

Tapping into our Anglican DNA:

Leadership in Complicated and Challenging Times

The Rev. Cn. C.K. Robertson, Ph.D.

“I believe that my eyes are as good as yours.”

*“Quite so,” he answered, “
You see, but you do not observe.
The distinction is clear.”*

--Dr. John Watson and Sherlock Holmes in
Arthur Conan Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia"

A three-step process of observation

- *Scriptural*
- *Historical*
- *Practical*



Where does
our story
begin?





Apostoloi =

“SENT ONES”

OR

“AMBASSADORS”

Acts of the **Apostles**

“Sent Ones”

“Is this the time when you are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” –Acts 1

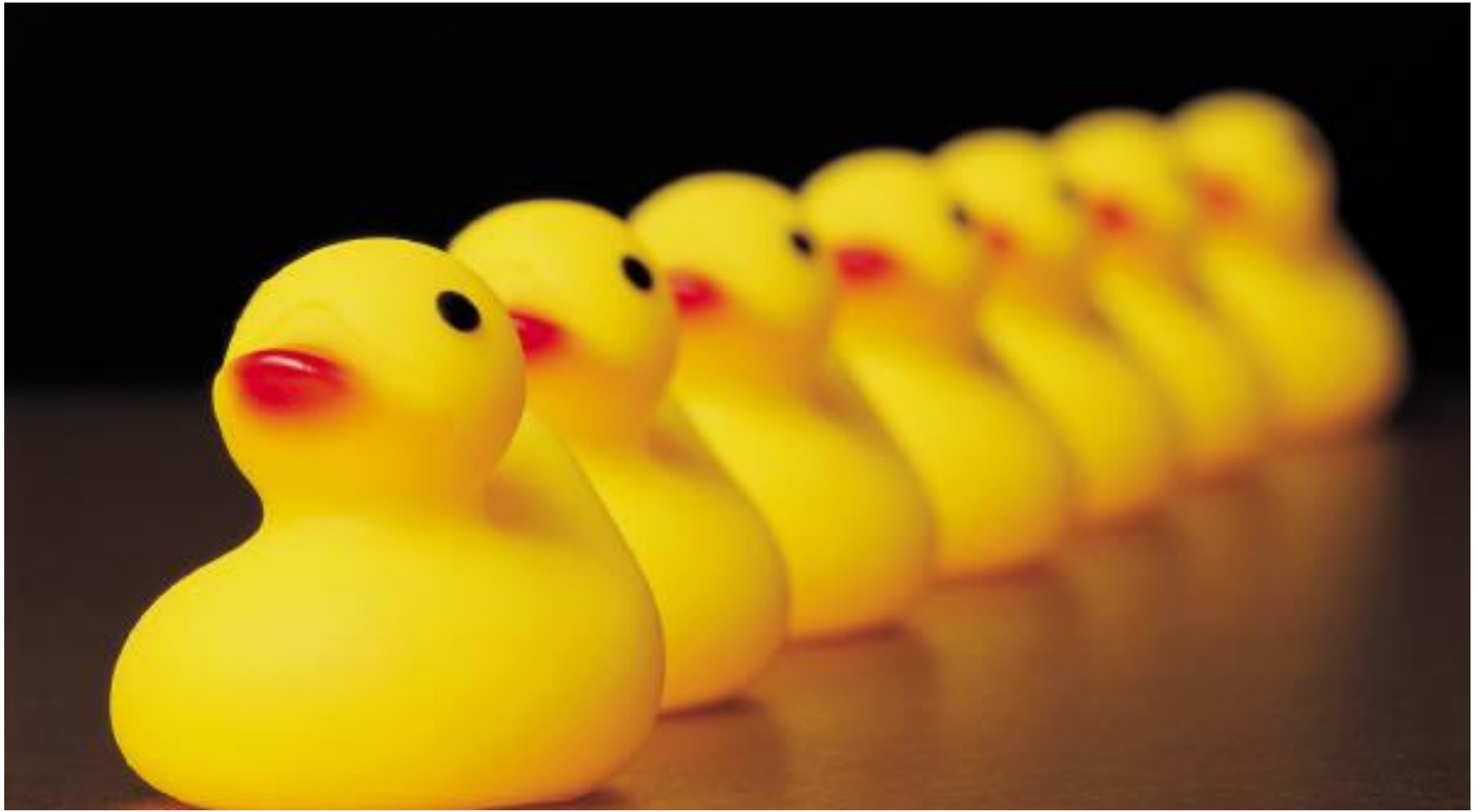
Their question points back to a seemingly idyllic past.

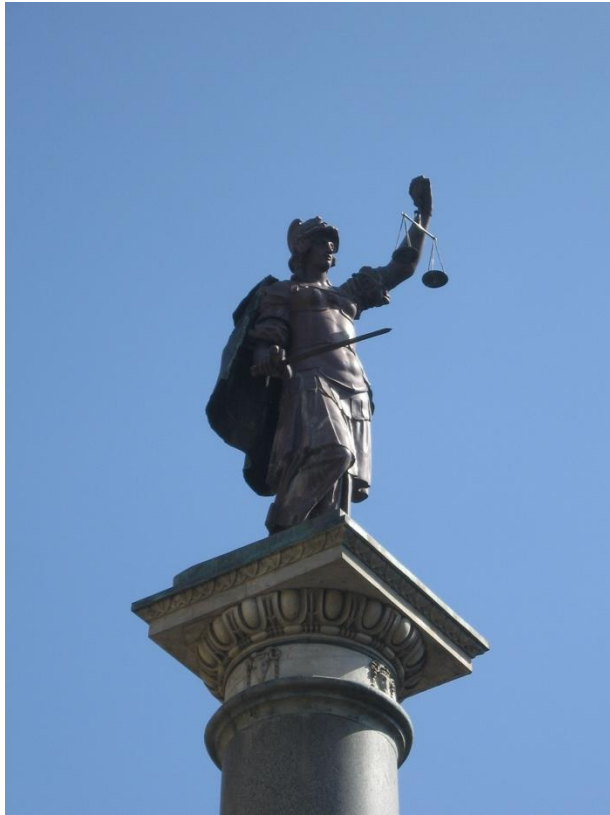
“Sent Ones”

Jesus' response points instead to the challenges and the opportunities on the journey ahead.


“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses **in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**”

Systems (and people) resist change!





Sent to preach the gospel to Cornelius, an uncircumcised Gentile, a Roman centurion, an officer in the army of occupation.

He did so, but  reluctantly...like Jonah before him. (Joppa!)

Peter's task (Acts 10-11:18)

No such hesitation in Antioch...

“Among them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists also...

Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people,

--Acts 11:19-26

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Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch.

So it was that for an entire year they met with the church and taught a great many people,

and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called ‘Christians.’ ”

Now time travel five centuries to meet...



Augustine of Canterbury, circa 597



Augustine of Canterbury

- Well educated prior of St. Andrew's, Rome, where Pope Gregory was Abbot
- Chosen by Gregory to lead a delegation on a mission to Kent
- In 597, met King Aethelbert of Kent & his wife Bertha, who along with many others was a Christian...but not like Augustine!



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- “If the faith is one and the same, why then are there different customs in different churches?” (*Libellus Responsionum*)



Gregory's Response



A: “You know, my brother, the custom of the Roman Church in which you were trained. If you have found anything in either the Roman or Gallican or any other

Church which may be more acceptable to Almighty God, **I am willing that you carefully make choice of the same and diligently teach the English Church, which is as yet new in the faith, whatever you gather from the several churches.**”

--Pope Gregory the Great
(*Libellus Responsionum*)

Gregory's Response



A pastorally sensitive,
politically savvy
compromise

Fast-forward 900 years

Thomas Cranmer

- Kept bishops and priests,
but allowed them to be married
- Kept the Mass,
but put it in the vernacular
- Kept the Church's governance,
but shifted power from pope to
become a national Church

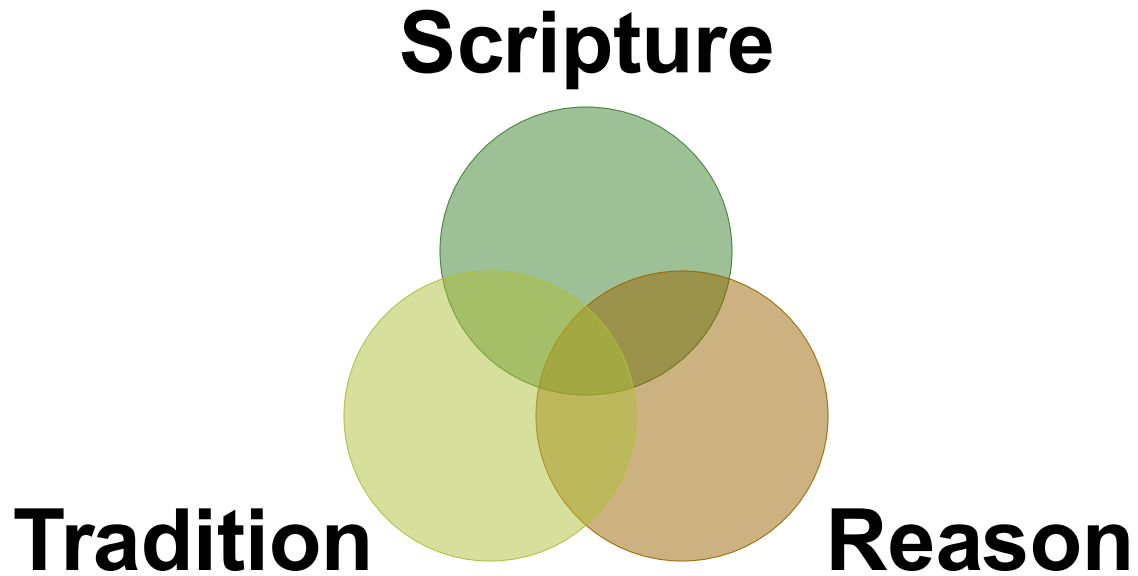


Richard Hooker

- Authored eight-volume *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*
- “Translated many of the confusing and destructive conflicts **into...a pragmatic and tolerant middle way** between the tempting dogmatisms of his day.”
—biographer Philip Secor

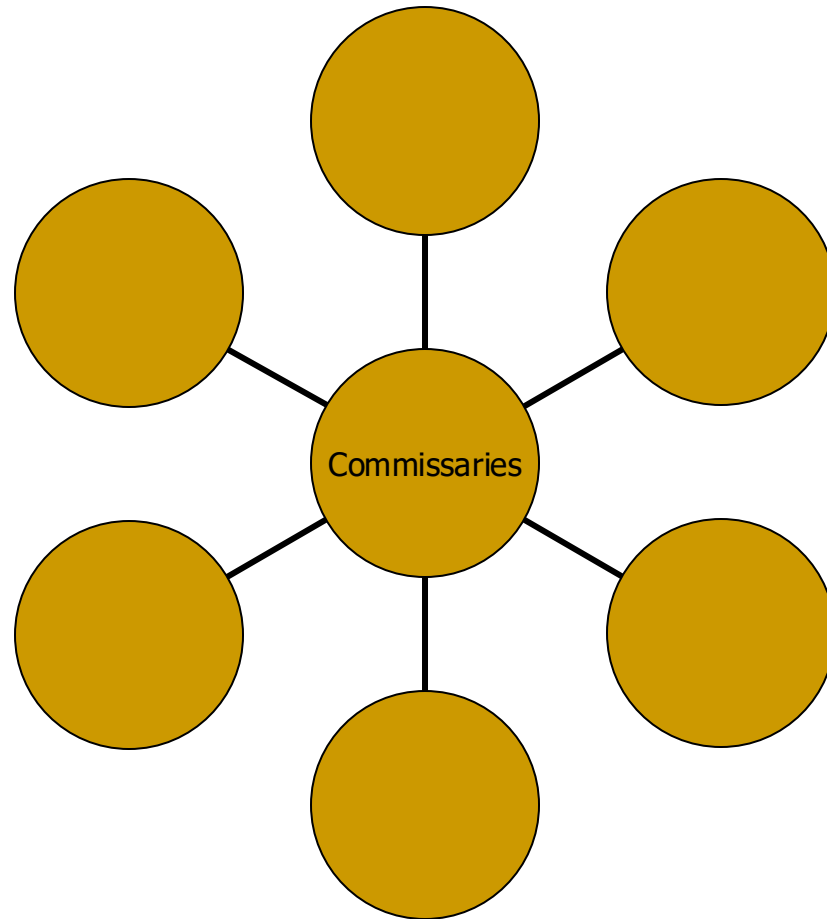


An Anglican Balance

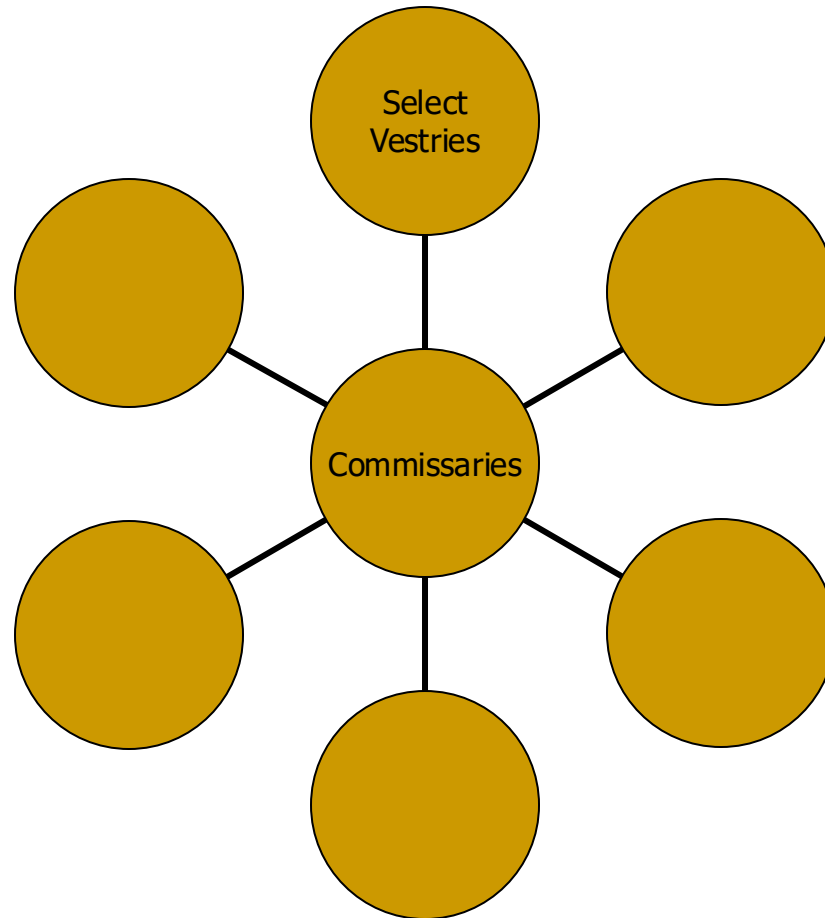


Two hundred years later
and
three thousand miles away

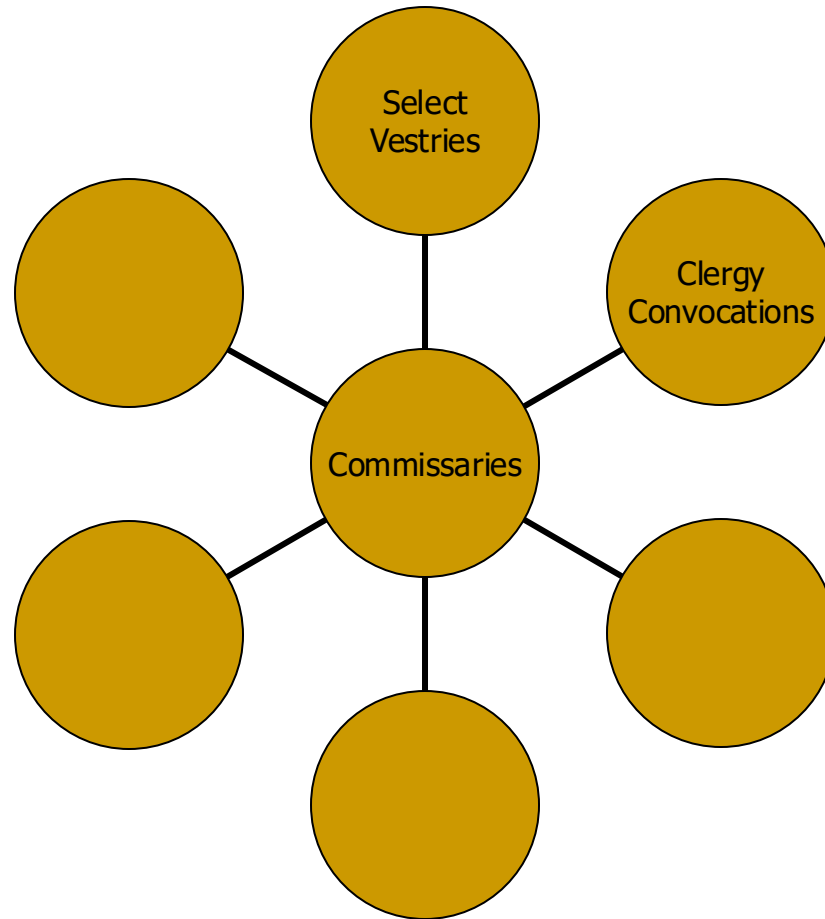
Leadership in the American Colonies



Leadership in the American Colonies

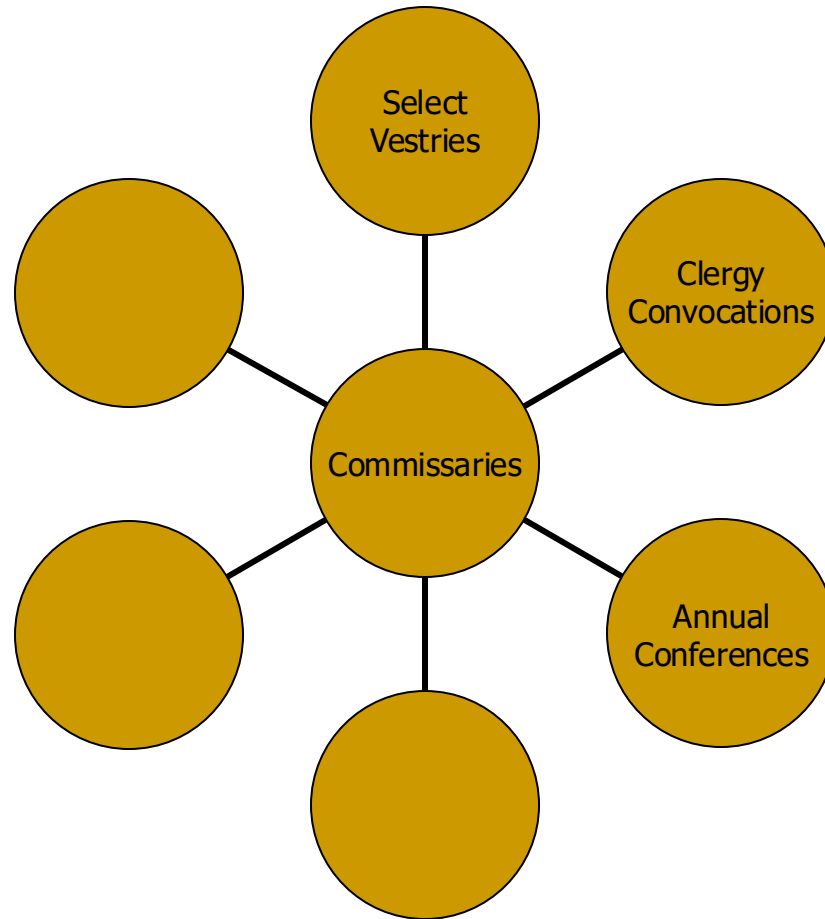


Leadership in the American Colonies



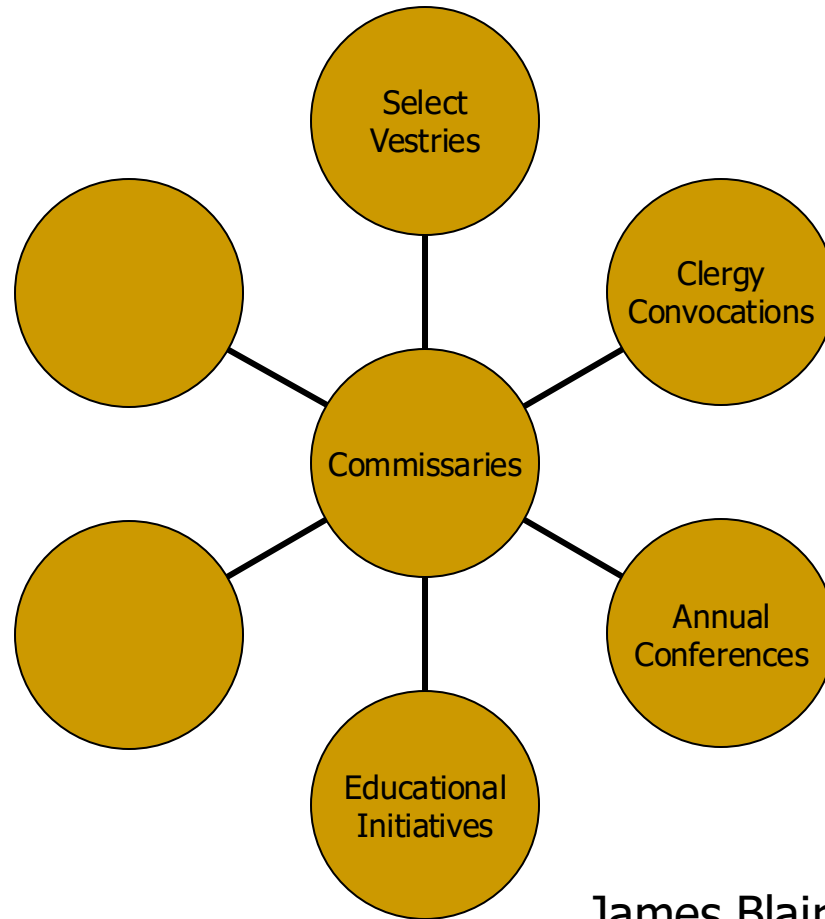
James Blair
VA

Leadership in the American Colonies



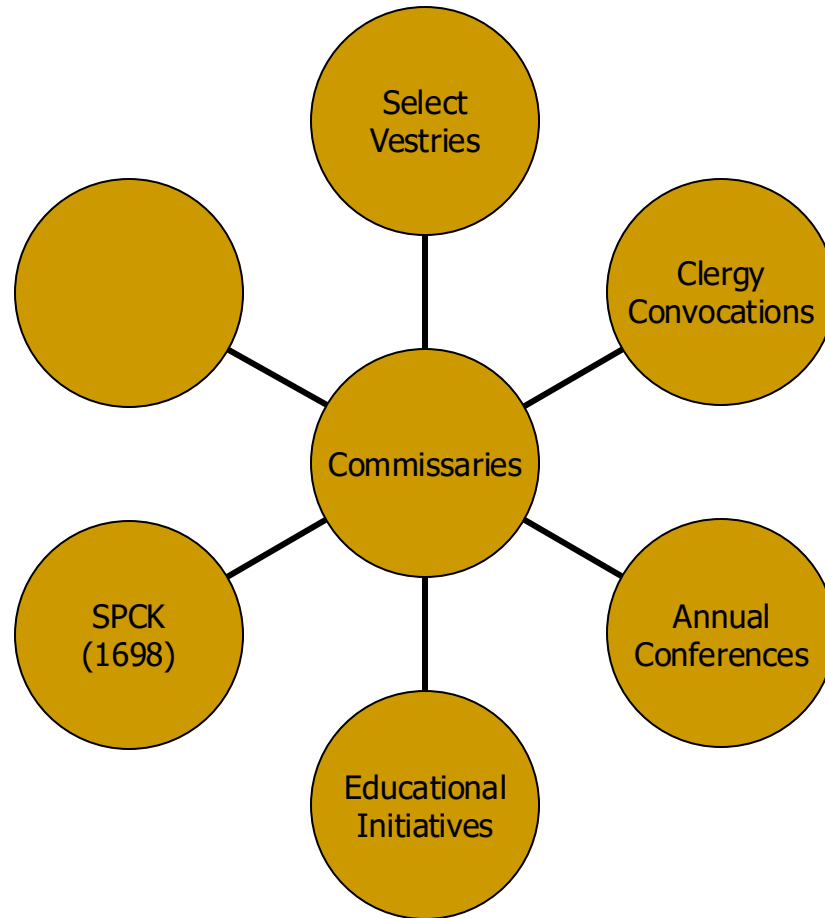
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Leadership in the American Colonies



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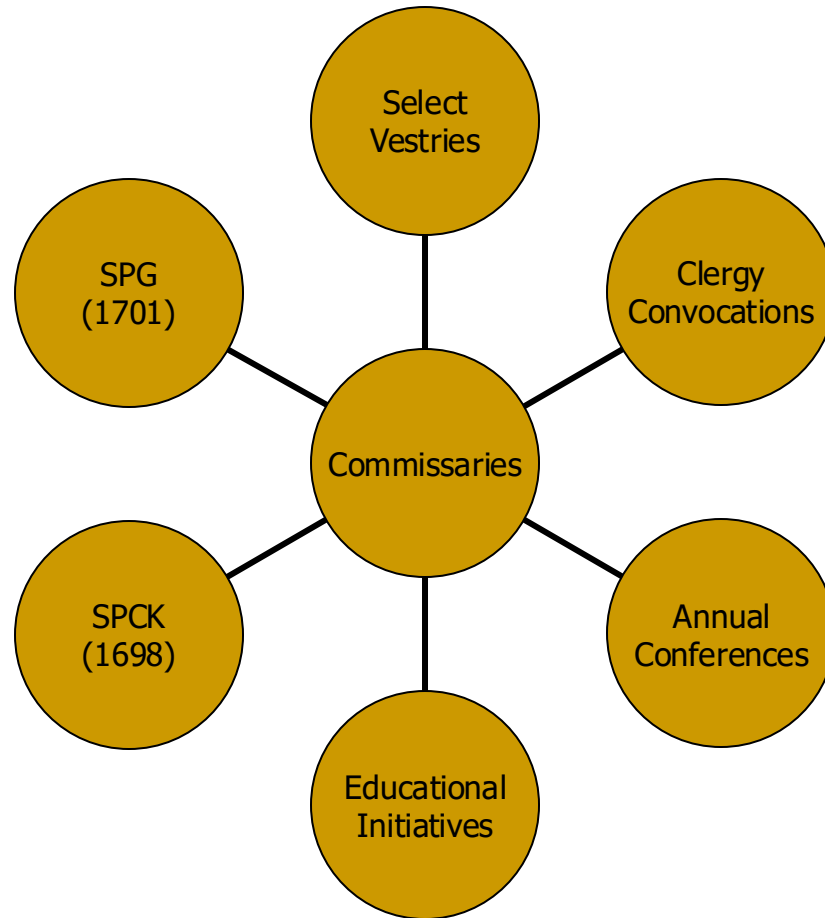
Leadership in the American Colonies



Thomas Bray
MD

Leadership in the American Colonies

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In the American colonies...

Tradition

Change

Distance from king
and bishops

More power to laity

State conventions

A more democratic
approach



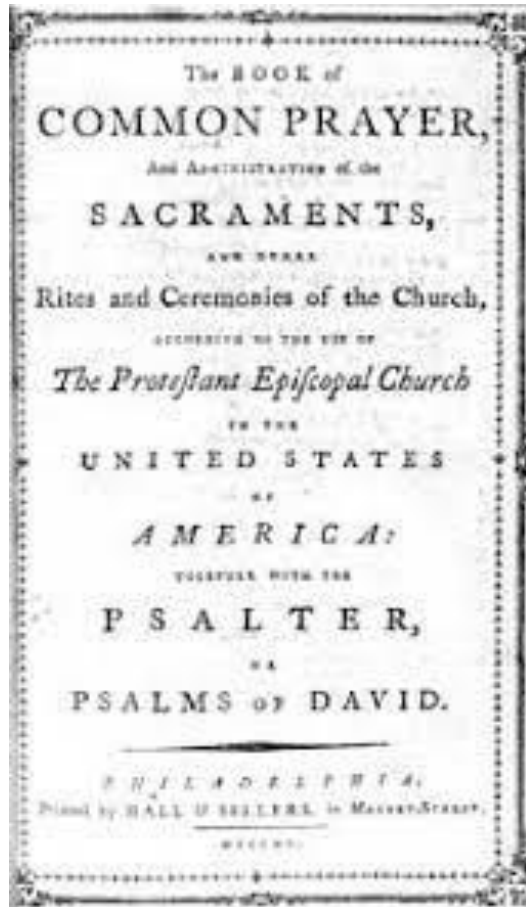
“The Case of the Episcopal Churches”

“A church government that will contain the constituent principles of the Church of England, yet be independent of foreign jurisdiction or influence would remove the anxiety which at present hangs heavy on the minds of many a sincere person.”

--The Rev. William White
Chaplain to Continental Congress



Continuity, but in a new context



“To model and organize their respective Churches, and forms of worship, and discipline, in such manner as they might judge most convenient for their future prosperity; consistently with the constitution and laws of their country.”

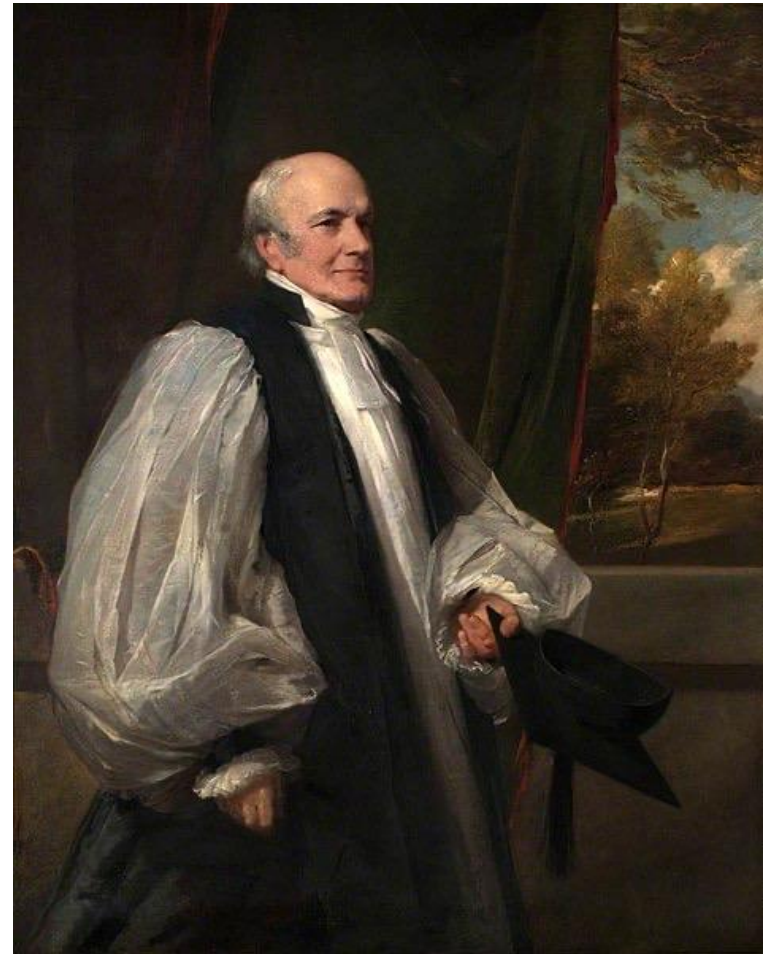
--Preface

Another hundred years
and
back across the pond

Leadership and Lambeth I

“It has **never been contemplated** that we should assume the functions of a general synod of all the Churches in full communion with the Church of England, and take upon ourselves to enact canons that should be binding upon those here represented.”

--Archbishop Charles Longley,
September 24, 1867



The stage was set for something...**new**.

Lambeth I



- Not a council defining doctrine, but a conference.
- With bishops not only from the Church of England and its colonial Churches...
- But also from the Scottish Episcopal Church and The Episcopal Church in the USA...

Lambeth I



Some bishops did not agree and did not attend.

Several newspapers showed utter disdain for the meeting.

But many attendees agreed with Bishop C. P. McIlvaine that “**the feelings of the whole meeting, the bearing of all towards one another, the decidedly high tone of manners and spirit, were truly delightful.**”

Leadership and Lambeth II



Ten years later, Archbishop Tait said this when calling for the second Lambeth Conference:

“There is no intention whatever on the part of anybody to gather together the Bishops of the Anglican Church for the sake of defining any matter of doctrine...or discipline. **I think it would be a work of love in which we should be engaged—the extension of Christ’s kingdom—and that we may be able by friendly intercourse to strengthen each other’s hands.**”

Leadership and Lambeth III



The 1888 conference endorsed a resolution that came from the 1886 General Convention in Chicago, offering four articles which could “supply a basis on which approach may be, by God's blessing, made towards Home Reunion:”

The Holy Scriptures

Apostles Creed & Nicene Creed

Sacraments of Baptism & Eucharist

The Historic Episcopate “**locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of God’s Church.**”

Leadership and Lambeth VI



The Lambeth Conference of 1920 directly followed the events of the Great War, in which the soldiers of “Christian” nations slaughtered each other in the trenches of Europe.

Its famous encyclical declared:

“To a world that craves for fellowship we present our message. The secret of life is fellowship.”

“It is not by reducing the different groups of Christians to uniformity, but by rightly using their diversity, that the Church can become all things to all.”

Leadership and Lambeth XI



The 1978 Lambeth Conference occurred after the ordination of women in TEC and other Provinces, and resolution 21 acknowledged the differences among member Churches, then declared once more:

“Our holding together of diversity within a unity of faith and worship is part of the Anglican heritage.”

The 106th Archbishop of Canterbury



Almost 50 years after the 1978 Lambeth Conference, and 40 years since Barbara Harris became the first woman to be consecrated a bishop in the Anglican Communion, the Rt. Rev. Dame Sarah Mullally stands ready to walk in Augustine of Canterbury's footsteps.

“Our holding together of diversity within a unity of faith and worship is part of the Anglican heritage.”

A work in progress...



The experiment begun with Augustine and Gregory, built on the principles of the Church in Antioch as seen in Acts, has been replicated countless times in practical ways through the relationships nurtured between individuals, congregations, and dioceses across the Communion which, at its best, is, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu once described it:

“very messy but loveable.”

17 October 2025
Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and Martyr

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I write with a brief word of encouragement in response to the statement issued yesterday by the chairman of GAFCON's Primates' Council. Since this statement was released, I have received many messages from across the world, both from Anglicans and ecumenical partners, assuring us of prayers and also showing concern for our beloved Anglican Communion family.

Every Anglican, and indeed every Christian, should seriously seek to discern a future of faithfulness according to God's own calling and enabling of our confession and obedience. In the Gospel of John, Jesus calls his disciples to unity in the truth and identifies himself as the means and the end of both. Divisions among Anglicans, and many other divisions in the Body of Christ, are sadly well known, as we see in the Scriptures (1 Cor 11:17). These divisions require urgent attention and repair, by means of every instrument available to us.

The one Church is ever reforming, which means that no institution, meeting, network or association of Christians is static. Our life of faithfulness is based in prayer, daily self-renunciation, repentance, and conversion, so that we may receive the mind of Christ and his Spirit, in accordance with holy Scripture. By this pattern of dependence on God and mutual submission to one another, God raises up a faithful, humble, obedient people for his praise, a people capable of taking counsel, making decisions, and sharing the Good News with the world.

The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO) has invited all member churches of the Communion to consider and respond to [The Nairobi-Cairo Proposals](#). I share the hope of the commission that all Anglicans, and the whole Church of God, may still seek and find agreement in the Faith. I also agree that we must summon up patience and love when members of the Body need to walk at a distance from one another in order better to seek and serve the truth and unity of our shared vocation (1 Cor 11:19). Theological uniformity cannot be demanded or expected without the hard work of discernment over time. Doctrinal, geographical or regional groupings of churches (for example GSFA, CCEA, GAFCON, and others) can help us reform and renew our life together.

At every level of the Church (local, regional, and global), we cannot 'neglect to meet together', as it says in Hebrews 10:25, whenever possible. All Anglican churches are ordered by canon law, constitutions and synodical structures that provide a collaborative system of governance by bishops, other clergy, and lay persons. In this way, the 'houses' of Anglican synods determine matters of doctrine, discipline, and order, and make decisions for the good of the whole. All Anglican churches are likewise invited to shape the Instruments of Communion, which rightly evolve over time, as those gathered seek to discern what the Spirit is saying to the churches. I urge them to send their representatives to the 19th meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council next year in Belfast, so everyone can participate in the decision-making. Those who are present are the ones who shape the outcomes and resolutions of meetings.

May the Lord enable us to continue walking together, to the highest degree possible, in the footsteps of our Lord and Saviour.

Yours in Christ,



The Rt Revd Anthony Poggo
Secretary General of the Anglican Communion

So how do
we tap into
that DNA,
and be
God's
leaders
today?



The Sacred Bundle



The Sacred Bundle



- The Carrier of the Bundle reminds the community of their most essential identity markers

The Sacred Bundle



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- Together the community determines which markers still define them and which do not

The Sacred Bundle



- The Carrier of the Bundle reminds the community of their most essential identity markers
- Together the community determines which markers still define them and which do not
- The Bundle, in turn, determines their roles

Go Back to the Future

- What was the Sacred Bundle of the church when it was founded?

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- How has the church's understanding of its vision and identity altered, evolved, or changed in the years since the founding?
What can our timeline tell us?

Go Back to the Future

- What was the Sacred Bundle of the church when it was founded?
- How has the church's understanding of its vision and identity altered, evolved, or changed in the years since the founding? What can your timeline tell us?
- How would we define the church's Bundle right now?

The 2-H Commissions

Heritage

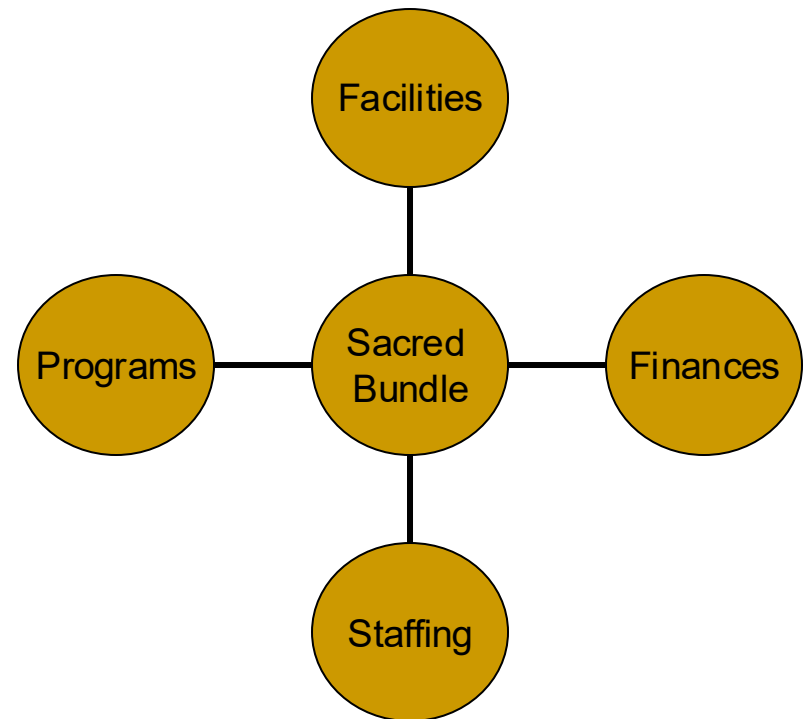
Focusing on a timeline for the internal congregation, addressing questions of leadership and change.

Horizons

Focusing on communication with the surrounding community, addressing questions of demographics and needs.

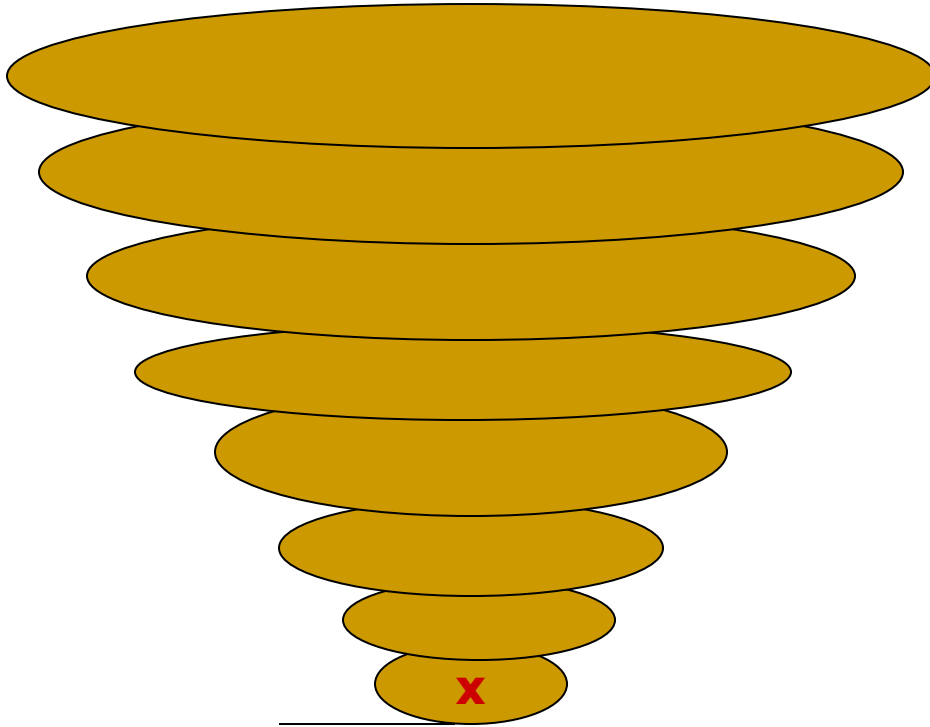
Arrange Structures Strategically

How do your decisions as leaders regarding the use of **FACILITIES, FINANCES, PROGRAMS, and STAFFING** reflect your church's **SACRED BUNDLE**?



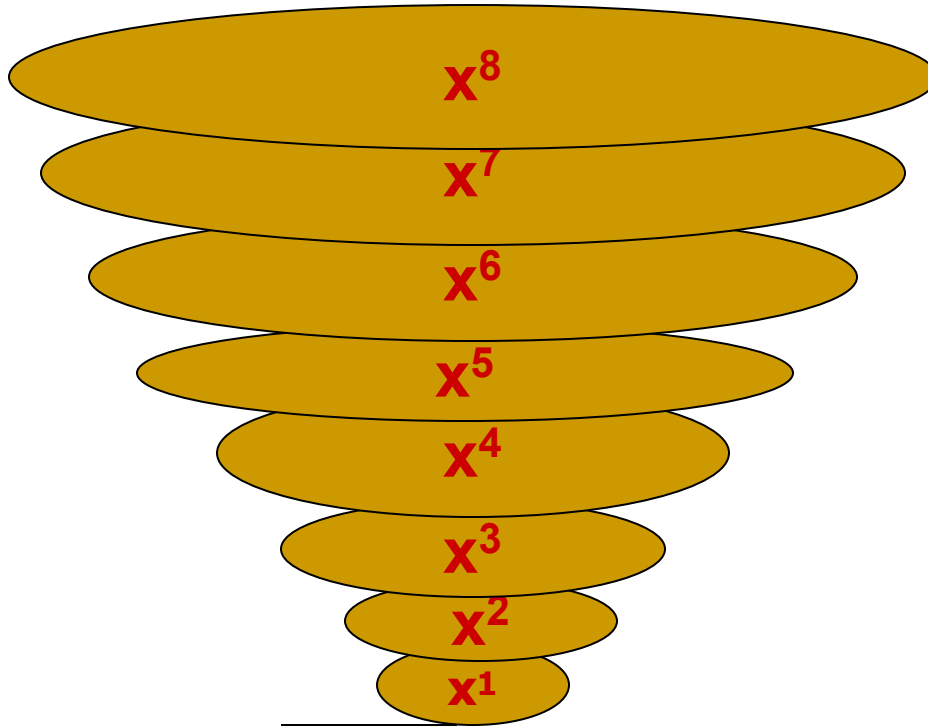


Know the storm patterns



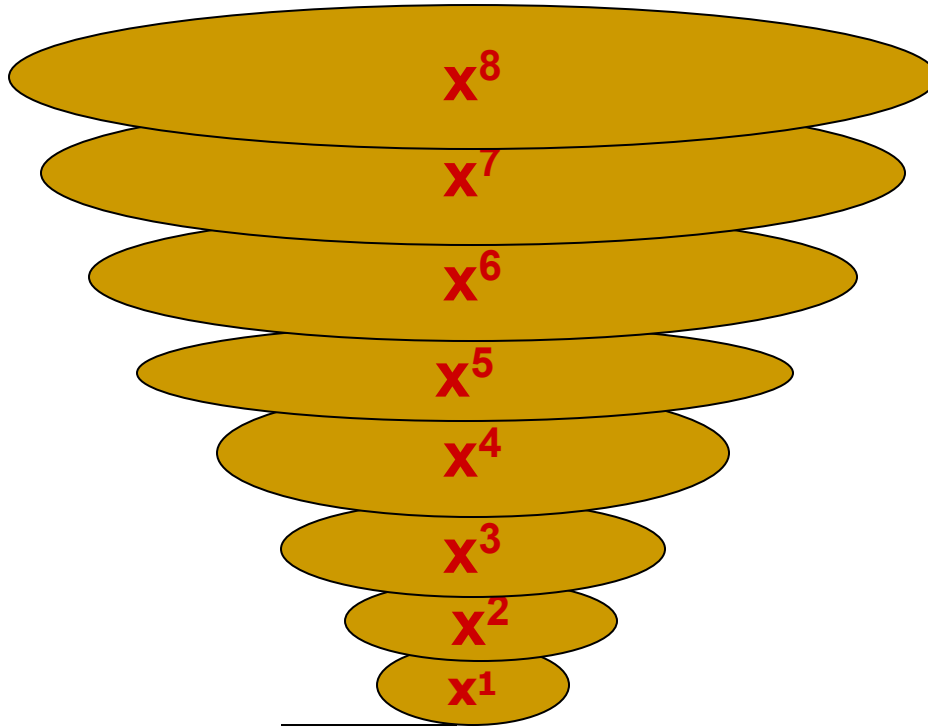
Managing Public Disputes
Susan L. Carpenter &
W.J.D. Kennedy

What happens at each level?



x^1 - Problem emerges

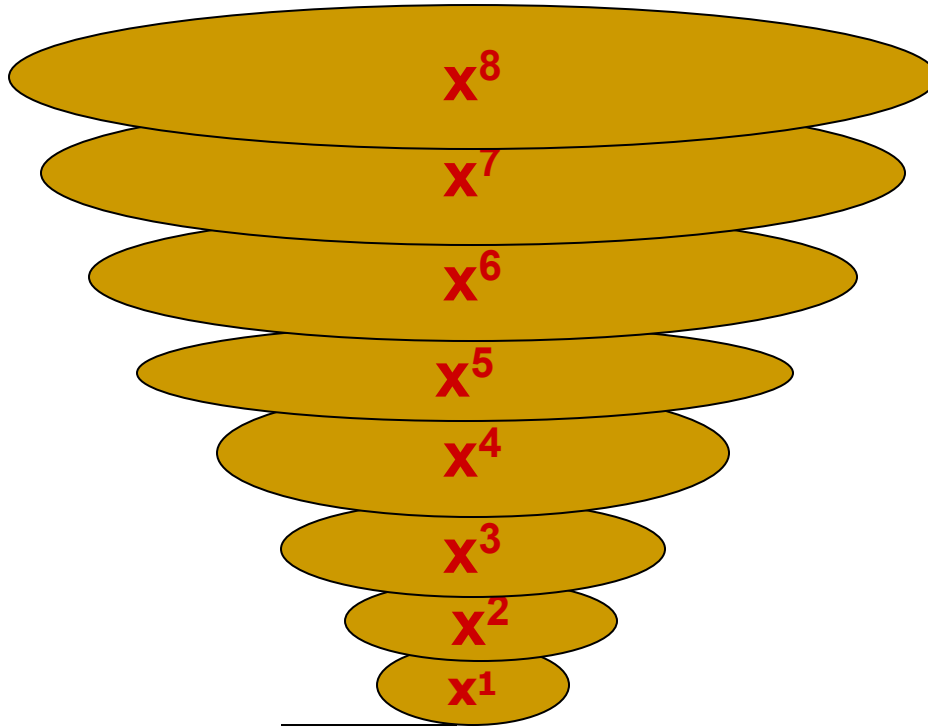
What happens at each level?



x^2 - Sides form

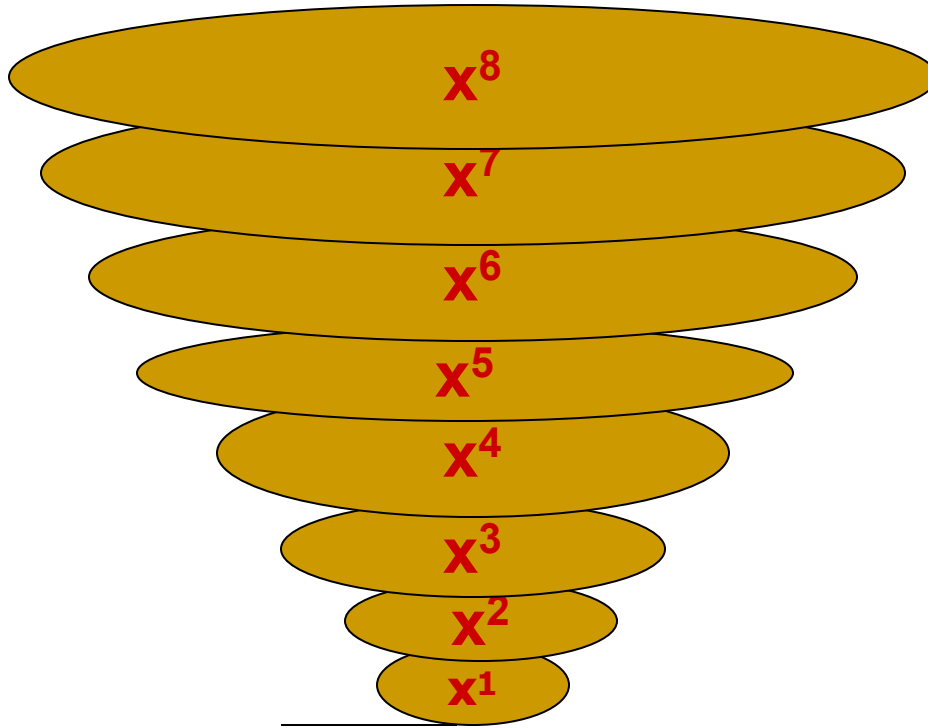
x^1 - Problem emerges

What happens at each level?



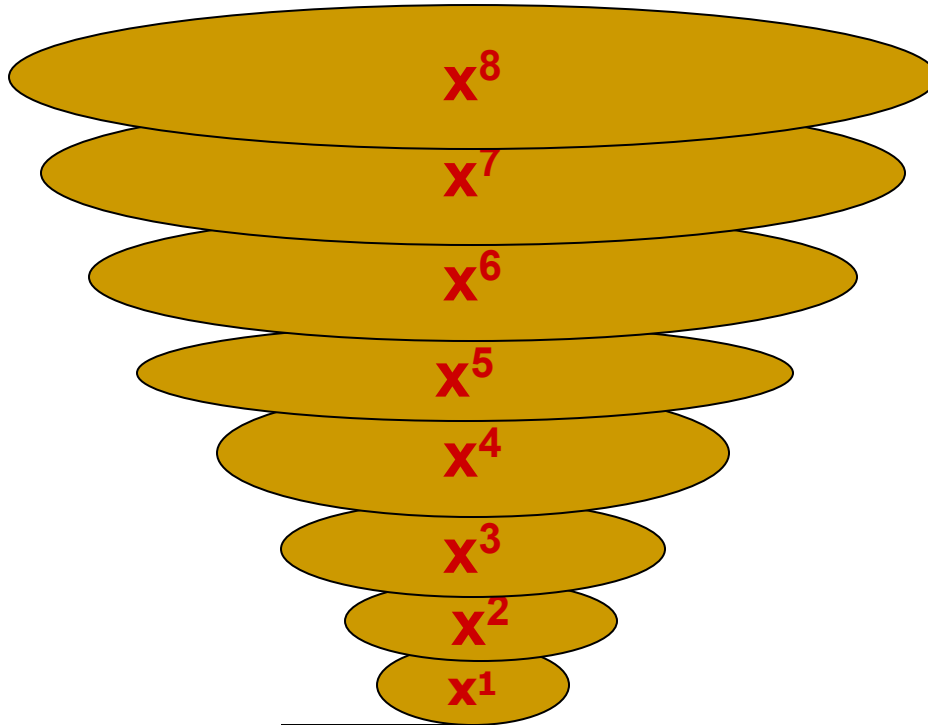
x^3 - Positions harden
 x^2 - Sides form
 x^1 - Problem emerges

What happens at each level?



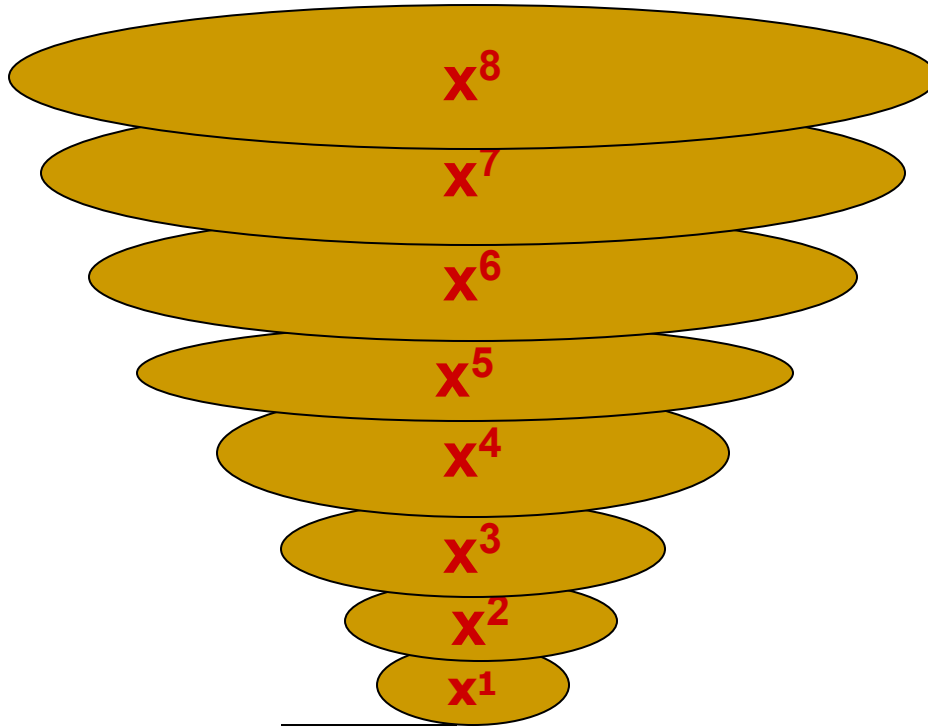
- x^4 - Communication stops**
- x^3 - Positions harden**
- x^2 - Sides form**
- x^1 - Problem emerges**

What happens at each level?



- x^5 - Resources are committed**
- x^4 - Communication stops**
- x^3 - Positions harden**
- x^2 - Sides form**
- x^1 - Problem emerges**

What happens at each level?



x^6 - Conflict spills outside

**x^5 - Resources are
committed**

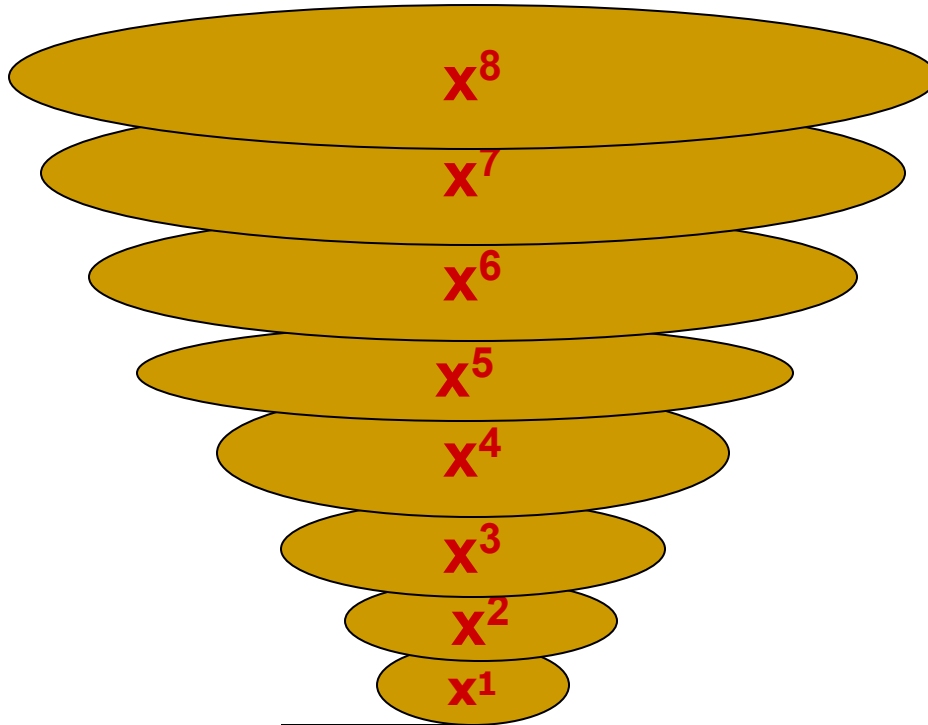
x^4 - Communication stops

x^3 - Positions harden

x^2 - Sides form

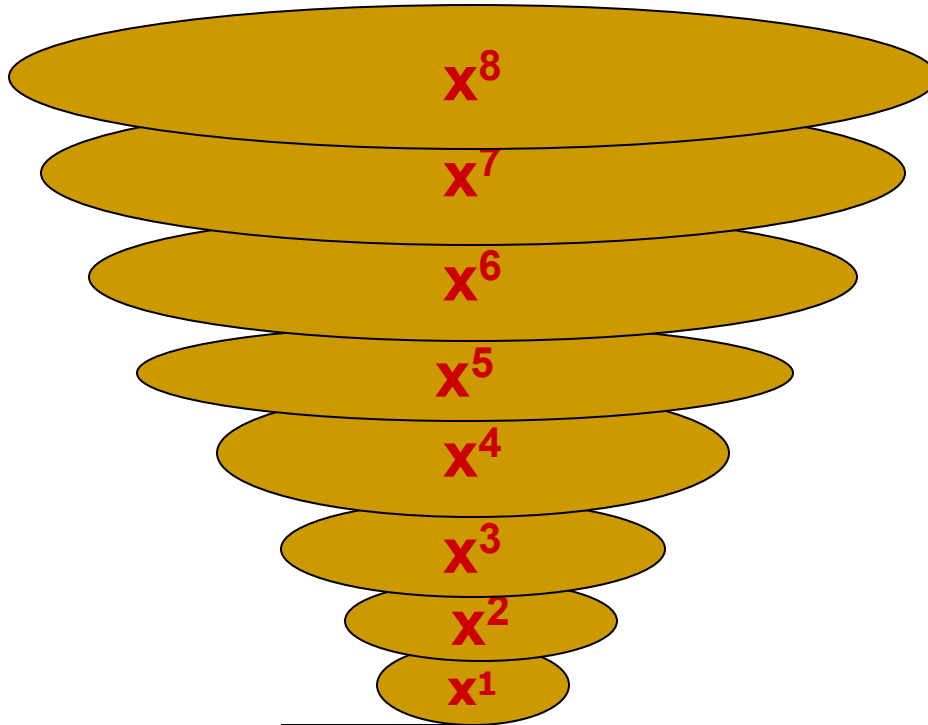
x^1 - Problem emerges

What happens at each level?



- x^7 - Perceptions of reality become distorted
- x^6 - Conflict spills outside
- x^5 - Resources are committed
- x^4 - Communication stops
- x^3 - Positions harden
- x^2 - Sides form
- x^1 - Problem emerges

What happens at each level?



**x^8 - Sense of crisis
emerges**

**x^7 - Perceptions of reality
become distorted**

x^6 - Conflict spills outside

**x^5 - Resources are
committed**

x^4 - Communication stops

x^3 - Positions harden

x^2 - Sides form

x^1 - Problem emerges

Recognize the level of anxiety

- Solutions that work at a lower level will NOT work on a higher level. In fact, they can even work **AGAINST** us.
 - As we move up the spiral, our interaction itself becomes the primary issue.
 - Once we reach level 7, it is almost impossible to go back down the spiral.
-

So what can we do?

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- **Ground Rules:** Make explicit what to do, and not do, when in conflict.



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 - **Remember your ABCs:** Always Be Clear about what the issue actually is.
 - **Create Allies:** Tackle the problem, not the other person, and do it together.
 - **Be aware of your own responses to the conflict and don't be overcome by them.**
-

Tapping into our Anglican DNA

We can unapologetically be who we are AND dare to be in relationship with all who wish be in relationship with us, presenting to the world “a still more excellent way” (1 Cor 12:31).

