Holacratic Community Organization: Anabaptist Edition

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1 Introduction: Aligning with Our Anabaptist Roots for a Sustainable Future

In tracing our faith back to its origins, we find in Anabaptism a devotion to the teachings of Jesus and an effort to emulate the early disciples in our lives and communities. This commitment sets us apart from many branches of Christianity, which have evolved into centralized, hierarchical structures.

We hold steadfast to the belief that the heart of Christianity lies not in earthly power or human constructs, but in the humble, loving, and community-focused teachings of Jesus Christ. It's a vision embodied in the early church, where members "had everything in common" (Acts 2:44), served one another humbly (John 13:14-15), and where leadership was shared among many, not held by a few (Acts 14:23).

In stark contrast, centralized ecclesiastical structures, such as that of the Catholic or Orthodox Church, often reflect the hierarchical norms of the Roman Empire rather than the practices of Jesus and his earliest followers. Much like infant baptism, these structures represent later additions to Christian practice that may stray from the spirit of Jesus' teachings.

Our Anabaptist tradition offers a different vision, one that honors the inherent worth of each individual and the collective wisdom of the community. Much like Jesus who "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28), we seek a leadership that serves and empowers, rather than dictating from the top down.

In our pursuit to strengthen our communities and enhance our cooperation, we look to models that reflect the spirit of Christ's teachings and align with our historical roots. It's important to remember that all wisdom and good practices come from God (James 1:17). Hence, it's not surprising to find helpful insights in contemporary organizational models such as Holacracy, which emphasize decentralization, role clarity, transparent decision-making, and dynamic evolution.

By reflecting on these principles and integrating them into our community structures where appropriate, we can continue to deepen our commitment to live as Jesus taught, fostering vibrant, resilient, and Christ-centered Anabaptist communities.

2 Problems or Tensions as Opportunities

In our Anabaptist community, we approach problems or tensions with a perspective that reflects our spiritual and communal values, reminiscent of the approach Holacracy takes. However, rather than viewing tensions as problems to be overcome, we consider them opportunities for growth and improvement, mirroring the Apostle Paul's words, "We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." (Romans 5:3-4)

A tension, in this context, is recognized as a perceived gap between our present state and a potential future – the difference between 'what is' and 'what could be'. This understanding resonates with the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:13-14, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

For instance, a community member feeling a tension about unclear community chores rotation isn't identifying a 'problem' to be 'fixed'. Instead, they're acknowledging an opportunity for growth and betterment. Our objective isn't to eradicate the tension but to harness it as a catalyst for positive change that draws our community closer to God's will and purpose. This aligns with James 1:2-4, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

In this manner, acknowledging and addressing tensions becomes a primary driver of community evolution, guaranteeing our community

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*(https://1being.org https://lyis.ca https://distributist.org)

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sense of unity and purpose.

Through Stewardship Meetings, every member is empowered to influence the structure and processes of our community, fostering ownership, clarity, and alignment with our shared calling.

7 Service Meetings

In our Anabaptist community, we recognize the importance of regular and effective communication, just as the early Christian communities did (Acts 2:42). Similar to the Service Meetings of Holacracy, we hold gatherings to review ongoing operations, track progress, and swiftly address any hurdles that might arise. This practice echoes the wisdom of Proverbs 15:22, "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed."

During these meetings, community members share updates on their responsibilities and discuss 'tensions' - the gaps between our present circumstances and our potential future, moving us towards a more harmonious and productive state. This aligns with the counsel of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:25-27, "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body... and do not give the devil a foothold."

This systematic approach keeps everyone informed and engaged, enabling us to synchronize our efforts, swiftly resolve issues, and maintain focus on our tasks. These gatherings offer a space for swift problem-solving and collaborative decision-making, ensuring our community operates smoothly and effectively.

Our Anabaptist gatherings are not just about swift action and clear communication; they also foster sustained momentum. They reflect the values in Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

By engaging in these practices, we are able to infuse our community's operations with efficiency, responsiveness, and resilience, thus strengthening our unity and faith.

7.1 An Example of a Service Meeting:

The meeting begins with a 'check-in round', a space for each member to share their thoughts and feelings as they arrive at the meeting, as encouraged in Ephesians 4:25, "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body." This helps clear the mind and heart, allowing everyone to be fully present.

Next is the 'metrics review', where critical numbers reflecting the health of our various ministries are shared, giving everyone an understanding of our community's current status. As Proverbs 27:23 advises us, "Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds."

Then we move to the 'service updates' segment. Here, brothers and sisters succinctly report on their assigned services - just the facts, not lengthy stories. For example, "Food Pantry operation - ongoing, need additional volunteers for next week."

Following updates, the assembly enters the 'triage' stage, which is the core of the Service Meeting. Here, anyone can raise a tension they've sensed in their role, with the aim of turning it into constructive action. Suppose a brother or sister managing our outreach programs brings up a tension: "We've been struggling to respond to all the inquiries from community members in need."

The facilitator, ensuring the meeting's structure and flow, would ask, "What do you need?" The brother or sister might respond, "We need more volunteers to help manage the outreach inquiries." The assembly can then discuss potential solutions, such as reassigning some roles or calling for more volunteer involvement.

Finally, the meeting concludes with a 'closing round' where each member can share reflections or words of appreciation about the meeting, in line with 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." This practice reinforces our fellowship and unity, and concludes the meeting on a positive note.

With these Service Meetings, we're not just talking about service; we're coordinating the service, in real-time, ensuring our community remains responsive and united.

8 Conclusion

In merging the wisdom of our Anabaptist heritage with Holacracy's effective methods, we seek to embody the biblical call to be both "in the world" and "not of the world." As we steward our resources, shape our roles, and guide our circles, we remain steadfast in our faith, encouraging each member to cultivate their God-given talents for the service of our community and the wider world. In this shared journey of faith, may we continue to grow together, embracing change with open hearts, and always remaining rooted in the love of Christ.

is continually learning, adapting, and growing in faith and unity, as encouraged by Ephesians 4:15-16, "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

3 Dynamic Steering

Informed by the Anabaptist commitment to community decision-making and faith in God's guidance amidst uncertainty (Proverbs 3:5-6), we engage in a unique approach reminiscent of Dynamic Steering within Holacracy.

Our decision-making deviates from traditional hierarchical mandates or consensus-based models. Rather than absolute certainty or unanimous agreement, we make decisions grounded in faith, akin to the parable of the mustard seed—small seeds can give rise to great growth (Matthew 13:31-32).

In this context, being "faithful" means maintaining alignment with our faith's guiding principles in our organization and decision-making. We question, "Is this step loyal to Jesus's principles and promising enough to warrant an attempt?" In line with Apostle Paul's exhortation to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12), we encourage taking steps that align with our faith and show promise for the community.

Consider an instance like introducing a new tree planting approach. We'd ask, "Does this approach align with our faith and hold enough promise to merit a trial?" Affirmative answers allow us to proceed, fostering swift learning, adaptability, resilience, and a culture of continuous improvement.

Embodying Paul's words in Romans 12:2, we strive for transformative thinking over conformity. By marrying our Anabaptist traditions and Holacracy's adaptive approaches, we foster a vibrant, adaptive community actively participating in shaping our shared lives for mutual edification.

4 Circles of Service in Our Anabaptist Community:

Our Anabaptist community is organized into what we call "service circles", each devoted to a distinct purpose and mission. Much like the early Christian communities that demonstrated their commitment to common life and mutual support (Acts 2:44-45), our circles commit themselves to laboring for the Kingdom of God.

A central "Anchor Circle" forms the heart of our organization, comprising our bishop, pastors, and deacons, akin to the Council of Jerusalem where early church leaders gathered to deliberate on critical matters (Acts 15:6). This circle serves as a guide, providing spiritual leadership and ensuring all parts of our community work in harmony towards God's glory.

Various service circles encompass the remainder of our organization. For example, an "Outreach Circle" might be focused on community engagement and evangelism. These circles define their roles and tasks based on their specific needs and the skills of their members. With roles such as a "Community Event Organizer" or "Visitor Welcoming Steward", each operating with autonomy and decision-making authority, our community actively lives out the principle from Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men."

In our congregation, circles should ideally be small enough to foster intimate fellowship and effective coordination – embodying the model Jesus provided with His twelve disciples (Mark 3:14-15). Yet they should also be inclusive, following the guideline from Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them," demonstrating that even small gatherings can embody meaningful service and fellowship in Christ.

Each circle, consisting of church members or possibly including volunteers from outside our immediate community, can adapt to the changing needs of our mission. Should any member sense a need for a new service group or a change within an existing one, such observations are welcomed for discussion and prayerful contemplation during our communal gatherings. As stated by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:15-16, we aim to grow and mature in every way into Christ, with each part of our body working correctly to build itself up in love.

By maintaining a dynamic, fluid, and responsive community structure, we honor the Biblical principle of the many parts making up one body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Our organization aims to mirror this divine design of diversity, interdependence, and unity. Embracing the benefits of both our Anabaptist heritage and the example of Holacracy, we aim to amplify our community's capacity to serve God and each other more effectively.

5 Roles Guided by the Spirit Instead of Rigid Duties

In the dynamic world of our community, inspired by the example of Holacracy, traditional rigid duties give way to flexible and adaptable roles. Drawing on the wisdom in Romans 12:6-8, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us... If it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully," we understand that each member may fulfill various roles at different times, often across different circles, in accordance with their gifts, interests, and the evolving needs of our community.

Roles are continually discerned and defined through the collective wisdom of the community in Stewardship Meetings, ensuring that they reflect the work that truly needs to be done. This approach not only optimizes the flow of tasks but also harnesses the full potential of our community, promoting satisfaction, engagement, and spiritual growth. Embrace the power of role-based service in our community, and walk together towards a future of adaptability, resilience, and spiritual deepening.

6 Stewardship Meetings

In our regular Stewardship Meetings, we live out the principles of stewardship, inspired by 1 Peter 4:10, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." Drawing on practices akin to the Governance Meetings in Holacracy, we collectively manage and adapt the roles within our community circles.

During these meetings, we focus on our commitment as stewards, refining roles to align with the evolving needs of our community and the gifts of our members. This process, a reflection of the Apostolic practice of making decisions as a community (Acts 15:6), ensures that everyone's gifts are fully utilized and recognized.

Our Stewardship Meetings encourage the continual definition and refinement of roles, promoting a vibrant, responsive environment where each member's service can best align with our shared mission. As in the early Christian communities (Acts 4:32), we strive to embody unity, mutual support, and the responsible stewardship of our diverse gifts.

6.1 An Example of a Stewardship Meeting

The meeting begins with a 'check-in round', in line with our tradition of fellowship and sharing. Each member shares their thoughts and feelings coming into the meeting, thus enabling everyone to arrive fully present. As 1 Corinthians 12:25-26 urges us, "so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

Next is the 'logistical concerns' phase. Here, any practical issues, such as scheduling or reviewing the notes from the last meeting, are quickly addressed.

Then we transition to the 'agenda building' stage. Each member has the opportunity to add governance items - sensed gaps about the community's structure or processes that they believe need to be addressed. These items are rapidly listed without discussion, focusing only on naming the tensions. For example, "Overlap in service roles" or "Need for clearer communication channels."

We then embark on the main part of the meeting, the 'integrative discernment process.' Each agenda item is processed one at a time, with the shared goal of reaching an outcome that resolves the tension.

Take for example the "Overlap in service roles" tension. The brother or sister who raised the issue would describe the gap and propose a change, like defining more distinct responsibilities for each service role. Then, each member is invited to ask clarifying questions, as urged in Proverbs 18:13, "To answer before listening—that is folly and shame."

Next comes the 'reaction round', where everyone offers their immediate response to the proposal. One might say, "This will help me know who to approach for specific service needs."

The proposer then has an opportunity to 'amend and clarify' their proposal based on the reactions. They might refine the role responsibilities further based on the feedback.

The facilitator then calls for 'objections'. An objection is not just disagreement, but a reasoned explanation of why a proposal might not serve our community's purpose or unity. If there are no objections, the proposal is 'adopted'. If there are, each one is processed - the group works together, in the spirit of Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them," to address and integrate valid objections, revising the proposal as needed.

Finally, the meeting ends with a 'closing round', an opportunity to reflect on the process and close in prayer, leaving everyone with a