



Adaptive Challenge Team Workbook

2014 Edition



Adaptive challenges address the question:

What ministry challenges are we currently facing, for which we do not presently have an answer, but which must be addressed if we are to live into God's future for us?

Welcome to *Transformed by the Spirit* (TbyS). This workbook is designed to guide you and your team through an “adaptive challenge.” This is the first of two workbooks. Once you have completed the adaptive challenge work, an Action Learning Team (ACT) will be formed for the next phase of the process. There will be an ALT workbook for that team.

As a participant in an Adaptive Challenge Team (ACT) you are joining with hundreds of other American Baptists on a journey of discernment seeking to discover fresh directions of ministry and mission into which God is inviting your group.

This is truly a process of discernment inviting all American Baptists to participate and seek out the fresh ways the Spirit is calling us to live out our Baptist convictions and imagination in our dramatically changing environments.

This Workbook is designed to assist you and your team to:

1. Understand what is involved in TbyS
2. Understand the concept of an “adaptive challenge”
3. Distinguish between an “adaptive” and a “technical” challenge
4. Identify the adaptive challenge underlying your specific ministry challenge
5. Understand your unique role as an ACT

WHAT IS TRANSFORMED BY THE SPIRIT?

Transformed by the Spirit is about ministry and mission in the midst of change. Our nation, indeed our world, is experiencing numerous changes and shifts in our culture. These changes are also affecting our churches as demographic shifts, population aging, newly arriving immigrants, and

declining revenues. In the midst of these realities, we have some deep and abiding Biblical and theological convictions:

- We believe that the Spirit of Christ is working in the midst of these changes—perhaps what we are experiencing is the work of God in our present situation.
- We believe that the Spirit of Christ is still very much at work among us, inviting us into a new chapter of ministry and mission together.
- We believe that the Spirit of Christ is already out in front of us in our changing contexts inviting us to participate more fully in God’s mission in the world.

IT IS ABOUT DISCERNING THE SPIRIT

Transformed by the Spirit comes out of these convictions that the Spirit is using these disruptive times to invite us to recover key aspects of our heritage as Baptists. It is an invitation to all our ABC family. We desire to join together to learn with and from one another how to discern the ways in which the Holy Spirit is calling us to address the challenges to be God’s missionary people. We believe this is necessary because business as usual is no longer good enough if we are to live into the future that God has for us.

IT IS ABOUT A JOURNEY

The process of discernment cannot presume to know the outcomes ahead of time. This is why TbyS is about being on a journey. When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus in *John 3* he described the Spirit in terms of the wind which we cannot catch. The Spirit, like the wind, blows where it will. That is what we



believe is happening to us: the Spirit is blowing afresh and inviting us to pull up our sails and discover where we are being invited to go. This is why

it's a journey of discovery rather than a program that predetermines what things are going to look like as we move forward. We also believe this image of journeying, hoisting the sails to discover where the Spirit is calling us, is consistent with the spirit of our Baptist forefathers and mothers who ventured with God because the Spirit called.

WHY WE USE THE IDEA OF “ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES”

Your specific Adaptive Challenge Team work involves taking the ministry issue that you have decided to embrace and discovering the adaptive challenge that is embedded within it. In order to explain why this step and your work is so important it is necessary to describe something of the nature of “adaptive challenges.”

The adaptive challenge is best explained through this question:

What challenges are we currently facing, for which we do not presently have an answer, but which must be addressed if we are to live into God's future for us?

Experience shows us over and over again that when groups name ministry challenges, there remains much work to be done to get beneath the surface to find out what is actually at stake. It is often beneath the surface that adaptive challenges are finally discovered.



Think about the work of archaeology. Someone might see on the surface of an area the outline of some building, statue or road long hidden. But it is only by digging beneath the surface that we finally discover the reality of what we have been seeing. An iceberg is another example. We may be on a boat and see an iceberg in the distance. We know it is a challenge we must address. But if we only make our decisions and plans on the basis of the small portion of the iceberg we can see, and do not consider what to do about the huge amount of ice beneath the water that we cannot see, then we could easily misdirect our response.

Adaptive change is about digging down under the surface to see what is actually going on.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ADAPTIVE AND TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

There is a qualitative difference between adaptive challenges and technical challenges. Adaptive challenges require thinking creatively below the surface. The answer is not readily available. Technical challenges are those issues that can be resolved with existing skills, strategies, programs, and processes. Both require our attention, but adaptive challenges cannot be addressed effectively with existing programs or processes. We must creatively peer into the future without predetermined outcomes in mind.

The following chart will help to clarify the difference between adaptive and technical challenges (from **Practicing Adaptive Leadership**, by Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky):

<i>What personal, professional, or organizational purpose is currently stalled?</i>		
	Technical	Adaptive
We need to ...	Ask _____ group to do _____	Talk to ... Learn more about ... Pray about...
Solutions	Known	Unknown
Requires changes in ...	Structures, systems, procedures	Priorities, habits, beliefs, loyalties
Who will make it happen?	Authority figures	People on the edge
Scope	Within current goals or current job descriptions	Outside current goals and job descriptions

	Technical	Adaptive
Time required	Short-term or clear timeline	Long-term or unknown
Norms	Maintain	Evaluate as essential or unnecessary
Statement of the problem	Clear	Requires learning
Primary skills required	Technical	Intrapersonal and interpersonal
Initial task	Steps for implementation	Frame the problem
Initial energy	Budget approval	Interpreting patterns
Process	Sequential, finite, well-defined set of steps	Iterative – observe, interpret, experiment
External threats	Protect organization from knowledge of them	Expose external threats to all members
Orient new people...	to current norms	to new expectations
When in conflict...	Restore order	Regulate the heat

THE ROLE OF COACHING

Before you begin this process your team will be assigned a coach to assist and guide you along the way. Your coach has been trained to work with both ACTs and ALTs.

Your Work as an Adaptive Challenge Team Begins Here

The following pages will outline the ACT meeting structure. It has been designed with four meetings having specific discussions in each meeting. Some teams may feel the need for more meetings but you are encouraged not to shorten the process because there is much reflective work to be done between the meetings.

Meeting 1: Understanding Adaptive Challenges

1. Introductions all around. Be sure and share the contact information on page 15.
2. Introduction of the coach with a discussion of the coach's role.
 - a. To support the team facilitator and to help maintain team focus;
 - b. To assure that communication occurs with the respective regional executive minister and other ACTS;
 - c. To maintain lines of communication with other process and coach consultants.
3. Begin this and every session with a "Dwelling in the Word" exercise. Never rush or omit this exercise.
 - a. Invite someone to read Luke 10: 1-12. After a period of silence share with one another the word or phrase that caught your attention.
 - b. Have someone read the text for a second time (perhaps using a different translation). After a period of silence, invite folks to respond to the question: What going on within you that is influencing your hearing of the Word today?
 - c. Invite someone to read the same text one more time (perhaps using a different translation). After a period of silence, invite all to respond to the question: What is God inviting us to be or do from this Scripture and discussion?

4. Using the material in the earlier section and the appendix discuss the difference between adaptive challenges and technical challenges (pages 3-5 of this workbook). This is an important conversation to revisit throughout your meetings as it is sometimes easy to slip back into the technical mode of thinking.
5. If time permits, invite each member to reflect on significant life experiences and identify whether technical or adaptive changes resulted.
6. Review the work the ACT to insure that everyone understands the flow of work. This work should be spread over three to six months and involve about five team meetings. Some meetings may be online. Make sure everyone has access to and is comfortable with the technology that will be used. Schedule these meetings (page 15).
7. Identify the ways and means by which the team will remain in communication between meetings (e.g., blogs, Facebook, etc).

Stating a Ministry Challenge

A first step in your work as a team is to name the ministry challenge that your church/group is facing as clearly as possible.

In a few brief sentences write your ministry challenge.

Meeting 2: Restating Your Ministry Challenge

Begin this session with a “Dwelling in the Word” exercise.

1. Invite someone to read Luke 10: 1-12. After a period of silence share with one another the word or phrase that caught your attention.
2. Invite someone read the text for a second time (perhaps from another translation). After a period of silence, invite folks to respond to the question: What is going on within you that is influencing your hearing of the Word today?
3. Invite someone to read the same text one more time. After a period of silence, invite all to respond to the question: What God is inviting us to be or do from this Scripture and discussion?

In this meeting, your goal is to discuss and resolve any questions you may have about this challenge and then create a commonly owned re-statement of the ministry challenge. Begin with each person sharing their reflections on this challenge since the first meeting.

Write out your commonly agreed upon ministry challenge:

Between Meeting Work

In preparation for the next meeting each team member should reflect on what they think is at stake in this ministry challenge. Make notes of your thoughts on this and bring to the next meeting.

Meeting 3: Naming What is At Stake

Begin this session with a “Dwelling in the Word” exercise.

1. Invite someone to read Luke 10: 1-12. After a period of silence share with one another the word or phrase that caught your attention.
2. Invite someone read the text for a second time (perhaps from another translation). After a period of silence, invite folks to respond to the question: What is going on within you that is influencing your hearing of the Word today?
3. Invite someone to read the same text one more time. After a period of silence, invite all to respond to the question: What God is inviting us to be or do from this Scripture and discussion?

This should be a brainstorming session bringing together the reflective and listening work that your team has been doing between the meetings. The goal is to get to the root of why this challenge is urgent.

Naming What You Think is at Stake (what may lie beneath the surface)

As a team, brainstorm what you think is at stake within this ministry challenge. What makes this important/critical to your ministry?

On the basis of your previous list, now identify the specific questions that you feel need to be answered in order for your team to be clear about what is at stake in naming the adaptive character of this specific ministry challenge. These are questions that may need to be answered before you can move to the next level.



Between Meeting Work

In preparation for the next meeting, take these two lists (what is at stake and what questions need to be addressed) and spend time reflecting on these. Use the table below to frame your individual thoughts about the work that your team needs to do before renaming the adaptive challenge.

Meeting 4: Determining the Information Needed

Begin this session with a “Dwelling in the Word” exercise.

1. Invite someone to read Luke 10: 1-12. After a period of silence share with one another the word or phrase that caught your attention.
2. Invite someone read the text for a second time (perhaps from another translation). After a period of silence, invite folks to respond to the question: What is going on within you that is influencing your hearing of the Word today?
3. Invite someone to read the same text one more time. After a period of silence, invite all to respond to the question: What God is inviting us to be or do from this Scripture and discussion?

As a team, share the reflective work you have done between meetings in order to surface all the information and data you need to name the adaptive challenge.

Using the list of adaptive characteristics in the right hand column above, determine if you need more information as a team to be able to more clearly identify and name the adaptive aspects of this ministry challenge. Is this information that is available, or will it come only by experiments? You might consider the following questions to aid in your discussion:

Are there documents, books, essays that we need to read?

Do we need to interview persons? If so, what would we ask them?



<i>We need to know...</i>	
Adaptive Aspects	Key Question

Now, based on this work together write a specific statement that clearly defines what you believe to be the adaptive challenge you are naming as a team that underlies the ministry challenge you started with:

This statement becomes the launching pad for the Action Learning Team.

Well done!!!

YOUR ACT TEAM MEMBERS ARE...

NAME	PHONE	E-MAIL

YOUR ACT LEADER IS...

NAME	PHONE	E-MAIL

YOUR ACT COACH IS...

NAME	PHONE	E-MAIL

YOUR ACT MEETING SCHEDULE IS...

DATE	FACE-to-FACE Location/Time	VIRTUAL System/Time

