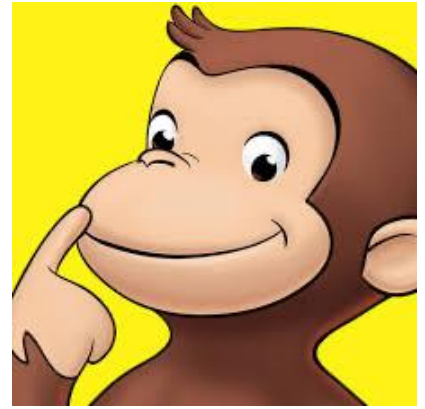


Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa

Workshop Questions

George is Curious

Whatever you found of value in these workshops would benefit first not from action but from conversation. Undoubtedly, there is action being called for by the living God. But the most useful starting point is conversation with your co-leaders. Use these conversations to explore what is possible for you and your church and let a different vision of your church emerge.



Workshop #1 Discussion Questions:

In workshop #1, Curious George and his colleague Lindsay talk about change not being what we think it is. They speak of punctuated equilibrium where instead of slow, continuous change that gradually yields seismic alterations, change actually happens with long periods of relative equilibrium, where the change in any individual or community largely has to do with adapting to stay current, relevant, and in place. At the macro level, these long periods of relative equilibrium (during which the massive amount of change happening is actually about reestablishing equilibrium or a balanced state) are then “punctuated” by periods of very fast development of new forms.

- Do you believe we are in a period of relative equilibrium where the change the church is facing is the kind of significant change that keeps us balanced and maintaining our place in the world or in local society? Do you believe that we are in a “punctuated” period of fast change, where we are developing new forms and ways of being church?

Shift 1: Age of Institutions: Churches started and/or sustained primarily in response to demand.
Age of Access: Churches start and/or sustain insofar as they offer meaning.

- While churches in every age offer deep meaning, church in today’s society is no longer central. It is no longer the primary place to go, see, or be seen. In fact, many argue they gain more spiritual nurture from time away from church. How have you seen churches which offer contextual purpose and meaning flourish in recent years? In other words, how have you seen churches who order their life around a particular vocation to, for example, heal, empower, protest, organize, neighbor, etc. – be particularly vibrant?
- What might happen if your church revisited its purpose – its “why” God has called it into existence?

Shift 2: Age of Institutions: Hierarchical, centralized decision making.

Age of Access: Decentralized, participatory decision-making and mass collaboration.

- What effect might this shift have on new people or young people in your church? How might this shift galvanize your community?
- Where could you start with making this shift? What manageable changes in leadership and decision-making structure could provide access to more people? What leadership postures and habits might it require from you?

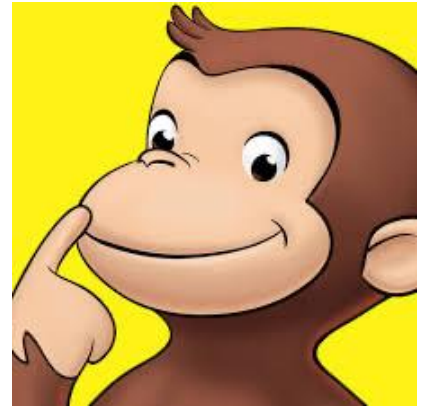


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Workshop #2 Discussion Questions:

In workshop #2, Curious George and his colleague Lindsay talk about a shift underway in the current age, which affects church as well as all other facets of society.

Shift 3:

Age of Institutions: Hard boundaries regarding who does what and who should be in which conversations

Age of Access: Permeable boundaries, conversation, co-creation

- Why might 21st century people of Southern Africa be particularly interested in permeable boundaries?
- For better or for worse, what do hard boundaries “say”?
- In your church, where can you imagine instituting co-creation and permeable boundaries?
- Who might permeable boundaries bring to the table, who is not already well represented there?

Shift 4:

Age of Institutions: Sought after leaders are experts, with specific credentials and high levels of expertise.

Age of Access: Sought after leaders are catalysts, asking the same questions, sharing similar experiences and making needed change happen.

- Why do we in the church particularly love experts?
 - What changes might we see if we gravitate more toward leaders who are catalysts?
 - Pastor and Civil Rights Activist William Sloane Coffin once wrote, *“Most church boats don't like to be rocked; they prefer to lie at anchor rather than go places in stormy seas. But that's because we Christians view the Church as the object of our love instead of the subject and instrument of God's.”*
 - If we viewed the church more as an instrument of God's love – rather than an object of ours - what leadership skills might we cultivate and prize most?

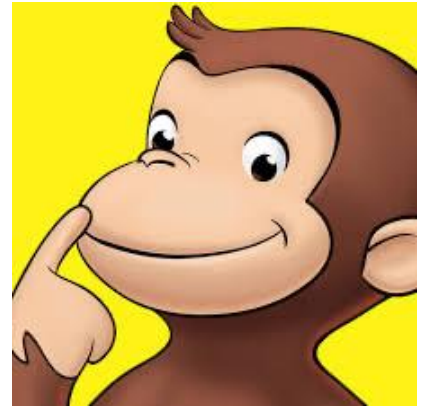


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Workshop #3 Discussion Questions:

In workshop #3, Curious George and his colleague Lindsay talk about more shifts underway in the current age, which affect church as well as other facets of society.

Shift 5:

Age of Institutions: Material and financial capital is of paramount importance.

Age of Access: Reputational and social capital are fundamental.

- While material and financial capital is and always will be important, how can reputational and social capital help pay the bills and open more possibilities for this church?
- What habits must be built into your week in order to build reputational and social capital?

Shift 6:

Age of Institutions: Focus on church gathered.

Age of Access: Focus on church scattered.

- While a world enduring pandemic certainly yearns for communities gathered, it is easy to see how church life once focused primarily on who we are when we are gathered together. What might a more balanced focus – on church gathered *and* church scattered - mean for the habits and practices of church leadership?
- What might it mean for the church budget? Church programs?



- What might God be saying to us in the shift from central focus on the church gathered to balanced attention to the witness and ministry of both the church gathered and the church scattered?
- What are some of your biggest church concerns and how can these concerns be reframed and addressed based upon the shifts explored over these workshops?