

Inspiring	Accepting	Stagnant	Discouraging	Toxic
CHARACTERISTICS OF INSPIRING • Leaders give clear direction, but they aren't authoritarian; they value the input of every person. • Leaders cultivate an atmosphere of trust and respect. • People believe that what they contribute really matters – to themselves, to the church, and to the people they serve. They contribute with a compelling sense of purpose, a sense that they are involved in a cause much bigger than themselves. • These churches have high but realistic expectations. They set high goals, train people, give them the resources they need, stay connected throughout the process, and encourage them to succeed. • Creativity is rewarded, failures are viewed as stepping-stones of growth. In fact, failure is seen as an essential part of the process of innovation, not a fatal flaw. • There are few if any turf battles, so communication flows throughout the church. • The church invests significantly and systematically in creating and building a healthy culture. • Leaders regularly celebrate success throughout the church, and they even celebrate those who leave and find success elsewhere. • These churches are a magnet for job applicants. They have their pick of the best and brightest.	CHARACTERISTICS OF ACCEPTING • Overall atmosphere is positive, but there are a few topics that are taboo, or there are a few incompetent leaders who remain in their roles too long. These unresolved issues and problematic leaders are the bumps and potholes that create tension. In many cases, the difficulties remain isolated in particular areas of church. For the people in these areas, the environment may be quite negative, while the rest of the church thrives. • Generally, most people are supportive of each other's roles and goals. Communication is a strength, and people don't feel the need to defend their turf. • Some difficult decisions are avoided instead of addressed expeditiously. • Most people who are involved in these churches think they are the best ones they've ever experienced. They love the blend of clear goals and strong relationships, and they are highly motivated to do their best. • The senior leaders invest in developing people and the culture. If they were more assertive about taking care of problems in the culture, they could be even more successful. • These churches enjoy a strong reputation, so they attract a lot of applicants for roles within them. However, new volunteers who are placed under incompetent ministry leaders are deeply disappointed.	CHARACTERISTICS OF STAGNANT • Those in leadership roles see others as production units, not people. They are valuable when—and only when—they produce. All praise is based on performance, very little if any on character. • Congregation members tolerate their leaders, but they don't trust or respect them. They still contribute, but only because they believe in things continuing. • Without trust, respect, and loyalty, people feel compelled to defend their turf, hang on to power, and limit communication. In this atmosphere, relatively small problems quickly escalate. • Complaining becomes a pastime. Things aren't quite bad enough to prompt open rebellion, but a few disgruntled people are thinking about it! • Those in leadership aren't happy with the lack of enthusiasm and declining commitment, so they treat others as if they were wayward teenagers. They try anything to control them: anger, pleading, threats, rewards, ignoring them, micromanaging them . . . but nothing works. • With only a few exceptions, people become clock-watchers. They are waiting for things to change (most often the minister to move on). The whole church lives in a status quo of lethargy. • To correct the problem, the leaders may send people to seminars or involve consultants, but the top people aren't willing to take responsibility and make significant changes. It's always somebody else's fault. • These churches usually attract people with low expectations and low motivation, but they may attract a few who believe their personal mission is to bring life to the church. These individuals usually give up after a few months.	CHARACTERISTICS OF DISCOURAGING • It's all about the people in leadership: their position and preferences often fuelled by their insecurities and inadequacies, or simply lack of competence to lead well with others. • People spend as much time trying to survive the power struggles, protecting themselves from more hurt, and analysing the leader's pathology as they spend doing the work of the ministry. • As the benchmarks of faithfulness and fruitfulness decline, people become more authoritarian and threatening. They demand compliance and loyalty, and they defy anyone who disagrees with them or even utters another opinion. • Leaders try to remedy the problem, but with the wrong analysis and the wrong solutions. They seldom look in the mirror to find a culprit. Instead, the blame is always put on 'incompetent' or 'unmotivated' people. Leaders may ask people to go to seminars and workshops, and they may even involve consultants from time to time, but they seldom listen to any outside input. • When leaders communicate a new vision, nobody cares. They've heard it before, and they don't trust that anything will be different this time.	CHARACTERISTICS OF TOXIC • Leaders create a 'closed system', so any advice and creative ideas from the outside are suspect from the start. These systems tend to breed bad ideas, bad behaviours, and bad values into a church over and over again. • Individual rights and the dignity of volunteers are surrendered to the powerful elite. People are expected to do as they are told—nothing less and nothing else. The leaders believe they 'own' every aspect of church life. They have exceptionally high expectations of volunteers, but they invest in them little or give them no autonomy to make decisions. • Fear becomes the dominating motivational factor, and those who choose to stay meekly comply – most of the time. Many, though, are too afraid to leave. They've noticed that when people even think about leaving, they're severely criticised for being "disloyal." • Unhealthy conflict is the accepted sport, and open warfare becomes normal. Suspicion and resentment poison lines of communication, so even the simplest directive becomes a weapon. • Leaders delegate responsibility but fail to give authority to people to fulfil their roles. • Creativity and risk-taking have long vanished, and in fact, these traits threaten the status of the leaders as the only ones who know anything. In this environment, pathology is rewarded and health is punished. • Ethical, financial, or sexual lapses may occur, but church members are expected to turn a blind eye. The leaders may constantly look over their shoulders to see if they've been caught.
Why have you graded your church as you have?		ASSESSING A CHURCH'S CULTURE Adapted from Cracking Your Church's Culture Code, Samuel Chand © CPAS Rate each of the following on a scale of 0 (not in the least) to 10 (all the time) the degree to which your church experiences these things: ___ Unrealistic demands ___ Blaming others ___ Power struggles ___ Dishonesty ___ An atmosphere of fear ___ Using people instead of valuing them ___ Unclear values ___ Lack of authenticity		