

YOUNG ADULTS AND THE CHURCH

Using Change to
Faithfully Engage
with Young Adults



What results show faithful **growth**?



What **actions** drive positive change?



Where does **potential** reside?



You Prepare a Table Before Me... (Psalm 23:5a)

God is setting the table and inviting people. With these guests, our task is to:

Facilitate Conversations & Build Relationships



When Jesus ate with people...

The focus was not about making reservations, practicing etiquette, or receiving excellent service. Instead, he wanted the focus to be on expanding the guest list, extending the invitation, and offering radical hospitality.



Capturing Change: A Survey of Pivot NW Churches



7 out of 11

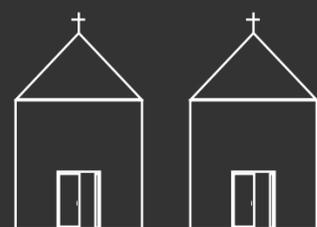
Pivot NW Churches responded to our survey in March, 2020.



Ultimately, churches saw real change in **personal faith growth**, **community belonging**, and presence of the **Fruit of the Spirit**.



Churches described several innovative ways they were engaging young adults such as **discipleship groups**, **change in worship times**, **training on prayer**, **shared meals**, **leadership development**, and **acts of service and ministry**.



The Church holds the responsibility – and possesses the God-given ability – to set the table for a more faithful engagement with young adults.

This can be accomplished through **three steps**:

- 1) Define faithfulness
- 2) Take action for growth
- 3) Discern areas of potential



Pursuing success has become a modern-day temptation to the church. Pivot NW has challenged churches to consider **measurements of faithfulness** in innovative engagement with young adults.



Define **Faithfulness**

Step 1:

Define faithfulness in the context of young adult engagement efforts that are focused and intentional. The real and biblical goal line for churches is faithfulness, not success.

Recognizing that God holds the outcome, the surveyed churches remained focused on active participation in what God is doing among young adults.

When churches were faithful in their change efforts, they saw positive change in the following areas...

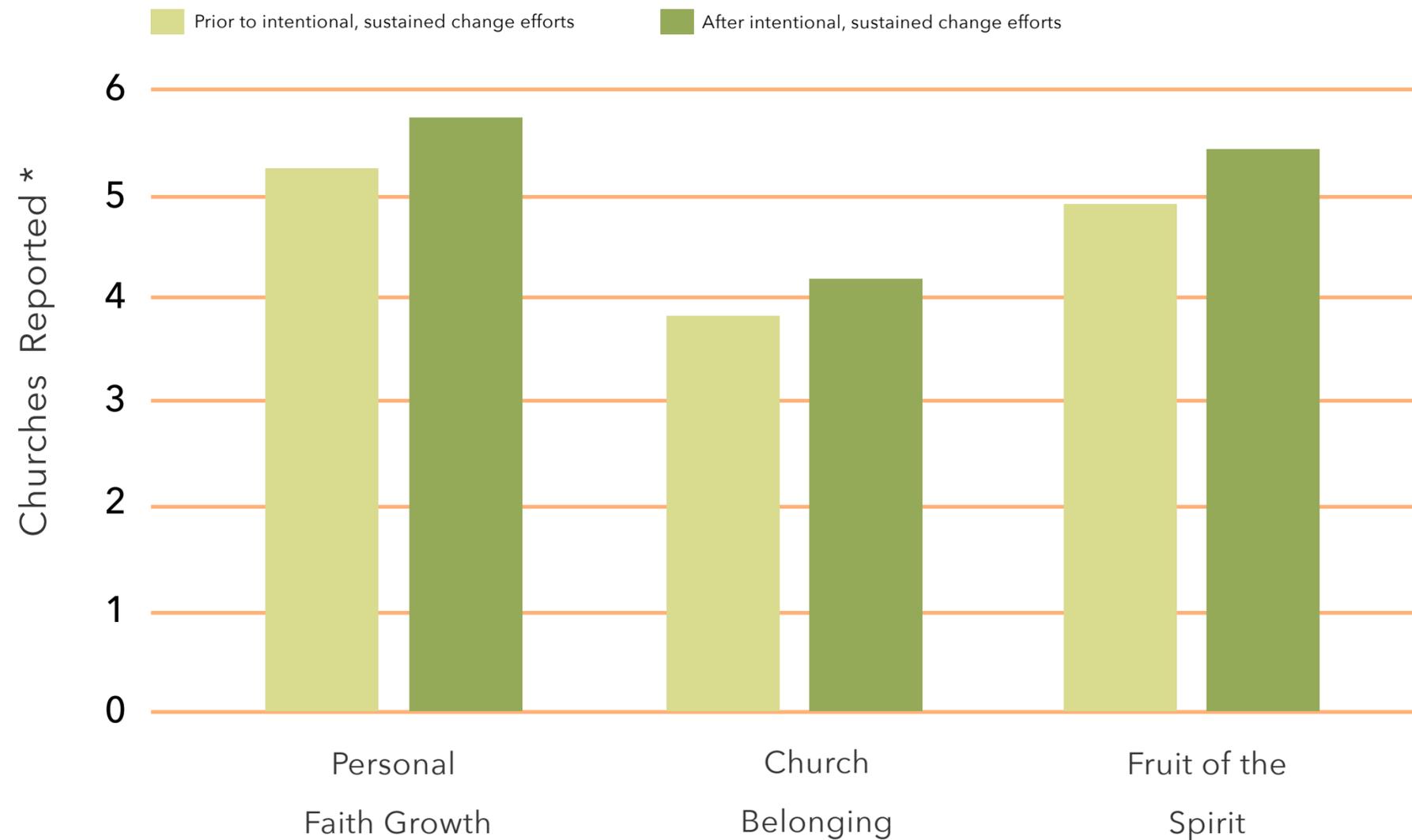
PERSONAL FAITH GROWTH:

asking spiritual questions, serving others, or sharing our faith.

CHURCH BELONGING: sharing in the work, being accepted as you are, having a leader who knows you.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: more signs of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Congregational Growth During Change Efforts



* The seven Pivot churches whose pastors participated in the survey responded to items on three outcome measures. Responses were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale. Congregational scores were aggregated for each measure, and then all seven scores were averaged to show the before/after bar graph.



Personal Faith Growth

Church Belonging

Fruit of the Spirit

Biggest Positive Change

"We have a real sense that God is guiding us."

"Everyone has at least one leader in the church they can talk to if they have a problem."

*"Generosity" &
"Self-control"*

Smallest Positive Change

(or no change)

"We seek opportunities to grow spiritually." & "We feel a sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world."

"The church community finds it hard to accept some people at church." & "Leaders in the church are not interested in some people."

*"Kindness" &
"Gentleness"*

By focusing on faithfulness – rather than success – all three outcomes (left) showed positive change. In addition, specific actions taken by Pivot churches (see below) were related to:

- Higher Weekly Young Adult Engagement (*75% increase*)
- Higher Weekly Church Participation (*4% increase*)



|| Define Faithfulness

For your congregation, what is the definition of *faithfulness*? Can you name three specific areas?

Based on that definition and your three areas, what specific improvements would you like to see in your church?

Certain behaviors have the potential to positively impact your congregation's situation. Which of these would be most impactful in your situation? Which of these do you already do well?



Take Action for **Growth**

Each family sets the table a little different; special traditions and local context mean that each table will look unique. God reminds us it is not about the pattern of the flatware or china, but instead, the goal is to facilitate conversations and build relationships with the people who respond to God's invitation.

Step 2:

Growth is the result of faith in **ACTION**.

In the model shown on the next slide, notice how Psalm 23 (NRSV) sets the table in a way that can be inviting to multiple people in a variety of congregations. Each stage requires a different set of intentional behaviors.



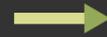
Stages of Changes

Anticipate



Becoming **aware**,
empathetic, &
receptive.

The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want.

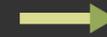


Motivate



Cultivating
a **desire** to
change.

He makes me lie down
in the green pastures;
he leads me besides still
waters; he restores my soul.

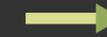


Discover



Looking for
ideas, building
capabilities.

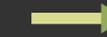
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and
your staff - they comfort me. You prepare a
table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.



Act



Acting and
learning as
we go.



Transition



Building
sustainability.

Surely goodness and
mercy shall follow me all
the days of my life. I shall
dwell in the house of the
Lord my whole life long.

Change doesn't all happen at once. It takes a lot of work. Typically, there are 5 different stages that groups go through before real change begins to happen.

Stages of Change

While all stages of change presented challenges (and corresponding rewards), Pivot churches found that each stage presented varying degrees of difficulty.

Experienced less
resistance/challenge

Experienced more
resistance/challenge

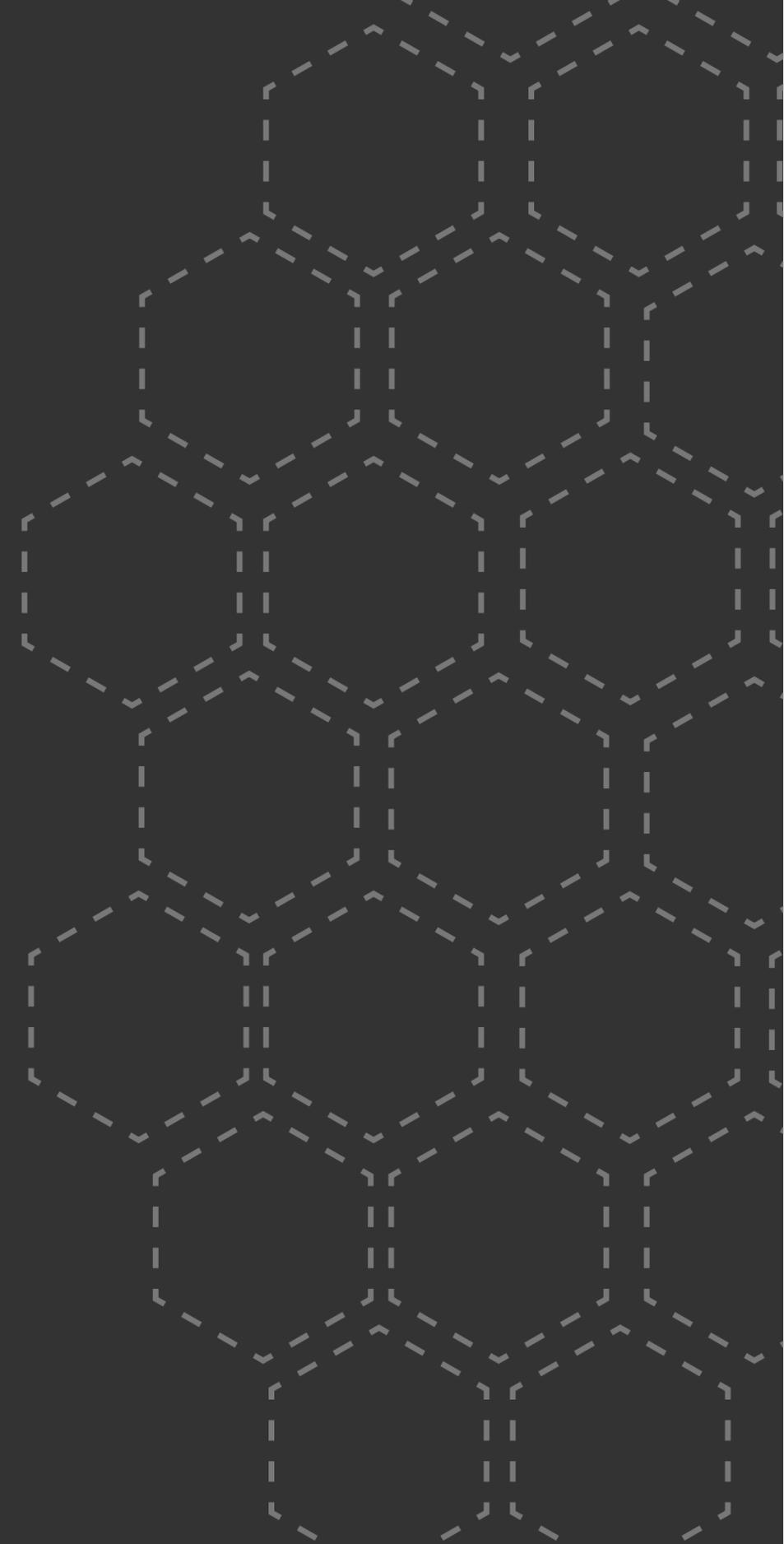
Anticipate: We spent time as a church community in observation, reflection, and discernment to become aware of God's call. Someone in the church community (pastor, leader, member, group) stepped forward to explain the risks of continuing in the status quo.

Motivate: Church leadership publicly championed and supported the new direction. Feedback was sought from all members of the church community regarding the specific change effort.

Discover: We sought out the necessary training on how to support this change process. We had a plan on how to manage the responses and reactions (both positive and negative) to change that we encounter.

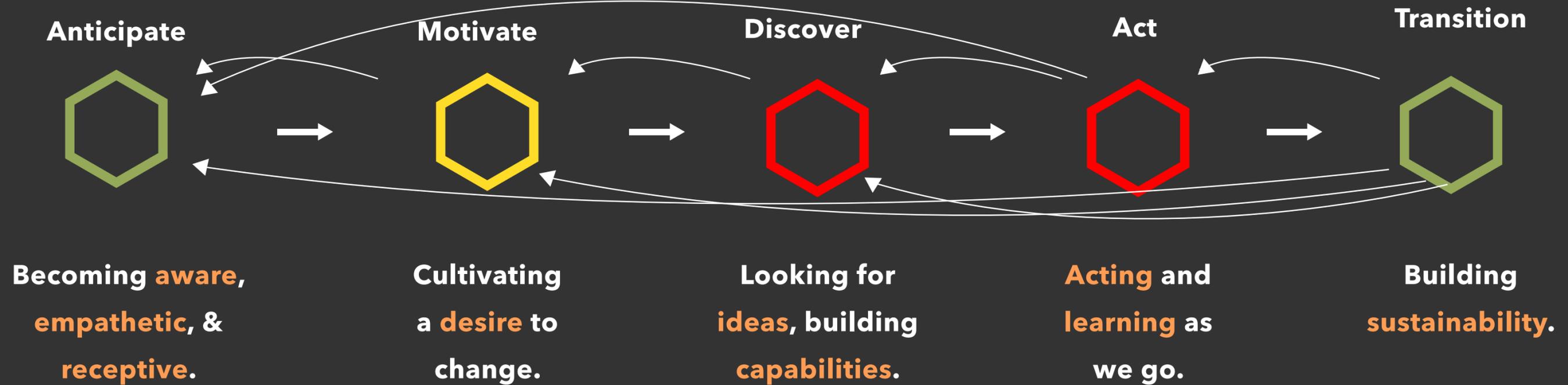
Act: We have mitigated for potential risks (derailers, barriers, etc.) to our plan of action. We created processes to initiate and track how we are adapting.

Transition: We used our mistakes to learn and adapt. We put processes in place to maintain the changes we have made.





Stages of Change



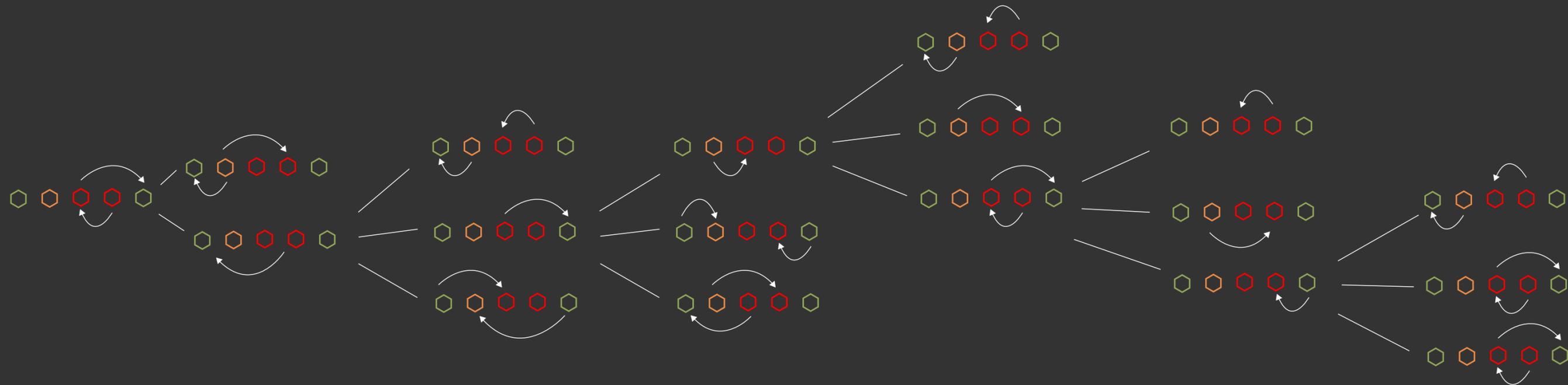
Progress is organic movement and is rarely linear.

Remember: the goal is faithfulness in the process, not reaching the final destination. Survey results showed that simply engaging with young adults showed multiple levels of positive growth (and no negative loss!). Therefore, simply moving through the process is key.

As our Pivot churches showed, the Discover and Act stages were filled with the most difficult items; many challenges and frustrations lay in this "valley of shadows." However, as the church learned from one stage to the next, they applied their new knowledge in innovative ways, making the next series of change stages a new adventure."



Iterations of Change



(n) x =
Culture Shift

A study describing this process was used by people who were attempting to quit smoking (see blogs; Prochaska et al., 1992). This research revealed that there were five distinct stages to the change process; no two people engaged the stages in exactly the same way or order. Some people would progress linearly through the stages; others would skip a stage, move ahead, and then circle back around. What was found to be consistent was that when people experienced the process through all five stages, it took multiple cycles/iterations for the change to ultimately take effect.



Reflect on **Stages of Change**

Think about a time in your congregation when a change happened.

What did your congregation do well to make it a positive change? (Think especially of what occurred in the Anticipate and Transition stages.)

During that change, what challenges did your congregation face in the middle (Motivate, Discover, and Act phases)? What behaviors helped you to positively navigate/overcome those challenges?



Where does **Potential** Reside?



Step 3:

Determine where the **potential** resides and make the most of it! Focus on your strengths and what God is calling you to be faithful to. We are called to use the gifts that God has given, focusing on our part and letting God take care of the rest!



|| **Plan Next Steps**

Based on your interaction with this material, name one area where you would like to see further improvement.

What is one action that you can take in the next two weeks that will help you grow as a community?

How can you help your church set the table and create an open space for these discussions to occur?



Contact Us

feedback@pivotnw.org

We'd love to hear your journey and your questions.
When writing to us, please reference version 1.0321.