conformity is widespread. It seems to be normal for people to change their opinions, even their perceptions, when they are at variance with other members of their group.

The church has long relied on the power of conformity to help people to behave in accordance with Christian principles. St Paul exhorts us to ‘Put on Christ’ (Romans 13.14) and ‘Be conformed to Christ’ (Romans 8.29). The story of Western civilization owes much to the power of conformity. In the chaotic power vacuum left by the fall of the Roman Empire, civilization in Europe was made possible by the norms of peace and mutual trust valued in Christendom (a process called ‘the normative pacification of Europe’).¹⁰ This happens in the local church, too. If we regularly rub shoulders with people who love, forgive and help others, we are likely to do some of this ourselves. This can have enormous benefits, as sociologist David Martin has observed in Latin American Pentecostal churches.¹¹ Through immersion in church life, those trapped in cycles of alcoholism, drug addiction and wife-beating, can escape. Families stabilize, adults hold their jobs, children go to school, and poverty is reduced. Thanks are due, at least in part, to the power of conformity.

Post-industrial, postmodern Western society bequeaths to each of us a personal project: the project of the self.¹² We no longer inherit an unquestioned role or identity in society; we have to create our own sense of self. In this context, the power of conformity in churches plays a more ambiguous role. Conformity both enables and constrains the development of an authentic self. During the Iraq invasion in 2003, some churches in the UK encouraged only one opinion concerning these international events and ostracized anyone with a different view. People accepted the group view, or kept quiet about their disagreement, or felt they had to leave. The opportunity for learning and growing that disagreement provides was missed. Maintaining the ‘unity of the Spirit’ by suppressing all other viewpoints ultimately exacts a high price.

Since the early experiments on conformity, subsequent studies have identified various nuances and factors involved. People are slightly less conforming since the social upheavals and questioning of authority that characterized the 1960s and 1970s. But on the whole, people still do conform to norms set by others. We exist in a matrix of relationships, and because we are social beings, this exerts a pressure to conform.

Pause for Thought

Think about the norms of conformity in your faith community. Perhaps the norms regard preferred dress-codes, or types of career. Perhaps the norms coincide with only one political or social viewpoint. Think about which norms seem to be positive, which seem relatively neutral, and which potentially suppress an authentic expression of selfhood. What would happen if you dissented from any of the norms?

The influences of conformity can be divided into two strands: informative and normative influences. When we don't know much about the topic at hand, we look to others to tell us 'what is'. When we need to rely on other people for information, or to define reality for us, *informative* influences are at work.¹³ We go along with the majority opinion on the latest Christian trend. Surely they must know!

Normative influences are at work when we conform to the behaviour of those around us in order to avoid being 'the odd one out'.¹⁴ We may not think the others are necessarily right, but in complying, our reward is group membership. Some of Asch's participants admitted afterwards that they agreed with the confederates' wrong judgements so that they could 'fit in' with the group. In church, we might remain standing during the sixth chorus, despite back strain, lest we appear lacking in zeal. We might agree with others that Alpha is superficial or 'too middle class', even though we thoroughly enjoyed the course ourselves. Research suggests that most groups effect *both* kinds of influence (informative and normative),¹⁵ and the church is no exception.¹⁶

Churches have potentially all of the factors that lead to a high level of conformity. Within the broad categories of informative and normative, at least five factors influence whether or not we will conform (adapted from *Psychology for Christian Ministry*).¹⁷

- 1 *The size of the group.* A large (50+) group with most people in agreement will exert a powerful influence towards conformity. A person thinks: 'They *must* know what they are talking about. They cannot *all* be wrong.' However, if a group has an excessively high degree of uniformity, then its viewpoint will exert less power than a more diverse group ('They must be all a bunch of zombies!'). Here, the opinion of *all* seems more like an opinion of *one* and therefore more easily resisted by another one. Jill visited a church where all the people seemed to be the same age and stage in life. They dressed alike, behaved in the service in more or less the same way, and said similar things when greeting her afterwards. Jill felt as if she had travelled to another planet. Feeling like an alien, and glad of it, she decided to resist the unspoken pressure to conform. A very diverse, large church makes it also slightly easier for the Jills of this world to resist the pressure to conform.
- 2 *The importance of the group to an individual member.* The more important the group is to a particular person, the more likely that she or he will conform to the group's behaviour. Similarly, the more important *membership in that group* is to a person, the more likely it is that the person will conform in order to ensure membership. Sam does not exercise much influence in any group except his local parish. This is the one place where he feels valued and important. He does whatever it takes to stay involved in church, even if it means

pretending he agrees. Because church matters to most people who attend, the possibility for an unhealthy degree of conformity exists.

- 3 *The person's concern with being liked.* Some people feel the need to be liked more powerfully than others. This difference among people is in part connected to the extrovert and introvert distinction in human personality. Extroverts feel the need to belong to a group more strongly than introverts; the difference is not about liking people, but on how their brain is wired to maintain an optimal level of stimulus. According to the research of Hans Eysenck,¹⁸ the way a part of the brain of extroverts functions means that the under-stimulated extrovert requires continuous input to keep the brain functioning at an optimum level.¹⁹ In other words, extroverts are slightly bored: they are looking for action and this includes seeking out other people. So, the external, social world is fascinating and vital for extroverts. Dorothy Rowe²⁰ asserts that for extroverts belonging to a group is so important that rejection by the group can threaten the extrovert's vital sense of *being a self*. Thus, an extrovert may conform more readily than an introvert in order to be liked. This will be true in a church context as much as in any other context.

In contrast, the ARAS (ascending reticular arousal system) of an introvert functions in such a way that they tend to become over-stimulated. Introverts reach overload more quickly. An introvert needs more solitude, lest over-stimulation sets in. An introvert may not be so devastated by rejection from the group, as the introvert's sense of self comes from personal achievement and the requisite internal clarity. Instead, says Rowe, introverts may dread invasion *by* the group. An introvert may conform outwardly (while resisting inwardly), simply to be left in peace!

We would all like both: to belong, and to have personal clarity and achievement. However, one tendency will dominate. To this at least partially biologically based aspect of personality, add individual experiences of insecure relationships or rejection. People rightly come to church to receive some healing from such experiences. And yet the inherent social dynamic of conformity in churches can produce a heady mixture of people looking for, but failing to find, acceptance *and* the freedom of being authentic.

4. *The ambiguity of a 'stimulus'.* The more ambiguous something appears, the more people rely on others for interpretations and explanations. If alone, a person will probably wrestle with the ambiguity, and struggle to make sense of it. In a group, people will often rely on the group leader for an interpretation. In a church context, ambiguity can be found in our understanding of God, scripture, or the Christian life in general: did I not get that job because God did not want me to, or because the people doing the hiring were disobedient to God's leading, or because life isn't fair, or . . . ? In the face of the Herculean task of interpreting God, faith and human existence, most of us conform to others' interpretations rather than live with this ambiguity.

5 *The perceived authority or expertise of others.* The views of those with identifiable credentials (professional, vocational, academic or religious) will be given more weight than those without such credentials. People will conform to the views of the minister, pastor or priest more than to those of a non-ordained person. Coming in second, a congregation's champion volunteer, for example, might get others to follow suit more readily than a newcomer. In a fresh expression of church, the initial founders may be considered the experts. However identified, groups mark out some people as the experts, and these people must be right!

Given this range of factors, it is not surprising that churches are very conforming places. Belonging in the church body is often quite important to individuals. Many people come to church because they are aware of their own woundedness and hope to find acceptance. We come to rely on the leaders UP THERE, in any form of church, because, well, *they* are the experts, and they will tell us all that we need to know. The feeling that it is best to fit in can express itself in the way people talk, dress, act and think, at least while in church (people often do their own thing elsewhere). This works in the reverse too; clergy can feel pressured to conform to perceived expectations. (We will discuss the pressure on church leaders in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.)

Emerging-church gatherings are often motivated by a desire to resist this kind of pressure. They question whether an authentic new identity in Christ can be fashioned through conformity. Through listening to people 'where they are at', and connecting with the needs of local people, some of the usual pressure to conform is modified. What is happening here is that the pyramid of 'expertise' is being overturned. It is the people, not just the leaders, who are accorded expertise. Although not leaderless, the emerging church is more of a 'grass roots', 'bottom-up' endeavour.²¹ However, Weber's concept of the 'routinization of *charisma*' warns us that whatever the structure of our group, over time there is a natural slide towards conforming to the dominant behaviour and opinions of the group.

At the extreme end, some churches may require a conformity that eliminates personal boundaries. Jessica feels guilty if she says 'No' to any request from her pastor or another church member. Any request is experienced as a command. Her church is always right, so Jessica is suspicious of anything not associated directly with her church. She feels most comfortable when interacting with her church friends. Happily, they all agree on everything.

This extreme example of conformity can be understood as a form of fusion. In a similar way, a young infant is somewhat fused with his carer; the infant does not know where he ends and another person begins. Some churches encourage this type of infantile blurring of boundaries for the sake of being 'unified' (discussed further in Chapter 7).

Should we blame church leaders and church members for these manifestations of conformity? Or does it happen of its own accord? The dynamic of conformity seems to take on a life of its own. It is true that certain kinds of leaders, certain kinds of followers and certain kinds of organizational structures reinforce our tendency to conform. A very authoritarian leader might exacerbate the tendency to conform among the church members (“Think like me – or else!”), but heavy-handedness might also provoke people to rebel. Conformity is a normal social process; it is not the fault of one person or group of people. To some degree, it is an inevitable feature of being people together.

In the initial, honeymoon phase, fresh expressions of church may be relatively free of pressures to conform. But over time, they too will develop their own norms, which will inevitably introduce pressures to conform. The good news is that by simply being aware of the human tendency to conform, we can help to prevent faith communities from turning into clone factories. Here are nine suggestions for curbing undesired conformity.²²

- 1 *Notice the people around your church building or gathering place.* Nothing disrupts the unhealthy routine of conformity like seeing the familiar with fresh eyes – the seller of the *Big Issue*,²³ the elderly person who lives alone with infrequent visits from children, the harried young professional, the intimidating young person – and greet and pray for them.
- 2 *Talk about conformity, good and bad, in casual conversation.* Awareness enables choice.
- 3 *Discuss healthy and unhealthy conformity as a church.* Be intentional about encouraging desirable and discouraging undesirable norms; children of all ages often ‘see’ these dynamics clearly: ask them to identify the norms and to put on a skit about them for the larger church.
- 4 *Change old habits.* Creative changes can help dislodge undesirable norms and nurture new perspectives. Visit the ‘Fresh Expressions’ or ‘The Simple Way’ websites²⁴ for ideas and follow their links for many more (also see Part 3, Resources).²⁵
- 5 *Embrace a theology of grace.* Foster an attitude of unconditional love that affirms the inherent worth and dignity of each person, while allowing for appropriate expressions of disagreement.
- 6 *Admit weakness.* Every one of us is corrigible, even those of us called to leadership; practise the transparency and humility that includes the use of apology.
- 7 *Welcome dissent.* Affirm those who remain honest even with unpopular views; they might have a prophetic viewpoint worth attention.
- 8 *Care enough to confront.* Kind, gentle, but firm and consistent confrontation can help to reduce negative words and behaviour much more lovingly and

effectively than the indirect pressure of conformity. Of course confrontation can be misused, but if there are agreed ‘rules’ (such as: be kind and humble when sharing truthfully), potential for abuse is reduced.

- 9 *Encourage conscious choices rather than default setting conformity.* Help one another to choose actively rather than to decide by not deciding; stay on the same topic for several gatherings, with updates on the results of particular decisions, and concrete ‘next steps’ that involve your larger community.

One of the most powerful tools for breaking up the crusty ground of conformity is the use of minority influence. Strangely, churches are contexts for both minority and majority (conformity) influences. For example, the pressure to buy everything from a certain brand of deodorant to luxury cars in order to be happy is a majority influence. People often feel pressured to conform to our culture’s materialistic understandings of happiness. In this context, the church can act as a minority influence, championing the view that true happiness is deeper than the pleasures of ownership and the elimination of body odour. A truly counter-cultural minority view understands happiness as rooted in God’s presence with us, through the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

In particularly contentious situations, minority influence is most potent when stated clearly and maintained firmly over time, even under challenge. The Revd Martin Luther King’s position of non-violence was his consistently stated strategy for overcoming racial discrimination, even when he knew that at some point he would most likely die for his minority position. His minority position led to a change in inner convictions among the majority, as reflected in changed laws.

We have all seen the unhelpful effects of conformity in churches. Not everyone in South African churches actually agreed with the official apartheid church position, but many conformed to the racist views. At the other extreme, pure anarchy is counter-productive; no co-ordinated activity is possible. In fact, research has shown that people prefer even fascism to pure anarchy. (See Chapter 5, pp. 107–8.)

Yet, as argued earlier, conformity brings its own rewards. If we cannot enculturate into a group, then we will always be on the fringe. A missionary who served in Kenya told about a church that invited a group of prostitutes to attend. The prostitutes arrived in their finery, which was rather short on fabric and transparent where there was any fabric at all. Without consultation, the church members uttered not a word about their clothing, and welcomed the women warmly, inviting them to their homes. At the next church gathering, the former prostitutes again attended. This time, their garments consisted of twice as much opaque fabric. By osmosis, the women conformed to the church’s normative behaviour. It was a powerful symbol of new life for both the women and the church members (cf. Colossians 3.12ff.).²⁶

The pressures of conformity provide an example of a tension that is part of human existence: the tension between being in relationship and being alone. On a group level, we feel the tension between a desire to be part of a group and a desire for the freedom to be ourselves. Our understanding of God as Trinity is our blueprint here: unity in diversity. The perfect love and trust within the Godhead confers the courage to be an authentic self. A fascinating characteristic of saints over the centuries is their (at times eccentric) individuality and authenticity in the face of great pressures to conform. There is a healthy balance to be struck between being absorbed by others and being isolated.²⁷ Today's saints also aim to live in a healthy dynamic tension between the poles of personal integrity and connectedness with others, both as guided by the Holy Spirit. We sometimes have to swing from one pole to the other in order to find that balance. (The tension between fusion and isolation is discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.) We swing now to learn from those who do not conform. What can non-conformers contribute to help keep the flame of authenticity alive in both traditional and fresh expressions of church?

Not conforming – dissenting

Discussion Point → Who are the non-conformists in your church?

Have you identified the dissenters in your church? Are they just the nay-sayers? The socially mal-adaptive ones? Or, are there people who, for various reasons, provide a valuable 'reality check' on the normal pressures to conform?

Formal and informal roles influence the extent to which people feel pressured to conform. If you are reading this text as part of the assigned reading for a class, think about a typical classroom scenario. The instructor will be acting like an instructor and the students will act like students. When they go home, they will behave differently; an instructor still in the role of lecturer at home might not go over too well at the family dinner table! Think about these dynamics in a classroom setting developing over time. The dynamics will involve mainly adhering to the formal roles of instructor and student. Over time, however, the instructor might earn the students' respect (or not). Certain students might become implicit leaders, by demonstrating their knowledge, or by disagreeing. Informal roles taken by people in the group will begin to influence group norms of behaviour.

Move the thought experiment to a church-related context. Think about a typical experience of a visitor to your traditional or fresh expression of church. Think about the formal and informal roles that pressure people to conform. Think about how these might change over time.

Discussion Point → What happens to the dissenters in your church?

In social psychology, social exchange theory provides a helpful interpretation of why people who dare to dissent often find themselves ostracized or silenced.²⁸ According to this theory, people operate with a sense of fairness about what they put into a group and what they get out of it. People want to get out of the group what they put into it. They may have a low tolerance for dissent due to a perception that dissent requires more effort than conformity. As a voluntary organization, church members do not want a lot of hassle. People may marginalize dissenters rather than engage with them because change might result, which again requires more energy. Although it can require a lot of energy to maintain the *status quo*, this energy expenditure goes unrecognized. Better the devil we know than the devil we don't!

Our heritage has bestowed upon us the ability to recognize immediately the person who has the most power in the group, the alpha male, so to speak.²⁹ We respond accordingly. When asked to jump, we ask how high. More or less unconsciously, we recognize the designated powerful ones and perpetuate their power by deferring to them. On some level, we believe that our very survival depends upon it. Human history is a story in which group membership usually increases the chances for survival, whether in the hunting horde, on a ship, the farm, the picket line, or in the family home. Given this background, the possibility of dissenting rarely enters the mind. But if one person refuses to conform, other members of the group begin to realize that dissenting is possible. A dissenter also allays others' fears about possible repercussions: I can dissent and survive to tell the tale! Dissenters play the valuable role of enabling the group to steer a middle course between unhealthy, fused conforming and the extreme of isolation. In the middle ground is a degree of conforming that enables relationship and coordination of activity without smothering individuality.

Social identity

We are social beings, and this is powerfully at work in our sense of self – that understanding of ourselves we call our 'identity'. People have a variety of 'sub' identities that contribute to their overall identity. As Christians, along with our other identities, we have a religious identity. Traditionally, religious identity was cast in clear-cut categories. But today, younger church members in particular are expressing a desire to transcend the usual categories of churchmanship or theological stances, such as 'evangelical', or 'liberal'. A fatigue with denominational loyalties and other religious categories is widespread: 'Emerging churches dislike

categorization that separates insiders from outsiders.³⁰ Although those involved in emerging churches talk about their weariness with categories, it does appear that human beings are wired to think in categories. No matter what shape our faith community takes, we cannot help but interact with the world through categories. Without categories, we would be bombarded with an infinite amount of variety. For example, the category ‘chair’ simplifies a vast array of objects on which to sit. Similarly, categories of people simplify the social world. While we may wish to avoid being stuck in rigid religious categories, research indicates that our tendency towards categorization exerts a powerful influence in our lives.³¹

Social identity combines two normal human processes. The first process concerns, as mentioned, the categories we use to simplify the flow of stimuli that makes up our experience of the world. Maintaining categories takes ongoing mental work. To maintain social categories with clear-cut boundaries, we exaggerate the similarities among people within a group: ‘They’re all like that.’ Simultaneously, we exaggerate the differences between one group and another and create false stereotypes: ‘The Chinese are all hard working but Tahitians are lazy.’ Exaggerating differences between our group and another group,³² while minimizing differences among our own group members, helps us to maintain clear social categories. Order is thus imposed upon a messy world.

The second process concerns our ongoing need for positive self-esteem. We want to feel that we are okay, that the groups to which we belong are good. We want to feel that *our* church is the best, the truest, most blessed – because then so are we. When we find the ‘right’ church to belong to, we display our membership through listening to the right Christian music, or reading a particular translation of the Bible, or using the familiar religious jargon. To demonstrate that we belong to the right social group, we may choose a particular career, live in a certain area, drive a trendy make of car, and wear clothes with designer labels. Belonging to this esteemed group of people makes us feel okay.

Group membership matters. When people are asked to describe who they are, they often do so using social categories such as ‘chemist’, ‘West Indian’, ‘married’, or ‘Catholic’. These terms describe their social identity. Social identities, associated with the groups to which people belong, exert powerful forces on group behaviour. There is something delicious about belonging to an esteemed group – it makes us feel good about ourselves. So, it is normal for people to favour their own group (their in-group), and to enhance its image. The flip-side is that by comparison, other groups (out-groups) are denigrated. This occurs even when group membership is somewhat arbitrary and without a past history. When there is a past history, the tendency to denigrate the out-group can mushroom into dehumanizing the out-group. This can be deadly. Consider the Rwandan violence perpetrated by Hutus against the Tutsis in the genocide of the 1990s. People who had lived and worked side by side divided according to tribal identities. Past

resentments were enflamed. Tribe turned on tribe. Even people who had prayed together, shared Communion together and studied the Bible together, turned on their neighbours and hacked them to death with machetes.

While not usually leading to mass murder, in-group and out-group dynamics are discernible in most churches and denominations. In terms of our churchmanship, we often define ourselves according to in-group and out-group markers: 'We go to the church where people do *not* raise their hands.' 'We go to the church where people *do* get slain in the spirit.' 'We go to the church that is Bible-believing.' 'We go to the church that helps the poor.' These statements tend to imply the obverse: 'And the other churches are *not as good as we are*.' Viewing another group as inferior to your own is a convenient way to elevate self-esteem. Denigrating the out-group is a strategy frequently used to kindle pious in-group sentiment. *The Times*³³ recently reported that former presidential candidate Pat Robertson told his television viewers that God had informed him that terrorists will perpetrate mass killings in the US: 'Possibly millions of people, major cities.' Robertson told his viewers not to be afraid because 'if you get blown up or something, you go to heaven'. As this is exactly what suicide bombers believe, Pat Robertson not only has polarized religious groups in the US by exaggerating the threat from the out-group, ironically he has made the in-group similar to the out-group by depicting both groups as thinking in extremely simplified ways. Simplification of complex social reality is the unfortunate legacy of social identity processes.

The pervasive nature of social identity processes was demonstrated in a well-known experiment by Tajfel et al.³⁴ The experimenters assigned schoolboys to different groups according to relatively arbitrary criteria, for example, the boys' preference for abstract paintings by Paul Klee vs. Vassilij Kandinsky. The boys were only informed of the group to which they had been assigned; they had no idea to which group the other boys had been assigned. They were told that they were participating in an experiment about decision-making, and were marshalled into separate cubicles.

The boys were asked to allocate pennies as rewards to the other boys. This was done anonymously, as the boys were identified only by group (a) or (b). Although the boys made some effort to be fair in terms of their allocation of pennies to both in-group and out-group, they gave more money to the members of their own in-group. Despite the relative neutrality of group identity, their lack of interaction with, or even knowledge of the group members, the boys showed consistent in-group preference and bias against the out-group. In fact, the boys sometimes limited the money allocated to their in-group as long as they could give *even less* to the out-group. In sum, merely placing people in arbitrary social categories elicits behaviour favouring the in-group and biased against the out-group. Repeated experiments continue to have the same results, in different countries, and involving adults, children, and both genders.³⁵

In *The McDonaldization of the Church*, practical theologian John Drane notes that this tendency for in-group preference can be at work even in our use of theology:

An over-emphasis on ‘sound’ theology is a manifestation of the same thing [power and control]. It doesn’t really matter here whether ‘soundness’ is defined by reference to a conservative or a more liberal theology – either way, it is about having control of spiritual processes . . . This is a major challenge for all of us – myself included. It seems to be a natural human inclination to suppose that, if other people are to achieve personal maturity, meaningful spirituality, integrated growth, and so on, that means they must end up being like we are. (p. 48)

Our tendency to exaggerate the contrast between our group and other groups feeds into stereotyping. Stereotypes operate as filters through which we negatively bias and over-simplify what we see. Then what we see confirms our expectations. A stereotype becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: we see what we expect to see. Social change that challenges stereotypes (as in the civil rights movement) threatens our sense of ‘how things are’.

The following example (admittedly a caricature) will resonate with readers in some geographical regions. (For those from other regions, how might you modify the following?) A conservative church group might stereotype a liberal church group as wishy-washy. The conservatives expect the liberal church group to be ‘soft’ on crime. They mutter to one another, ‘I told you so!’ when a vagrant caught breaking into the church is taken into one of the liberals’ homes while social services are contacted to obtain a place in a halfway home. The conservatives complain that the church will become a target for vandalism. Indeed, recently a brick was thrown through a window. Proof.

Now for the mirror image. A liberal church group might stereotype a conservative church group as inflexible and punitive. The liberals expect the conservative church group to be ‘hard’ on crime and mutter to one another, ‘I told you so!’ when a vagrant caught breaking into the church is reported to the police and imprisoned. Yet, the conservatives plan to visit the vagrant in prison to help him learn from the experience and to enable him to acquire skills so that he can support himself upon release. The liberals complain that the church is being seen as a self-righteous fortress that repels the homeless. Fewer church members are signing up for the soup kitchen rota. Proof.

In both cases, perception is governed by the normal categorization that leads to ‘taken-for granted’ social identities. The dramas thus generated can keep us busy for life. In contrast, the gospel turns social categories upside down. Jesus’ parables are full of normal category reversals. Pairing the concept ‘good’ with ‘Samaritan’ creates an oxymoron – not unlike speaking about the ‘good terror-

ist' in today's terms. In the Gospels, categories are not dispensed with, rather boundaries are shifted. Jesus makes use of categories, but in surprising ways. The sheep had no idea that the (normally despised) social outcast to whom they were ministering was in fact the Son of Man; the goats had no clue that in their indifference toward the needy they were neglecting the Lord of all nations (Matthew 25.31–46). Social categories are joyfully overturned: Jesus Christ is present not in royal majesty, but hidden among the 'least of these'.

Discussion Point → How might theologically liberal and conservative church groups stop the cycle of stereotyping one another?

If conflict between groups is part of our human condition, is there any hope for co-operation among groups with religious differences: between groups espousing different theological stances, between denominations, or between different religions? Is there a way to use social identity processes for good rather than to allow them to run rampant, unrecognized, and thereby wreaking havoc? We will explore conflict more fully in Chapter 3, but it is useful to consider it here in the context of in-groups and out-groups. We need to accept that *the categorization process in and of itself, even for arbitrary reasons, generates an in-group preference and out-group negative bias*. You might like to read that sentence again. Through nature or nurture, we experience inter-group conflict because it accompanies the categorization process, and we cannot function in a complex world without creating categories.

A large body of research has studied conflict and co-operation among groups. The good news is that identifying and working towards a superordinate goal enables previous rivalry to be set aside and for co-operation to prevail. The co-operation lasts longer if their shared task has had a positive outcome. The 'summer camp experiments'³⁶ observed the development of in-group and out-group dynamics between two groups of boys. The boys were carefully selected for participation in what they thought was a normal summer camp, but what was in reality a specially designed camp experience staffed by psychologists trained to observe group dynamics.

The summer camp programme consisted of activities normal in summer camps, and which afforded the 'camp counsellors' (psychologists) to pay close attention to the in-group and out-group dynamics. Divided into two groups, the boys soon exhibited competitive behaviour. The rivalry mushroomed along expected lines. The boys' competitiveness was turned into co-operation only when the truck returning the boys to camp for lunch 'mysteriously' broke down. The boys had to unite to pull the truck back to camp using a rope that they had previously used in a tug-of-war competition. History contains many such odd bedfellows: Herod and Pilate forgave their mutual enmity and united in order

to crucify Jesus (Luke 23.12). These previously rivalrous leaders enjoyed a temporary solidarity in order to achieve a superordinate goal.³⁷

Have you seen this dynamic at work within your own faith community: the coming together of two groups to work together on a shared goal? This shared goal can be valuable, such as service to the wider community. Or, the shared goal may be dubious, as seen when prior warring church cabals gather together in order to oust a leader who is challenging the *status quo*.

Discussion Point → Do you think that if the shared goal is ongoing, the groups are likely to continue to co-operate? If the shared goal has been achieved, are the groups likely to return to the old rivalry?

A group of talented young musicians finally give up on their local church; they vote with their feet. For years they have tried to 'fit in' with their parish church. Since they were teenagers, they have led worship in the All Age and youth services. They have played a key role in the annual youth festival – the church building is huge. Hundreds of young people flock to these events. But the young people also leave a mess. There are complaints every year. This year the church lavatories had to be repainted to cover up a bout of group graffiti. Cars were coming and going all night. Faithful church members, people with social clout in the parish, feel they have put up with enough noise, disruption and mess over the years. They want the festival closed. This year, the early morning Eucharist service took place before all the mess was cleared away. That was the last straw. A meeting was called.

The music group decided to leave the church, even before the final decision about the festival was made. They have never felt accepted or appreciated. They have worked their socks off, they have attracted young people to the church and still they get complaints. They have put up with enough conventional church to last them a lifetime. They are angry. They decide to start their own initiative, taking with them most of the young people in the church. Good riddance, both groups sigh. They rent a back room on the High Street and invite musicians to play. Young people sit around, talk, listen, share their faith and their questions. As the months go on, more young people are attracted. The music group realize that they have become a fresh expression of faith, a music-rich café church. It's great! But for these volunteer leaders, the bills are difficult to keep straight, they need help with the pastoral care; in fact, they need some help with teaching and . . . generally they need help. One idea is to reconnect with their parish church for sponsorship. But what will they have to give up to get it? Some of the newer members agree with the idea; others are dead set against ever having anything to do with the old church. A meeting is called.

The coming together of previously competitive groups is a hopeful but risky road. If previously competitive groups unite to co-operate and achieve a superordinate goal, but then *fail* to attain the superordinate goal, each group tends to blame the other group for the failure.³⁸ Moreover, gratuitous in-group and out-group rivalry appears to be the norm. The group that initiates co-operation still comes out looking a tiny bit better than the other, and this reinforces the competition between the groups beneath the overlay of co-operation. After attainment of the superordinate goal, the two groups often break off again into their old rivalry. Other research demonstrates that co-operation as a survival strategy does win out in the end (see Chapter 6, and the ‘Enlightened Tit for Tat’ strategy, p. 155). Even so, it seems that human beings are more than eager to find an out-group.

Because religious identity is such a powerful aspect of social identity, it is not unusual for religion also to contribute to the more violent problems thrashed out on the world stage. Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins is not alone in claiming that religion is the prime cause of conflict and war. History and current events force us to acknowledge that religious identity can intensify the processes of social identity and the conflicts these ignite. That said, as Christians, we also believe that faith in the God of love will lead us to the solution to these problems. Paradoxically, the solution requires that we forgo the delicious sense of superiority that ‘believing in the God of love’ confers.

Although we will always find an out-group, we *can* change attitudes through activities explicitly designed to do so. An example occurs among Palestinians and Israelis, led by the group Musalaha.³⁹ Musalaha organizes desert activities among Palestinian and Israeli youth who undergo ‘Outward Bound’ types of wilderness survival experiences. Musalaha also organizes encounter groups for Palestinian and Israeli women and men, both as one-off encounters and as ongoing gatherings. Participants write poignant accounts of their fears, and shattered preconceptions are replaced by genuine friendships with members of the out-group. These stories embody a glimmer of hope in a land of great pain.

Another way of reducing stereotyping and conflict among groups is through multi-group membership. When one or more people fit into different categories, or are members of several groups at once, then inter-group discrimination may decline. Inter-denominational marriages can reduce the prejudices among denominations generally. When people marry inter-denominationally, they become members of two groups through their marriage, even if each remains in his or her original denomination. (However, in some settings, one group may continue to dominate and this dilutes the effect.) In the church, many people are becoming more eclectic in their Christian identity: roots down in their own tradition, walls down in order to experience the benefits from other traditions (discussed further in Chapter 9). In this vein, our postmodern tendency towards ‘Pick ’n’ mix’ identities might be good news.

Consider the following strategies for reducing inter-group conflict (adapted from *Group Processes*).⁴⁰

- 1 *De-emphasizing categories.* Anne and Jeff disagree on most theological topics and are active in different Christian denominations. Their friendship is more important than their different ‘brands’ of Christianity and they openly discuss the stereotypes of conservative and liberal Christians and their churches.
- 2 *Emphasizing a super-ordinate category.* Sally and Chris value their theological discussions about women in ministry and explorations of denominational differences, making it a point to pray together after their discussions. Praying together as sister and brother in Christ means more to them than their different perspectives on women in ministry, and through their discussions they have found that they have more in common as Christians than initially was evident during a debate about women bishops.
- 3 *Emphasizing co-operation among different groups, despite disagreement.* Veronica and Michael have decided to host an Alpha course together, even though Veronica objects to many aspects of Alpha, and Michael thinks Alpha is great in all ways. As they prepare for each week, they discuss Veronica’s concerns and alter the course so that they both feel comfortable hosting the session. Through their co-operation, they have in essence come up with their own course, taking responsibility for the content while using Alpha as a starting point.

A combination of these approaches might enable the greatest harmony among groups. We do not advocate a simple negation of differences, simply to seek consensus, especially when these are related to important matters of faith. Rather, we are inviting readers to be open to the probability that differences are heightened by in-group and out-group dynamics.

Discussion Point → What would a combination of these strategies look like in your faith community?

Summary: the ‘spirit’ of the group

You may feel that you are sinking beneath the enormity of the task at hand. How on earth can leaders engender healthy group processes in faith communities? We hope that this chapter has convinced you that taking an individualistic approach to Christian transformation will not solve the problems that exist at the level of the group. This will be true for both traditional and fresh expressions of church

life (although for some fresh expressions of church, this might not be evident until the honeymoon is over). Even if we leave behind church as simply a place we attend once a week, and decide to live the whole of our lives as disciples of Jesus, we take the human condition with us. It works like this.

In the church, we start out with ordinary human beings trying to embody the gospel. We hope that as we do x , y will result. We hope that our good leadership will lead to good consequences: a healthy church. The way our mind imposes categories on the world blinds us to the sheer complexity of life, that everything is connected to everything else. Our thoughts are organized as vast conceptual networks. Our relationships with other people are part of vast, overlapping social networks. Everything affects everything in somewhat unpredictable cascades, rarely in the neat, linear way we expect.

In our churches, as people interact with each other, conformity and social identity processes spontaneously arise. Through countless interactions, a nexus of social psychological processes *emerges*. Over time, it seems to take on a life of its own, and to exercise a top-down influence on those involved. This *emergent* reality possesses some properties of a living organism: it is 'as if' it looks after its own survival. It becomes resistant to change. (It's as if the nexus 'grows legs' and becomes somewhat independent of the group's good intentions.) We acknowledge this mystery when we speak of a church as having a 'lively spirit' or a 'dead spirit'. We speak of the spirit of the times, the *zeitgeist* of an era. We speak of team spirit. The overall influence of the spirit of the group is greater than any single individual.⁴¹ We know that these metaphors reflect what the individuals involved generate, but we are also aware that this 'spirit' affects the behaviour of the social group as a whole.⁴²

It may be helpful at this point to remember that 'emergent' properties are found across the whole of creation, which moves ever towards greater and greater degrees of complexity. Stars are born of the simplest matter: hydrogen. Stars, those blazing radioactive furnaces, give birth to the abundant variety of matter in the known universe. A simple celled organism, at some point in pre-history, evolved into a more complex organism. Even a tadpole is more than a mere collection of cells: the organization of its specialized cells entails a higher-order property of 'tadpole-ness'. At certain thresholds of great complexity, emergent properties arise in the natural world. The most complex system in our universe is the human mind, and this provides an unrivalled example.

Mind, as an emergent system, arises from the living brain upon which it depends. Many scientists approach the mystery of human consciousness, not simply as the bottom-up product of 10 to the 14th power neuronal synapses in the brain, but as an emergent property that arises from the brain, dependent upon the brain cells, yet possessing its own reality – a reality we call 'mind'. Even though we cannot see 'mind', it is rightly considered a reality because it has

observable effects.⁴³ Our thoughts and feelings affect our body, and in a top-down manner, influence everything we are, everything we do.⁴⁴

In a similar vein, St Paul understood the church as the Body of Christ (Romans 12). This suggests a hugely complex system of human inter-relatedness, ideally under the top-down influence of its ‘head’, Jesus Christ. This may be our universe’s most complex emergent entity.⁴⁵ As individuals, we commune with Christ through our own human consciousness. We know that our minds can be receptive to Christ, or resistant. We have argued that social groups, such as churches, also generate emergent properties, and it follows that these too can be receptive to Christ, or resistant. Although the mystical Body of Christ can be understood in its unity and perfection, it is clear that we can use our collective human capacities to partner with or resist the Holy Spirit.

Biblical theologian Walter Wink argues that the early Christians (indeed all ancient Middle Eastern peoples) lived with a similar understanding concerning complex social groups.⁴⁶ The ancients may not have had our scientific outlook, but they had first-hand experience of emergent entities arising from empires, legions, palaces, churches, synagogues, families and ethnic groupings. In grappling with emergent realities (often hostile to their welfare), the ancients often personified them, using a range of interchangeable terms to point towards these unseen realities: powers, principalities, authorities, rulers of this world, ‘gods’, unclean spirits.

Wink talks about these emergent realities, which he terms ‘Powers’, as the interior spirituality, the emergent social–psychological–spiritual interior of real-life human groupings. The Powers reflect the characteristics of the people involved – on a collective level – and, like the humans they mirror, they can lean towards good, or towards evil. Wink often repeats: the Powers are good (as part of the creation), the Powers are fallen, the Powers must be redeemed. Each church has its own emergent social–psychological–spiritual reality, which in time takes on a life of its own. In the book of Revelation, the writer is commanded to speak to the angel of the church at Laodicea (3.14–22). As the passage makes clear, there is good in the church, there are aspects that are fallen (in this case, being lukewarm), and it must be redeemed. Who is equal to the task of redeeming the Powers?

Prayer in the power of the Spirit through Jesus Christ is our main resource. Please do give up on the idea that, armed solely with the social–psychological resources described in this book, you will be able to tackle the Powers ‘head on’ and heroically create healthy churches. More often an indirect approach will be required. Christian psychologist Paul Tournier argues that many human problems are so delicate and socially enmeshed that our ham-fisted, direct approaches often yield unintended consequences. Prayer, prayer and more prayer is needed to ‘soak’ the invisible, snarled bonds. Praying for the emergent social–psycho-

logical–spiritual entity, for the redemption of the Powers, is crucial. And trust that the Holy Spirit is working in creation and through the church, sustaining, while constantly inviting deep, transforming engagement.⁴⁷

Whether you are involved in the emerging churches, a fresh expression or traditional church, we recommend a three-pronged, gentle but subversive approach: be aware; be honest; pray. Yes, key moments will arise, opportunities when a direct, honest approach will be fruitful. This and forthcoming chapters describe valuable resources and understandings to bring to bear on specific problem areas – when the time is right (also see Part 3, Resources). When direct action is appropriate, your strategy can be summed up in these two words: Be honest. Be honest about what is happening on the group level. Dialogue with those involved, perhaps in the context of a church consultancy or role analysis (see Chapter 10). But your honesty needs to be sandwiched between self-awareness and prayer. To recap, our recommended three-pronged approach is:

- 1 Be aware of the social–psychological processes that will naturally be at work in your traditional or fresh expression church. Conformity and social identity processes are a good place in which to start looking. Examine your own responses, your own complicity.
- 2 Be honest. When the time is right, tactfully be honest about what is happening. Do not blame individuals, but with a light touch bring into the light the inevitable activity of the ‘Powers’.
- 3 Pray. This is where it all gets simple again. Pray unceasingly for your group or church. There is only One who can redeem the Powers. Listen to him.

To engage further with the material

- Start thinking about your traditional or fresh expression church, or church-related contexts. Imagine yourself as a researcher in one of these contexts. Put on a researcher’s hat and begin to look at the context through the lens of what you are reading in this book.
- Find a buddy or two in your class with whom you can discuss what you are learning, perhaps going over the discussion points, analytical exercises and case studies, and identifying the group dynamics going on in your classroom. Share resources: where additional texts can be borrowed or purchased. Exchange email addresses and stay in touch.
- Continue to think about your own church experiences, using the Discussion Points throughout the chapter as starting points. Consider how the topics discussed help you to recognize and reflect on the group dynamics of which you are a part and to which you are an observer.

- Select one thing that you have learned from this chapter and do something different this week. Keep a journal of what you experience from this experiment. Continue this practice with each chapter (we will remind you). Discuss with your buddy.

Further reading

Social psychology; social psychology and the church

Brown, R. (2000), *Group Processes*, 2nd edn, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

A clearly written, introductory text that focuses on groups.

Hewstone, M., Stroebe, W. and Stephenson, G. M. (2001), *Introduction to Social Psychology*, 3rd edn, Oxford: Blackwell. See especially chapters 15, 16, 17.

An introductory text that surveys the scope of social psychology.

Moscovici, S. (1976), *Social Influences and Social Change*, Oxford: Academic Press.

A classic text on dependence and social control, conformity, conflict, social norms and innovation.

Tajfel, H. (1981), *Human Groups and Social Categories*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

A classic text on in-groups and out-groups, membership badges and other group dynamics.

Watts, F., Nye, R. and Savage, S. (2002), *Psychology for Christian Ministry*, London: Routledge. See especially chapters 2, 4, 11, 12.

A clear presentation of psychological resources for anyone involved in ministry.

Science and religion

Clayton, P. (1997), *God and Contemporary Science*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

— (2004), *Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Not for the faint of heart, but exciting presentations of the developments in science and religion. Make sure to read the final chapters.

Polkinghorne, J. (1998), *Science and Theology: An Introduction*, London: SPCK/Fortress Press.

A clearly presented discussion by a world-class scientist and Anglican priest.

Issues for contemporary church

Gibbs, E. and Bolger, R. (2005), *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Incorporating research from both sides of the pond, a snapshot of the emerging church.

Wink, W. (1984), *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

An exploration of the manifestation of evil in social processes and systems.

Notes

1 Paraphrased from Chapter V, 'The Grand Inquisitor', in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, pp. 227–54; we urge you to read the original.

2 Max Weber talked about this in a speech to students at the University of Munich, which was published in 1919 as 'Politik als Beruf' ('Politics as a Vocation') by Duncker and Humblodt in Munich.

3 Thanks to Duncan MacLaren for this colloquialism.

4 The gift of the gospel, and of Christ incarnate.

5 Please see the Introduction for a discussion of how we use terms such as 'fresh expressions', emerging church, fresh expressions of church, and so on.

6 Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy: malcolm@mtorry.freeseve.co.uk.

7 See the Introduction for an explanation of the exercises in this book.

8 Sherif, M. (1936), *The Psychology of Social Norms*, New York: Harper & Row.

9 Asch, S. (1951), 'Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgements', in M. Guetzkow (ed.), *Groups, Leadership, and Men*, Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Press; Asch, S. (1956), 'Studies of independence and conformity: I. A minority of one against a unanimous majority', *Psychological Monographs*, 70(a), 1–70.

10 Mann, M. (1986), *The Sources of Social Power*, Vol. 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

11 Martin, D. (1990), *Tongues of Fire*, Oxford: Blackwell.

12 Giddens, A. (1991), *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

13 Festinger, L. (1957), *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

14 Deutsch, M. and Gerard, H. B. (1955), 'A study of normative and informational social influence upon individual judgement', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 51, 629–36.

15 Kelley, H. H. (1952), 'Two functions of reference groups', in G. Swanson, T. Newcomb and E. Hartley (eds), *Readings in Social Psychology*, 2nd edn, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

16 Thanks to Jonathan Loose for this point and reference.

17 Watts, F., Nye, R. and Savage, S. (2002), *Psychology for Christian Ministry*, London: Routledge.

18 Eysenck, H. (1970), *The Structure of Human Personality*, London: Methuen and Co.

19 Too little or too much is aversive over time. One part of the brain (the ARAS, ascending reticular arousal system, located in the brain stem of the brain) has the job of modifying the amount of stimuli flooding in.

20 Rowe, D. (1987), *Beyond Fear*, London: Fontana.

21 Cf. Pete Ward (2000), *Liquid Church*, Carlisle, UK: Paternoster. Thanks to Duncan MacLaren for this connection.

22 Adapted from Watts, F., Nye, R. and Savage, S. (2002), *Psychology for Christian Ministry*, London: Routledge.

23 A magazine sold by homeless people in the UK that helps them to move into housing. See www.bigissue.com.

24 'Fresh Expressions': www.freshexpressions.org.uk and 'The Simple Way': www.thesimpleway.org

25 For an inspiring read, try Shane Claiborn's *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

26 Thanks to Nessie Kerr for this true story.

27 Most counselling models (person-centred, psychodynamic, and family systems, to name just three) help clients to recognize and choose how to live out this tension.

28 Homans, G. (1950), *The Human Group*, New York: Harcourt Brace; Homans, G. (1974), *Social Behaviour: Its Elementary Forms*, rev. edn, New York: Harcourt Brace; Thibaut, J. W. and Kelley, H. H. (1959), *The Social Psychology of Groups*, New York: Wiley; Kelley, H. H. and Thibaut, J. W. (1978), *Interpersonal Relations: A Theory of Interdependence*, Chichester: Wiley.

29 Gardner, H. (1997), *Leading Minds*, New York: HarperCollins.

30 Gibbs, E. and Bolger, R. (2005), *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, p. 126.

31 Allport, G. (1954), *The Nature of Prejudice*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley; Tajfel, H. (1981), *Human Groups and Social Categories*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

32 Campbell, D. T. (1956), 'Enhancement of contrast as a composite habit', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 53, 850-5.

33 *The Times*, Thursday 4 January 2007, p. 39, Reuters.

34 Tajfel, H., Flament, C., Billig, M. G. and Bundy, R. P. (1971), 'Social categorisation and intergroup behaviour', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1, 149-78.

35 Tajfel, H. (1982), 'Social psychology of intergroup relations', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 33, 1-30; Brewer, M. B. (1979), 'In-group bias in the minimal intergroup situation: a cognitive-motivational analysis', *Psychological Bulletin*, 86, 307-24; Diehl, M. (1990), 'The minimal group paradigm: theoretical explanations and empirical findings', in W. Stroebe and M. Hewstone (eds), *European Review of Social Psychology*, Vol. 1. Chichester: Wiley, pp. 263-392.

36 Sherif, M. and Sherif, C. W. (1953), *Groups in Harmony and Tension: An Integration of Studies on Intergroup Relations*, New York: Octagon Books; Sherif, M. White, B. J. and Harvey, O. J. (1955), 'Status in experimentally produced groups', *American Journal of Sociology*, 60, 370-9; Sherif, M., Harvey, O. J., White, B. J., Hood, W. R. and Sherif, C. W. (1961), *Intergroup Conflict and Co-operation. The Robber's Cave Experiment*, Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma.

37 Thanks to Duncan MacLaren for this point.

38 Worchel, S., Andreoli, V. A. and Folger, R. (1977), 'Intergroup co-operation and intergroup attraction: the effect of previous interaction and outcome of combined effort', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 13, 131-40.

39 www.musalaha.org.

40 Adapted from Brown, R. (2000), *Group Processes*, 2nd edn, London: Blackwell.

41 See Dietrich Bonhoeffer's discussion of spirit created in community in (1998),

Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of Church, Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

42 Clayton, P. (1997), *God and Contemporary Science*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

43 Polkinghorne, J. (1998), *Science and Theology: An Introduction*, London: SPCK/Fortress Press.

44 Jon Loose suggests that it is not that neural interaction requires conscious states (qualia) in the sense that social interaction demands a sense of the group over and above any one individual. Thus a weaker sense of emergence is perhaps more accurate here in that we might imagine some properties of collections of neurons explicable in terms of synchronous firing, or waves of activation, but there is no possible way to predict consciousness (December 2006, personal communication).

45 Polkinghorne, *Science and Theology*.

46 Wink, W. (1984), *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

47 In agreement with Anderson, we do not seek to replace the 'eschatological reality of the risen Christ', as the emergent One (*parousia*) who empowers 'each contemporary event of faith and ministry', with 'pragmatic principles for institutional life and growth' (2006), *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches*, p. 48.