

#2—Overly Assertive Leadership Group Confrontations (renounced). There was an era in the ICOC history in which it became prevalent in some regions for a leader to receive a “Discipleship Group correction” led by a higher-up leader for some reason—sin, performance, or lack of compliance. These styles of discipleship groups were practiced less and less over time but were not fully eradicated. Someone would show up to a meeting in which everyone, except the subject, was fed unfavorable information, possibly inaccurate or with incomplete perspectives, against the unsuspecting subject. Often the charge was “pride” and “pridefulness.” It was said, “You can always get someone on pride.” This approach puts someone in a no-win situation because it makes it impossible to defend oneself without being labeled “defensive.” The outcome of this ramped up approach, in the mind of the consultants, leans towards injustice.

One of the leaders who occasionally used this approach conceded that he would be frustrated when someone on staff seemed unresponsive. His response was “the Hail Mary pass” of stepping up the confrontation within a group setting, “which, looking back was less healthy and not at all helpful.” The group confrontation was a painful factor behind some of the critiques discovered within the OHA.

There are many problems with this tactic, which feels like “ganging up,” that we renounce, even for people struggling with pride, egotism, arrogance or hubris. While strong approaches may appear effective at times, they engender a culture of silent reservation, fear, unhealthy pacts, and contain a risk of emotional and psychological harm. During our interviews and following our teaching, no one has defended the heavy-handed practices of group confrontation.

We do support small group confrontations when they follow a sequence of impartial investigation, involve impartial third parties, the vetting of capable witnesses, and allow for advocacy and defense of the accused as well as prior transparency about the nature of such a meeting. Some of the previously hurt parties received apologies for these meetings prior to our arrival. The practitioners of the heavy “old school” approach agreed with our assessment.

#3—Weak Collaboration Between Ministry Staff and other Members (improving). This particular concern was not unique to the Westside, or the Coastal Region or Los Angeles but seemed more acute just prior to the disturbance. The challenge of intra-congregational collaboration relates to historical and cultural patterns that are more particular to aging churches, and seems to be connected to a generational component between aging leaders, younger leaders as well as non-staff members. Sometimes it shows up as tension between clergy and laity, or staff and non-staff, or ministers and business professionals.

Recognition is the first sign of progress. In October of 2013, four LAICC members—Bruce Williams and three from the CLA Region (Steve Morici, Catherine Shump, Tim Priestley)—attended a minister/business professional summit directly aimed at improving this dynamic. There is an obvious heightened awareness of this dynamic, and over the recent months there have been various processes employed in the Westside such as interviews, surveys, and transition teams and task forces that are helping members influence their self-determination.

#4—Reactivity and Non-Reflective Behaviors (improved, still an issue in early June). The levels of anxiety and discouragement had peaked just before the launch of the consultation. The first three concerns of weak agency, overly assertive leadership and insufficient collaboration draw attention to why the former leaders and members of the Westside were exasperated. However, the CLA leadership became targets of less than appropriate behavior. It was difficult to approach individuals about these apparent behaviors. Similar manners of conduct were widely reported to the consulting team, but the members who observed the interactions over the last sixteen months seemed fearful of addressing them. Some of the most reactive individuals had or still have prominent roles in the observing members’ lives and in the Westside.