



Faith, Values, and the Identity of Your Organization

April 29, 2010



Profound Appreciation

**Friends Foundation for the Aging
Greencroft Communities
Rockhill Mennonite Community
Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community**

Ten Participant CEOs

Supportive Board

Competent Staff/Team

If we do not have a religiously grounded, theologically articulated understanding of who we are and what we are, we will lose our way in this complex context. At the same time, if we specify our identity but we cannot meet the standards of a rational, secular, pluralistic world, then our identity will not be effective.

Fr. J. Bryan Hehir, Th.D., "Identity and Institution,"
Health Progress, May-June, 2008



Research Purpose

To explore how executives of Mennonite/Anabaptist nonprofit health and human service organizations view their role and work in shaping organizational identity

Identity: Is it really important?



The two Quakers
or Mennonites



Vision

To be a community of vibrant Anabaptist health and human service ministries committed to God's work of healing and hope in Jesus Christ.



Mission

MHS Alliance strengthens and extends Anabaptist health and human service ministries in faithfully and effectively fulfilling their missions.



Values

Spirituality and Prayer

Community, Mutuality and Service

Human Dignity and Compassion for All People

Stewardship of God's gifts

Justice

Peace and Reconciliation

Ethical Rigor

Grace and Hospitality

Research Question

How do you as CEO understand your role and work as it relates to shaping the faith identity of the organization you serve?

Qualitative Research

- ◆ Case study—story centered
- ◆ Phenomenological
- ◆ Collaborative
- ◆ Interviews and focus groups

Purposive Sample: 10 CEOs

- ◆ Various service types
- ◆ Small and large organizations
- ◆ Various structures of affiliation
- ◆ Broad range of experience as CEOs

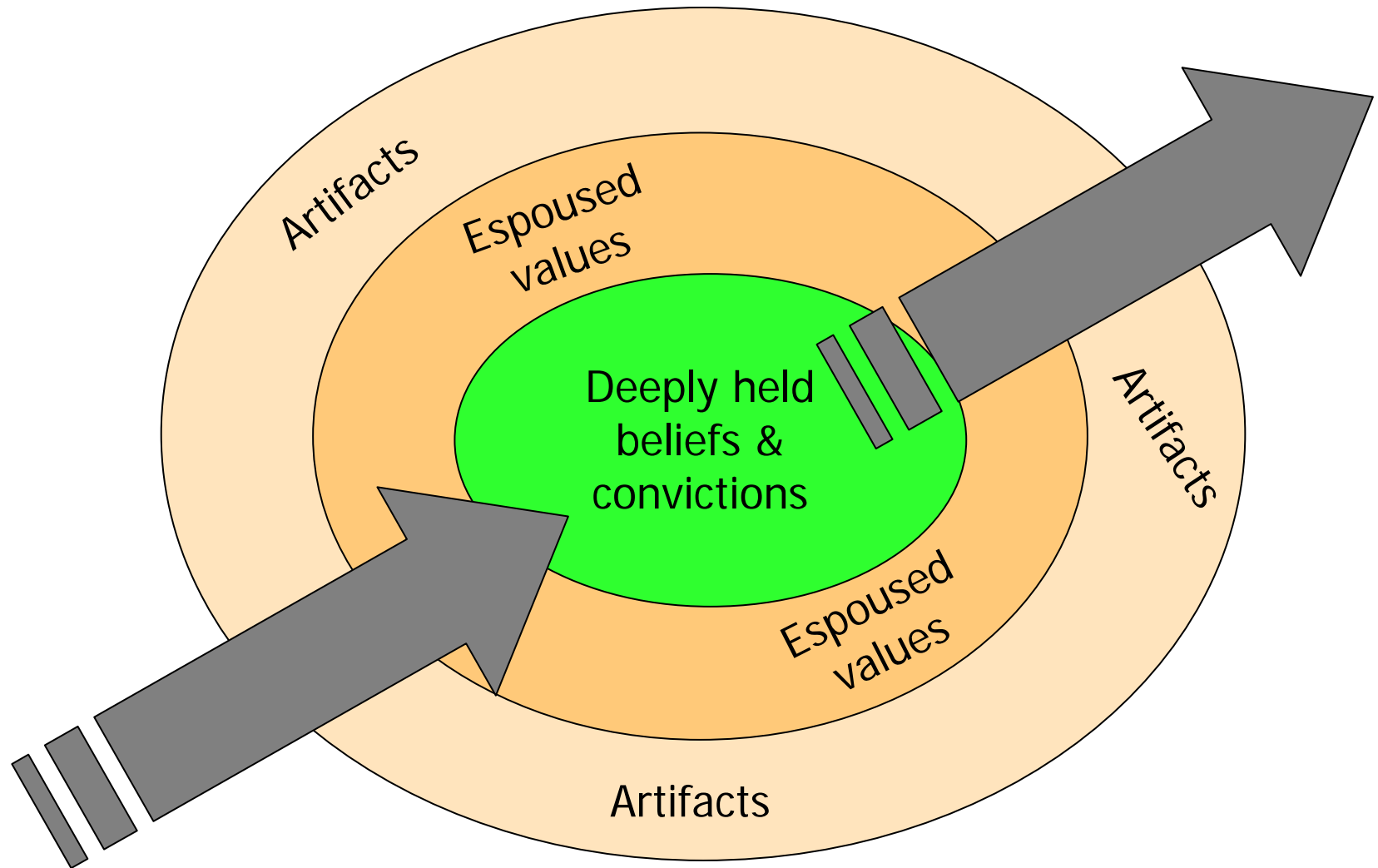
Frames of Reference

Leadership Theory

- ◆ Transformational leadership
- ◆ Moral agency
- ◆ Executive role theory
- ◆ Sense-making

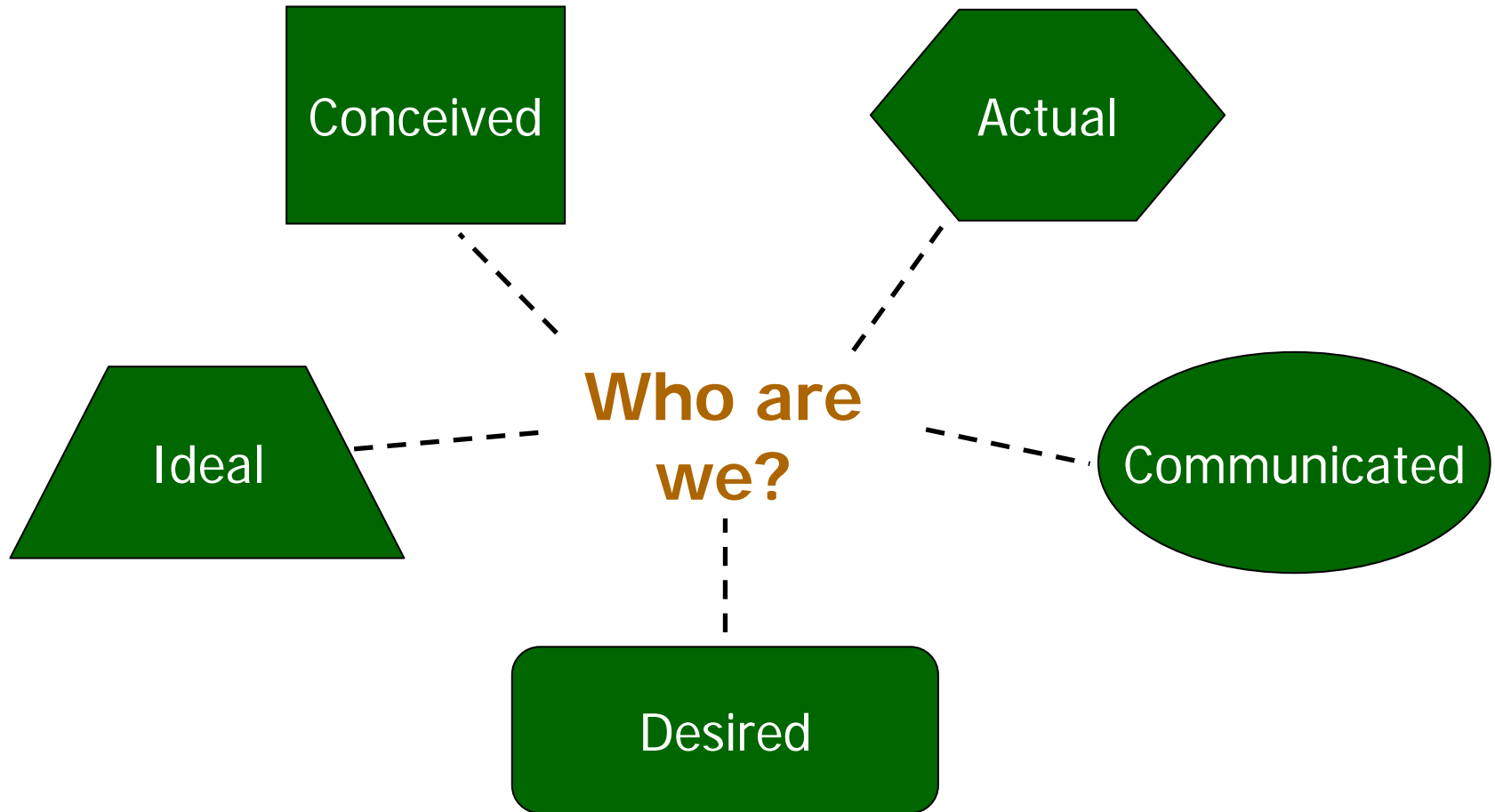
Organizational Culture & Identity

Organizational Culture



Adapted: Edgar Schein, 2004

Types of Organizational Identity



Balmer and Greyser (2003)

Organizational Identity

**“Fundamental hallmarks
of the organization as
experienced or perceived
by constituents”**

R. Stiffney

Mennonite/Anabaptist Perspectives on Institutions

Findings

- ◆ Executive as Person
- ◆ Executive and Context
- ◆ Executive and Sense-making
- ◆ Promising Practices

Executive as Person

- ◆ Shared Christian faith
- ◆ A Mennonite/Anabaptist faith further defines for some
- ◆ Integrity is critical to work at identity
- ◆ Self-awareness, humility, and vulnerability inform integrity
- ◆ Various disciplines shape faith

Executive and Context

- ◆ Convergence of calls
- ◆ Self as embodiment of mission/values (incarnate core identity)
- ◆ Commitment to both effectiveness/faithfulness
- ◆ Great tension to successfully integrate both
- ◆ Many variables beyond control of CEO

Executive and Sense-making

- ◆ Tension: Distinctiveness/Legitimacy
- ◆ Pluralistic markets/diverse workforces
- ◆ CEOs facilitate sense-making/meaning
- ◆ It is a tool for shaping identity

Pathways for Sense-making

- ◆ Distinctiveness as legacy (relic)
- ◆ Distinctiveness as accent (frosting)
- ◆ Distinctiveness as focus for renewal (leaven)

Most Critical Variables

- ◆ The attitude or stance of the board
- ◆ The CEO's degree of understanding and prizing of Mennonite/Anabaptist faith and convictions

Promising Practices for Shaping Faith Identity

- ◆ Powerful personal modeling
- ◆ Employee orientation that intentionally “indoctrinates”
- ◆ Use of metaphors that communicate faith and values
- ◆ Rituals that express core convictions
- ◆ Leadership development that is based on faith/values

What's needed

Resources for Boards

1. To work on organizational identity in the board room
2. To shape expectations of candidates during executive transitions
3. To sharpen executive appraisal to deal with issues of identity formation

Resources for CEOs

1. To equip CEOs to interpret Mennonite /Anabaptist story and perspective
2. To support leadership formation—senior staff
3. To provide guidelines for senior staff recruitment/selection (legal review needed)
4. To support new covenant-making with the community of faith



Participant Stories

◆ John Hendrickson

Frederick Mennonite Retirement Community

◆ Chris Book

Paxton Ministries

◆ Ron Sawatsky

Rockhill Mennonite Community

Table Group Assignment

- ◆ What elements of this analysis resonate with your experience?
- ◆ How would you enrich the list of resources needed?
- ◆ What possibilities do you see for advancing elements of this on a collaborative basis?

Thank-you again:

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**It is an honor to
serve with you!**

