



These images “capture the rich tapestry of our postponed 2020 General Conference, held from April 23-May 3, 2024, in Charlotte, North Carolina.”

Photos courtesy of United Methodist Communications. Scan the QR code (far left) for more information.

Leadership lessons from The United Methodist General Conference 2024*

*Also known as the 2020 postponed General Conference

As we bask in the delight of our postponed United Methodist 2020 General Conference (Who would ever guess that we would say that about a General Conference!), we must realize the historic significance that just transpired. This General Conference may go down as the most significant one since 1968. What we accomplished at this 2024 General Conference may well set the stage for our denomination in the next twenty years.

Just a short recap of what was accomplished around the three “R’s” of change:

- **Regionalization** as a new model was overwhelmingly passed. This would put the U.S. on par with other Central Conferences and enable legislation to be worked on by each region and culture in the future.

Of course, because of Constitutional amendments, this must be ratified by each annual conference of the UMC, a process that could take up to a year to complete.

- **Removal** of all exclusive and oppressive language against our LGBTQ communities was overwhelmingly supported. We no longer have to suffer under the “incompatibility” language against our LGBTQ siblings. Queer clergy can be ordained in our UMC, and serve at every level of our church without the fear of charges or trials. There will be no penalties for performing same-sex marriages, and clergy will have the individual right to determine who they will perform marriage ceremonies for.

- **Rejection** of any further formal disaffiliations of

local churches based upon theological preferences. Local churches can leave the denomination, but not under the special provisions of Paragraph 2553, which had a sunset clause that was not renewed.

Dozens of other significant changes were made at this year’s General Conference that will continue to strengthen our connection as we move forward.

Here are a few leadership lessons from the 2020 postponed General Conference:

The removal of the most dysfunctional element in the system paved the way for the UMC to move forward. For decades of past General Conferences, the conflict between the progressive and traditional forces has locked

the church in a stalemate of no action. It was very similar to the extreme polarization that has plagued our current congress, where constant battling over a political position takes precedent over the creation of solid legislation to move the country forward. With 25 percent of UMC churches disaffiliating and the creation of the Global Methodist Church, the extreme polarization of our delegations was removed, and we were able to get back to some of John Wesley’s vision of Holy Conferencing. I am struck by the fact that it took less than 25% of conservative delegates not being present to bring about this major shift. It underscores that we are a denomination of the “middle ground.” The polarization

Continue to “GC becomes progressive”, next page

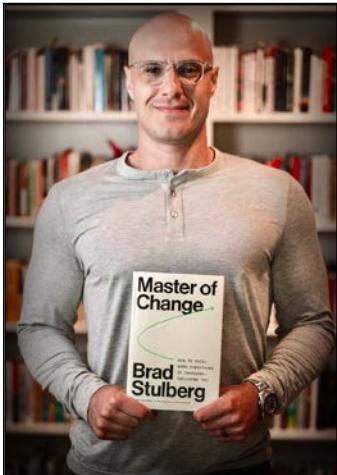


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Quote to Ponder

Demagogues, authoritarians, and grifters thrive during periods of disorder. They offer a false sense of status and security to those who dislike or feel threatened by what is happening. They represent the past, fighting to go back to the way things were instead of moving forward toward something better. Though this book is not meant to be political, I would be remiss not to mention the resurgence across the globe of strongman leaders who stoke and prey upon ambiguous fears in the populace, including in my own country, the United States of America. In 2016, Americans saw the rise of Donald Trump and Trumpism, a political movement defined vaguely by “making America great again”.

Trumpism and other similar movements capitalize on people’s discombobulation, offering them the false hope that by taking part in the movement, they will successfully evade change, maintain their status, and remain strong as they are.

If, however, more people had the skills to confront uncertainty and impermanence, we would not have to worry so much about grifters, demagogues, and authoritarian leaders.

Stulberg, Brad. *Master of Change* (p. 30). HarperCollins. Kindle Edition.

GC becomes progressive as finances will be conservative

Continued from the front page

between left and right was not a 50-50% split, but rather a much smaller percentage represented the extremes. Removing even 10-15% of either extreme was enough to break open the sense of being “stuck” at the General Conference.

The leadership of our Central Conference Bishops made a massive difference at this year’s General Conference. Most of our Central Conference Bishops remained loyal to our mainstream UMC. They publicly voiced this loyalty and commitment, breaking open the partisan politics usually played out at the General Conference. I doubt whether Regionalization would have passed and still be ratified without the Central Conference Bishop’s support and endorsement. The Adaptive Leadership Gurus, Marty Linsky and Ron Heifetz write that “Authority” in leadership is extremely limited, and true leadership is a verb, or something we



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Photos courtesy of United Methodist Communications.

do. However, in studying with them, they acknowledge that authority has a definite place in a complex and traditional culture like our UMC. Their attitude and respect for me personally as a UMC Bishop was evident in classes, as they acknowledged some of us with authority as a part of our roles.

Finally, the 25% of disaffiliations dramatically affected our financial forecasts. While the General

Conference moved in a socially progressive direction, our fiscal fears financially moved us in the opposite direction. With a more conservative General Church budget, we will not be able to do some of the things we have done in the past, especially regarding support of our general agencies and ecumenical commitments. There is some lament here, but it is a natural outcome given our present realities.

I am teaching United Methodist Polity this coming summer. As I scramble to put together lesson plans without a printed 2024 Book of Discipline, it will be time for me to put together a more complete picture of what we have done. It will also be a time for our Polity class to celebrate all we have accomplished at this year’s General Conference!

An Excerpt from “The Daily Drucker”

The renowned management expert, Peter Drucker taught for years at the Claremont Graduate School of Management, which now bears his name, “The Drucker School of Management.” I once heard Peter lecture about the constant need to seek abandonment in organizations, and at the time as a local church pastor, I was struck by the church’s inability to do this! In general, the church is loath to give up on almost anything, and Drucker was insistent that to try something new and innovative, the organization must give up something else.

So, in honor of Peter Drucker, let me share one of his daily meditations from the book, “The Daily Drucker: 366 Days of Insight and Motivation for Getting the Right Things Done,” edited by Joseph A. Maciariello, HarperBusiness, 2004. The new edition is “A Year with Peter Drucker: 52 Weeks of Coaching for Leadership Effectiveness” by Joseph A. Maciariello.

The Practice of Abandonment

“If we did not do this already, would we go into it now? If the answer is no, ‘What do we do now?’” The question has to be asked—and asked seriously—“If we did not do this already, would we, knowing what we know, go into it now?” If the answer is no, the reaction must be “What do we do now?” In three cases the right action is always outright abandonment. Abandonment is the right action if a product, service, market, or process “still has a few years of life.” It is these dying products, services, or processes that always demand the greatest care and the greatest efforts. They tie down the most productive and ablest people. But equally a product, service, market, or process should be abandoned if the only argument for keeping it is: It is “fully written off.” For management purposes there are no “costless assets.” There are only “sunk costs.” The third case where abandonment is the right policy—and the most important one—is the old or declining product, service, market, or process for the sake of maintaining which, the new and growing product, service, or process is being stunted or neglected. (Peter F. Drucker, Management Challenges for the 21st Century, 1999, pp. 74–75.)

• *Abandonment of any program is difficult for a nonprofit organization because of the strong belief in the righteousness of its cause. It is sometimes difficult for a for-profit organization to abandon a program because the program may represent an investment by the people who introduced it and who nursed it along. Beware of commitment to ego as an excuse for maintaining the status quo.”*

— A Year with Peter Drucker: 52 Weeks of Coaching for Leadership Effectiveness by Joseph A. Maciariello

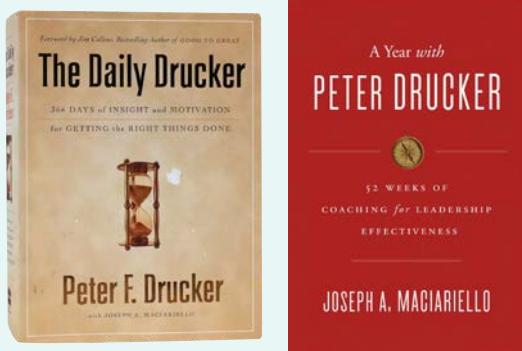
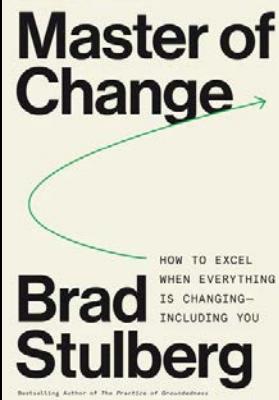


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National Bestseller



Book Recommendation

“Master of Change”

By Brad Stulberg
HarperCollins, 2023

I would like to recommend the author and book from which our “Quote to Ponder” comes from. “Master of Change” provides a template for personal and social change using the latest research and solid illustrations. One of the key takeaways is his delineation of the difference between “homeostasis:” which is always a return to the status quo. Homeostasis is marked by a pattern of “order, disorder, order,” always returning to the original natural state of order itself. Stulberg advocates for “allostasis” (from the Greek word, “allo” meaning “variable). Allostasis follows the pattern of “order, disorder, reorder.” (Pg. 8-9). Stulberg’s point is that life mostly follows the pattern of allostasis not homeostasis, as true development and growth can only happen with allostasis.

Again, as we reflect on the 2024 General Conference, the traditional political forces always strived for homeostasis, based on what they have achieved in the past. They did not want anything to change. However, by following the rule of allostasis, we moved from order to disorder, and finally to reorder, which will set the stage for true change and development of us a major Protestant denomination. We must now concentrate on actualizing the “reorder.” We must remake our UMC into something different and relevant to the changing world. I highly recommend reading “Master of Change,” to continue our deep reflection on the next steps for our church.

Subscribe to the “Leadership Brief”

 CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
Center for Leadership and Coaching

Leadership Brief

Vol. 1 | No. 1 | Dec. 2023 A leadership newsletter with summaries of the best leadership research



Introduction

Welcome to the inaugural “Leadership Brief” issue, a summary-style newsletter with helpful leadership concepts and practices. As the heading description “brief” implies, I have always yearned for a short summary of the latest leadership concepts that have practical utility to church and nonprofit work.

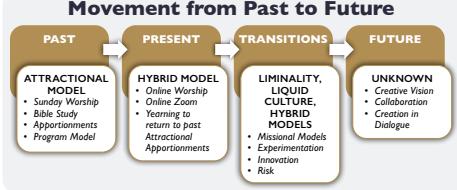
The format of this newsletter will be short summaries of leadership ideas, practices, and link to longer and more descriptive writings. My hope is that it will “prime the pump” for deeper insights and learnings from those who read it.

Please give me feedback on whether you enjoyed the newsletter or not and specific suggestions for improvement. This first edition is a pilot project that will determine the usefulness of this format and content.

Feel free to reach me at ghagiya@cst.edu Enjoy this first edition!

Grant Hagiya

Movement from Past to Future



Past, Present, Future: A Social Context of The United Methodist Church

I have been using this diagram above to do a short analysis of the Past-Present-Future of the UMC and also the Protestant Mainline Church. Currently, we have one foot in the Past “Attritional Model,” and one foot in the Present Hybrid state. We are trying to move into the “Transitional stage,” in order to experiment widely to get to a viable future. Notice, that the future is “unknown,” and this should sober us as to any expectations about our future.

Where is your church or organization in this diagram? It is possible to estimate percentages, as in 70% in the past-attritional model and 30% in the present-hybrid model. What percentages are you in? What will it take for your church/organization to move to the next level? More to come in future issues as we consider the “Transition Stage” and the “Future Stage.”



A Quote to Ponder

“In a time of drastic change one can be too preoccupied with what is ending or too obsessed with what seems to be beginning. In either case one loses touch with the present and with its obscure but dynamic possibilities. What really matters is openness, readiness, attention, courage to face risk. You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith and hope. In such an event, courage is the authentic form taken by love.”

Thomas Merton, “Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander”, 1965
(Quoted in “The End of Theological Education” by Ted A. Smith)

Also

- [3-2-1 Thursday by James Clear](#)
- [The CCL's 10 attributes of an effective leader](#)
- [Book Recommendation](#)

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Leadership Brief

Vol. 1 | No. 2 | Jan. 2024 A leadership newsletter with summaries of the best leadership research



New Year's Resolutions: Helpful or Bust?

There is a lot of research on the unhelpful nature of New Year's Resolutions. Much of the research points out the fact that between 85-95% of all New Year's Resolutions fail within a very short time span (no more than a month). With that type of failure rate, why should one even consider making them?

Part of the problem is they tend to be too generic and lack realistic measurement. For example, “I pledge to lose weight” is the perfect example. Instead of a hopeful resolution like this, it would be more helpful to set a specific objective, e.g., “I will lose ten pounds by working out three days a week and starting on a Mediterranean diet three to four days a week.” It would also help to put a specific timeline on this objective, such as, “In the first month of January, I will...”

The timeline suggestion reinforces what some productivity experts are also critical of regarding New Year's Resolutions, namely, that a year is simply too long to project personal changes. Instead, the suggestion is to project quarterly or every three months objectives.

Set a short intention for the next three months

If the details outlined above are just too much for you, think of one short intention you will observe in the next three months. For example, I will try to live more in the present moment as a realistic intention in the next three months.

What key intention do you need to strive for?

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- [Organizing](#)

Happy New Year!

We have received some positive feedback about our first edition of “Leadership Brief,” so continuing the momentum, here is our second edition for the new year. Some people have inquired about the frequency of these editions, and right now, with all that is going on, every other month seems sustainable. As always, please provide your feedback, which will help us tremendously.

With the New Year 2024, I thought it would help to share some research on the effectiveness of New Year's Resolutions or goals. Whether you make New Year's Resolutions or not, perhaps some pointers would be useful.

I wish all of you much joy and peace in this New Year!



This allows you to evaluate your work and set new objectives for the next three months. For the last ten years, I have set key goals for the New Year. In the last six years, I have altered this to two six-month goals, and I plan to move to setting quarterly goals this year.

Here are the categories in which I set my goals:

- Work/Professional
- Continued/Lifelong Education
- Family/Friends
- Spiritual
- Physical/Recreational
- Intellectual/Writing
- Personal Improvements
- Financial
- Organizing

I have specific and achievable actions in each of these broad categories. Moving to quarterly goals will constructively improve my system. I would love to hear from you and how you handle resolutions and goals.

Email ghagiya@cst.edu with your response!

 CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
The Generative Leadership Institute

Leadership Brief

Vol. 1 | No. 3 | Mar-Apr 2024 A leadership newsletter with summaries of the best leadership research

We have a new name: The Generative Leadership Institute

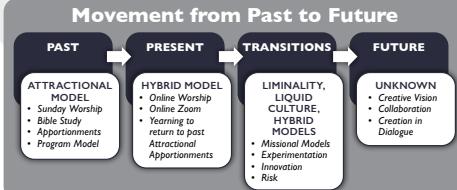
As we combine programs at Claremont School of Theology, we have decided to use a prior name: “The Generative Leadership Institute.” We researched various options already in use, and this one stood out for us. It will take some time to get used to, but we hope this gives us an identity all of our own. We thank everyone for their continued support, and we hope you like our new name!

Further Thoughts: Our Movement from Past to Present to Future

As promised in our first edition, we are coming back to explore further the diagram above. As mentioned previously, most of our churches are in the past and present stages of “attractional to hybrid.” It is relatively straightforward that the old attractional model is not working, as our attendance numbers continue to slide in our mainline denominations, with some exceptions of course. If your church is still holding on the attractional model and your numbers are decreasing, a move to the next stage is absolutely imperative. Hybrid models are extremely effective, and we can glean much from the automobile industry to attest to that fact. Currently, the move to fully electric cars is stalled, as people are weary of the lack of charging stations, and they want the flexibility of falling back on a gasoline option, especially for medium to long distances. Hybrid models for our churches allow us to experiment and test what might work for our local communities.

Experimenting and innovation lead directly to

Movement from Past to Future



“The Transitional Stage,” which has several names. We like “liminality” as it is expressive of current consultants and authors who explore this theme.* The Latin root word of liminality is “lumen,” which connotes “a threshold.” It is a space between the familiar (old world) and the not yet (new world). It is a holding space where transformation can begin. It is almost impossible to step directly into the new world because it has not been birthed yet. Hence, we must enter a transition from old to new. As Father Richard Rohr describes liminality: “The threshold is God’s waiting room.” (Rohr, Richard, Personal Communications, 2010). The threshold is a sacred space because it is imperative to tap into God’s

creativity. We cannot do this by ourselves alone. The sacred space is where we meet God, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is leading us. There are no road maps that plot this course. Every mission field and church will be different. Every church must enter into its own liminal space to discern where God is calling it. It will be a unique and different calling for everyone!

For this reason, Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch describe liminality as a “journey or quest.” As such, it has no definitive content, but they describe the personal qualities that are required for the journey as “courage, adventure, mission, and risk.” (Frost, Michael and Hirsch, Alan, “The Faith of Leap.”

2011). These critical qualities will take our churches, laity, and clergy to enter into liminality as a journey. Only then will we have the capacity to envision the new church.

*For a deeper dive, please see:

- “How to Lead When You Don’t Know Where You’re Going: Leading in a Liminal Season” by Susan Beaumont, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2019, ISBN: 1538127679
- “Faith of Leap, The: Embracing a Theology of Risk, Adventure & Courage” by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, Baker Books, 2011, ISBN: 0801014158

Also

- [The “T” Diagram of Leadership](#)
- [Recommendation: “The Good Enough Job: Reclaiming Life From Work”](#)

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