

Weather Patterns

Do you know why the weather is so hard to predict?

The assumption for such a long time was that if you had enough data and could see the big picture you should know what the weather is going to do.

It's really interesting.

The guy that figured it out was called Edward Lorenz.

Forces they call attractors were well known.

an attractor keeps a system or pattern together. A magnetic field is an attractor that holds paper clips in a system.

Or a beating heart is an attractor that keeps the circulatory system working.

Lorenz fed all the weather data into a computer and found that the weather at a global scale formed a pattern like 3d butterfly wings. At local points there was no predictability, but on a global scale there was clearly a pattern at work.

Similarly he recognised patterns in swarming bees and flocks of birds.

There was clearly an attractor or force at work, but it was strange.

So those clever science lads called it a 'strange attractor'.

A strange attractor is a force that keeps a complex systems like weather or swarming bees

in a recognisable pattern, albeit a chaotic one

The result is that something may emerge in a complex system that cannot really be explained by the total of the parts

Lorenz discovered that these strange attractors that govern complex systems are often made up of simple rules

And can make a system hyper sensitive.

For example. A flock of birds is 50 times more responsive to external stimuli

than an individual bird.

In a complex system the rules governing these strange attractors can sometimes be astonishingly simple.

For a flock of birds for example it might be

- 1 – Maintain same speed as neighbouring birds
- 2 – Head towards the centre of the flock
- 3 – Maintain a minimum distance from other objects (birds, trees etc)

Any more rules or any less rules, and it doesn't work anymore. rule 2 without rule 3 would be disastrous

These rules are really relationships between groups or things, or people in the system.

Isn't that interesting? You cannot understand a complex system, like the weather; or a church; or the community the church is in, by looking at the organisation flow chart, or the mission statement.

You have to see the basic rules that govern the relationships between the groups and people.
The way the relationships work.

Maintain speed,
Head for the centre.
Keep a safe distance.

Church numbers are in decline.

The New Zealand society sees it as largely irrelevant.

Climate change threatens the poorest and most marginalised in the world, and ultimately all of us.

The financial crisis has shown the crack in the global economic system
Unemployment is climbing and food banks and social services are already stretched to capacity
with resources shrinking.
Our communities are struggling.

What are the rules that govern the way the church and society interact?
What are the rules of engagement?

Read 1 John 3: 16-. This is love that he laid down his life... That we should do the same... that if someone is in need and don't help how can the love of God be in us.

Does this describe the basic rules for the way the church and community interact?

That we lay down our life.

That we lay down our comfort for our community

That we lay down our security for our community

That we lay down our reputation for our community

that we lay down what we worked so hard to get for our community

That we lay down what is rightfully ours for our community

I wonder what it is that you are called to lay down...

The church has reached a settled way to do thing. We continue to do what has worked in the past,
even though it no longer works.

There are rules around how we interact with the community, and within the church.

These rules, these relationships, mean that for all the variation in churches in NZ,
from above they make a recognisable pattern. They all look kind of the same.

Story of Brooklyn. Jeff Brown... walking streets from midnight – 4.
like the weather you couldn't predict the results in advance,
Gardening project... big results were when we broke a operative rule...
that nothing is free, there are always strings attached.

To change these rules, the way the relationships work
firstly they need to be identified. A hard task.

What is the basic way the relationship works when the church approaches the community?

How does the community see the way we relate?

**If I asked the community how they see the basic relationship between church and community
what would they say?**

If we are like most church groups we will draw a blank with the second question.
(Which should lead us to be suspicious of our answer to the first question).

[A number of possible conclusions]

1- because the OT reading is Psalm 23.

It can be an intimidating and daunting thing to rethink our relationship to the community and the way we do things. Especially in the context of 1 John 3. It is good to remember that in all things, we are not alone. This is not about our effort to change the world. God is with us, this is Good Shepherd Sunday. Psalm 23 is an encouragement all of us. What is interesting, however, is that in the first 3 verses where there is comfort and ease (something most of our churches are familiar with) where God leads us beside still waters and restores our souls, the Psalmist speaks of God impersonally. He leads me beside still waters... the Lord is my shepherd... His rod and staff... It isn't until the following verses the language becomes intimate and personal. During the darkness of the following verses the languages changes... You are with me.

Possibility 2 -

Because it is not something we can do overnight, understanding the rules that govern the relationship between our church and our community, perhaps we could finish by borrowing the rules of the birds.

Keep up the speed
Head for the middle
Maintain a safe distance.

They are perhaps not so busy from us after all.

We have a habit of;
staying busy (keep up speed)
putting energy into the church (head for the middle)
And keep a safe distance

To reverse all three would result in something quite dramatic and unpredictable.
Slow down.
Move to the edge where the marginalised are.
And get close.

I think one of the rules of relationship is that the Anglican church acts as if it is an expert in all the things it does, and interacts via invitation to things. Even when we plan things for the good of the community, we rarely consult the community on what they believe the needs, causes, problems are. I wonder what would happen if, prior to any decision for action, a church decided that it would first speak to EVERY person in the community, and ask what they think the priorities for change and what are the primary issues in the community are, I wonder how different the action and outcome would be.