The Flourishing Culture Podcast Series
"Threefold Tribe"
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Pam Marmon

Female: Today's podcast is brought to you by BCWI's 360 Leadership Assessment.

Male: Welcome to the Flourishing Culture Podcast, where you'll learn how to build a flourishing workplace culture that drives the ministry impact of your organization, your church, or your company, brought to you by the Best Christian Workplaces Institute. Now here's your host, BCWI president, Al Lopus.

Al Lopus: Hello, and thanks for joining us. Are you facing a challenge you don't know how to tackle, a change that seems beyond you? Do you feel things have stalled, and you don't know quite what to do next? What do you think might be keeping your church, your organization, or your company from growing the health of your culture and your overall impact in the lives of others?

Well, my guest today has some answers you can use to create some positive results *now*. Her name is Pam Marmon, and she is the founder of Threefold Tribe, an online education and change-management consulting firm whose mission will cause you to lean forward and say, "Tell me more." I've known Pam for a while and have personally come to believe those of you listening will be hearing a lot from her in the future because of her remarkable talent.

Pam, welcome to the Flourishing Culture Podcast.

Pam Marmon: Thank you, Al. Such kind words! I appreciate it. It's a pleasure to be here.

Al: Well, first off, Pam, tell us about Threefold Tribe and your ambitious 12-word mission statement.

Pam: Yes, well, the mission statement of Threefold Tribe is, "Equipping the church to be the highest-functioning organization in the world." After working with for-profit clients, I just couldn't think of

one reason why the church *wouldn't* be the highest-functioning organization in the world. So I've made it my mission to provide church leaders with resources to optimize their impact and pursue the Great Commission.

Al: Your mission and ours are very similar. Ours is Christian workplaces should set the standard as the best, most effective places to work in the world. Yours is very close to that. So we're linked in that regard. Your topic today on the podcast is highly practical. It's an equipping strategy any church or organization, for that matter, could benefit from. We're going to talk about four steps to achieve the ministry growth for which you are praying. I think all of us are praying for it. "Lord, how do we grow?"

Before you reveal those four steps, Pam, let's step back. Tell us a little bit about your background, which I find fascinating. What led to your current role?

Pam: So I have been told I have an accent. I can't hear it personally, but perhaps our listeners have been able to pick up on it. I was born and raised in the former-Communist Eastern European country of Bulgaria. When I was 12 years old, my family moved to America. We settled in Chicago. At the time, I didn't speak English. I didn't understand the culture. As a Christ follower, I certainly didn't know why God brought *me* to America.

I went on to get my undergraduate degree in business from Calvin College and my MBA from Seattle Pacific University. Then after that, I spent over a decade building a career in the marketplace as an organizational effectiveness consultant. No, it's not about being organized (I get asked that often), although it is helpful.

I work with executive leaders of Fortune companies to help them implement organizational change and culture transformations. I'm extremely blessed that my work restores brokenness in the marketplace, and it brings organizational health.

Now about the inception of Threefold Tribe, I remember this very clearly because it was a Sunday morning during our church worship time when the Lord whispered to me, "It's time to build my church." Now to be honest, that didn't really come to me as a complete surprise. I had been volunteering at church since my youth days, but like most people, I didn't go to seminary. So I started to examine, "What skill sets do *I* have to build the church? What could *I* offer that would make a difference?"

At the time, I was teaching at Wheaton College, and I was consulting with for-profit clients. So I took what I knew, which was teaching and consulting, and I set out to create resources specifically designed for church leaders to equip them and to empower them to fulfill the Christian mission. I'd like to think I have a big dream that the church will be the highest-functioning organization in the world.

I think it's a dream God birthed in me, and I also believe it's a dream God birthed in others. He has called us collectively to pursue that. I think it's a dream worthy of being pursued for the Great Commission. So that is how my love for the church and my passion for healthy organizations brought me to my current role as a guide to pastors, ministry leaders, and church volunteers who themselves are on a daily basis making sacrificial givings to build the church.

Al: Well, I have to say, Pam, you have a great background. Calvin, Seattle Pacific University, Wheaton College…those are well-known organizations in the Christian world. It's just really exciting to listen to you talk about the dream God has birthed in you and how you're actually beginning to implement that in the church.

As you got into your role and responsibilities, what were some of the challenges facing churches that motivated you to come up with your four steps to achieve the ministry growth you're praying for? What were some of the pain points churches were feeling whose culture and ministries were not growing?

Pam: Well, every church is unique. Certain challenges were emerging on a consistent basis. What I heard from church leaders was that change is hard, and it's constant. I heard people transitions are ongoing, that resources (no matter how large or how small the church) are limited, and that there is never enough time to get everything done. These are big organizational challenges for churches in all stages of growth. So let's unpack them one at a time.

Al: Well, I can't wait to learn about the four steps to achieve ministry growth. First, give us the list all four in order.

Pam: Absolutely! The prerequisite to achieving ministry growth is always prayer. God loves the church, and he grows the church. We pray for wisdom and guidance. From my experience, the first step is to *build change capacity into the church*. The second step is to *remove culture busters*. The third step is to *learn new skills*. The fourth step is to *tell time where to go*.

Al: Oh! We're going to tell time where to go. Yeah! Okay.

Pam: Yes, we will.

Al: Yeah! All right. Well, you and I were talking earlier about how the growth of a healthy culture has a lot to do with creating change and managing change. Often we find that an unhealthy culture, a toxic culture, really is resistant to change or growth. When we look at the first step (*build change capacity in your church*), how has your online training and development come into play as you sought to help leaders get their arms around this step?

Pam: As a transformational change leader, I noticed there was a gap in the resources available to my for-profit clients versus my non-profit clients. While most of us have access to books on the topic of change management, the language used in business resources did not properly translate into the church ecosystem.

So I set out to create an online course titled "Lead Change in Your Church" to share my insights of best practices in the field of change management. I needed the course to be comprehensive. It had to be all-inclusive and easy to absorb. I needed it to be time appropriate. I just couldn't imagine church leaders spending days in training sessions, so my course is about an hour and a half in length (plus a little bit for homework).

It had to be affordable, and it also had to be available globally so all church leaders have access to build change capability into their organization. The course is designed for anyone who is a church leader and who is leading change. It's peppered with biblical application, and I share how to right size the change management activities based on the type of changes the church is undergoing. The course comes with a self-guided workbook and an Excel toolkit with templates to help church leaders stay organized, on target, and on plan. I also teach this course live for church groups by request.

The reason the first step is to build change capacity into the church is I wanted to solve a problem church leaders felt burdened by. I actually had one pastor say to me change is the silent killer in the church. Wow! What a powerful statement. I just felt like that was something with which I could help. We create change because we have to adapt to our new environment, and we manage change so we don't become obsolete and irrelevant. I felt like this was a critical skill. Without the guide of someone with experience, it can feel overwhelming.

Al: Well, Pam, I'll have to say hold on. "Lead Change in Your Church" is a one-and-a-half-hour long online course, which you could read books about this, but it's really not related to the church so much. So any leader can learn about this, and they'll end up with a workbook and a toolkit. They'll be ready to go!

Pam: They will be ready to go. Absolutely! That was my goal, and I'm praying it blesses our church leaders.

Al: You know, I've been impressed with the new technology related to building online courses. I think we're going to see a lot more of these in the future. I'm really excited you're right in the middle of this and making it work. I've really enjoyed going to your website and seeing what you have to offer. That's the first step.

The second step. You're using a term I love called remove "culture busters." What are you talking about here with culture busters?

Pam: Yeah, so the second step has to do with staff and volunteers serving in the church. People transition in and out of ministries for many reasons. As a matter of fact, one of the biggest changes that often takes place in the church is people transitions. While some attrition is normal and it's healthy, high attrition can be a symptom of a serious problem.

We have to ask ourselves, "Is the culture of our church encouraging a higher level of unplanned people movement?" If the answer to that question is *yes*, then we have to ask why. Here are a few things to watch out for. The first one is…

1. *Strict rules about everything*. It communicates lack of trust. Some examples in that would be a strict attendance policy, a six-month promotion path, or strict time-off rules. Now don't get me wrong. Some rules are required to operate. It's when they become so strict and rigid that it doesn't allow people to flourish within the organization. When an organization feels the need to heavily control its staff, good people leave. Those who remain stop generating creative thinking.

2. *Unnecessary bureaucracy*. It leads to increased politics. As organizations grow, layers of leadership oversight emerge. That's normal. Now flat organizations intentionally manage unnecessary bureaucracy, which can lead to increase in politics. Our goal there is to minimize that as much as possible.

3. *Burdensome processes*. It just slows down the church, and it makes things harder to get done. Internal organization processes that are cumbersome, manual, and unnecessary slow down the church. They slow down your people. By automating activities and streamlining processes, churches can become more efficient.

Al: I trust you're enjoying our podcast today. We'll be right back after an important word for leaders.

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Al: All right. Now let's hear more from today's guest. I've done a lot of focus groups in churches, and I have found many people are saying, "It just takes so long to get something done in my church, in my organization." Here you're saying that's a culture buster. We would certainly agree with that. You

know, these strict rules, this bureaucracy that over time gets built in (probably for good reasons at the time) just completely wears itself out. I can see, yeah, remove culture busters. Tell us about the third one, *learn new skills.*

Pam: To address the resource challenge I mentioned earlier, it's important to continuously learn new skills and get creative with resources. Now I have to say I'm not an expert on finances, but I am a creative problem solver. I'm also obsessed with learning new skills. More resources do not guarantee solving all your church's problems. It might just mean you're solving more problems.

If we look at Daniel Pink's research on motivation, it tells us people are intrinsically motivated by autonomy, purpose, and mastery. When we master new skills, we expand our capabilities to deliver higher quality work. We may even feel better about ourselves. It takes resources (both human capital and financial) to make resources.

The key here is to cultivate a learning culture. Identify what skill sets your church needs in the future. Encourage and celebrate when staff and volunteers stretch beyond their comfort zone to acquire those new skills sets. Reinventing ourselves can really address some of the resources constraints churches face today.

Al: Becoming a learning culture is really critical. Having those opportunities available for your staff is also important. I love your quote about Daniel Pink's research. That very much falls in line with our view of life-giving work that when people do work and they are learning, that brings meaning to their job. That really gives them a sense of mastery and satisfaction.

You know, highlighting the importance of the takeaway value of the fourth step (*tell time where to go*), that's one that really got my attention to start with. Tell us what it means to tell time where to go, because I want to do that.

Pam: Absolutely! You may have heard of Dave Ramsey. He often says, "Tell your money where to go." Similarly, we need to tell our time where to go. This is where time management is a required capability for a healthy organization. I believe it starts with our relationship with time. If we continuously say there's never enough time to get things done, well, then it's very likely you're correct.

I challenge us to think differently about time. What if there *is* time to get everything done? Learning how to prioritize activities, tasks, and roles is all rooted in our ability to improve processes and the flow of our work. This part excites me because small adjustments can lead to big time saving opportunities over time, just like small changes can lead to a vastly different trajectory path of an organization.

A great way to start thinking about time management conversation with your staff is to bring your team together for a workshop. I mean, nothing complicated. It's just a meeting. Ask a few questions.

Some examples would be, "What is the most time-consuming task of your day? Do you understand how your work fits into the overall process of the team? What bottlenecks do we have in our processes? How can we creatively solve the bottlenecks and address productivity challenges? What metrics can we put in place to make progress?"

Discussions of this nature really empower staff and volunteers. I counsel leaders to outline a decision matrix and spell out who needs to make decisions that are strategic, operational, and tactical. It really brings clarity to the team. As leaders, we really need to be focused on helping our people understand how their role is adding value in the organization and how it relates to the overall mission of the organization.

This is where role clarity saves us time. Simpler, automated processes save us time. Integrated systems save us time. Borrow what works for other organizations, and adapt them to your church's operating model. There is time for everything that is important.

Al: The last item (*tell time where to go*), a lot of it's about operational excellence and just what it takes to be operationally excellent. I'll have to say that my experience is that operational excellence isn't on the top of the priority list for many organizations or churches. You're right; it needs to be. To talk about those bottlenecks, to have a decision matrix… I'm sure in your course you kind of outline what one of those looks like. That sounds like good advice.

You know, surely as we've looked at these four steps, I'll bet you have a favorite story involving a church that really got it and began to walk the talk of these four steps of ministry growth. Tell us a story.

Pam: Yes. Church leaders are receptive to these ministry growth steps. They are very smart people. They get it. I recently received a note from a pastor of a multi-campus church in the Midwest I work with. She had attended one of my workshops and said the following. I'm just going to quote.

"Our whole team has been impacted by the principles I brought back after attending your workshop. I immediately implemented a few of the practical tools I learned about, and we have seen positive results and collaboration among our team. As a result, we're engaging more effectively with volunteers and inviting them to take more ownership in our church.

The decision-making matrix you shared has turned things around for us. Several volunteers have stepped into roles with more responsibility, and the staff (including myself) has been able to delegate more effectively. The workshop came at a time when I really needed that one fresh idea to inspire me to lead to change. I am so thankful for the investment we made in attending your workshop. It was well worth it."

My heart melts. I am truly honored and blessed to have received that sort of feedback. Now the pastor of this church was facing several operational challenges, including roles, responsibilities, and process improvement and, thankfully, walked away inspired and equipped to implement changes and see positive results in this church.

Al: That's a great story. I'll bet you there has been positive improvement in the way that church runs, especially in that example.

Pam: Absolutely.

Al: Yeah! Pam, what do ministry leaders need to know, understand, and practice about change management, especially when it's the very thing they're praying about? Where does the prayer piece come in to change?

Pam: Prayer is our primary response to change. Even good changes can set our productivity back, decrease staff engagement, or increase resistance. All of that can lead to higher costs. When it comes to managing change, leaders play a key role in the outcome. Allow me to share a few highlights regarding the role of a leader during a transformation. I'm just going to list them, but these are definitely worth discussing.

1. *Managing the timing of changes to avoid change saturation*. A lot of organizations I work with are so ambitious. They want to see change happen, so they have saturated their organization. People just can't absorb incremental change. The role of a leader is to be able to align changes throughout the year or the upcoming year so it's staggered and it's not all at once.

2. *Communicate the purpose of change frequently*. The key word here is *frequently*. Leaders often think, "If I just say it one time, that's enough." What we know from research and from practical experience is people need to hear the vision often, and they need to hear it from the leader.

3. *Include team in decision-making regarding the change*. Now clearly not everybody is going to be included. What's important here is the leader is not leading without people following. By allowing people to be engaged, offer feedback, and be a part of that decision-making process, it helps people to transition faster, to get the vision, and to be on board.

4. *Engage staff and attendees as appropriate*. This question here for us as leaders is to identify, "To what degree does my staff need to be engaged? To what degree do all attendees of my church need to be engaged? What do I hope to accomplish through that engagement, and what's the most appropriate way to engage them?"

5. *Acknowledge people's reactions*. It's very normal for people not to be excited about every change (obviously). Allowing people the space to grieve the loss of whatever has changed is a wise thing for us as leaders to do and then also allowing them to celebrate the excitement of what's ahead.

6. *Allow people to process the change*. One thing I teach in the courses is called the *change curve*. It's a path we undergo as we transition from different stages of understanding the change. So allowing people to go through that entire process and not expecting them overnight to be excited, on board, and supportive of the change.

7. *Understand resistance, and manage expectations*. The key here is really to be able to understand before you manage, because if we know the root cause of resistance, our strategy of how we manage those expectations and those behaviors will be different.

8. *Ask for feedback*. It's always important to ask but also to be listening to that feedback and to do something with it. Following that is…

9. *Reflect on what is working and what needs to pivot*. As leaders, we know we can plan out what the change is going to be, but the reality is it's going to change. We're continuously looking for feedback, listening, adapting, and changing so the final outcome is really our desired outcome. Then the last one on this list is…

10. *Celebrate wins along the way*. Even the small ones are so important, because if you're leading a large transformation that's going to take six months or a year or more, you want people to contain that momentum throughout the duration of the change. Sometimes the small wins along the way really help people to move forward.

This seems like a very long to-do list, and I apologize for that, but I have to say it's hard work. But church leaders are not alone. I elaborate on all of this in the "Lead Change in Your Church" course.

Al: Well, I like that list, Pam. Ten ways leaders can lead change. You'll find these 10 items outlined in the show notes, so please go back and take a look at those. You know, Pam, we at BCWI are grateful to serve some fairly large churches where many of our listeners work and serve. How do larger churches and organizations you've worked with successfully tackle major change initiatives? Is there any secret you've seen?

Pam: Surprisingly, the process is the same. The scale changes, the complexity increases, but the fundamental principles of change management are consistent regardless of the church size. Now here are a few things I have seen work well in large churches and large organizations.

1. *The executive sponsor is visible and is supportive of the change*. That is incredibly important. We know from research the number one reason why projects fail is because of lack of this executive sponsorship. It's really critical the executive sponsor is visible and supportive.

2. *There is a compelling vision for the change*. Perhaps a burning platform that creates a sense of urgency people can rally around. Without that burning platform and urgency, change doesn't go as well.

3. *Communication flows freely throughout the organization*. We have tailored messages by audience based on the level of impact. That one is really important because we want to allow information to go both up and down and be shared in a way that really allows people to receive what they need to receive.

4. *People are invited to engage in a dialogue and to take ownership of the change*.

5. *There is adequate training in place if needed*.

6. *Results are measured, and the course is adjusted as needed*.

Al: Six things that need to work when you're making change in a larger church or an organization. You know, Pam, also you mentioned you've done this work with Fortune companies. Without mentioning any names, give us an example or two of where you've been able to see change work using these techniques.

Pam: Absolutely! Yeah, I can think of one of my clients right now. It's a very large non-profit organization that was changing their operating model and system implementation. All of these six steps were addressed individually because they're so important to the organization and to the people.

That particular organization strived for excellence, almost actually perfection, which we know isn't attainable. That type of culture was so ingrained that the detail that went into each one of these steps was very thought-out and very thorough. The result also was proving to be true.

Al: With this level of planning, it's important to have it in order for the outcome to be positive. I can see that! You know, at the Best Christian Workplaces Institute, we believe a healthy culture is a true and worthy end in itself. We also believe a healthy to flourishing culture leads to organizational growth and greater ministry impact. How has growing the culture of one of your church or organizational clients influenced your own culture even as a sole proprietor? What I'm getting at really is how has it influenced you personally?

Pam: It has given me a great appreciation for the intentional leader who invests in their organization's culture. It has also inspired me to grow deeper in my own personal knowledge and understanding of organizations so I can add greater value to those who I serve. It takes one person to ask God, "What can you do with my skill set, and how can you build the church with what you've given me?"

Many organizations start out as sole proprietorships and grow to meet the demands of the market. As we grow, our hope is the culture of Threefold Tribe (whose name was actually inspired by Ecclesiastes 4:12, "…a threefold cord is not quickly broken") would emulate long-lasting impact, partnerships, trust, and obedience (obedience to the call God has for all of us and obedience to the Great Commission).

Al: Long-lasting impact, partnerships, trust, and obedience. Those are great things. Pam, you know, we've really enjoyed what we've learned today. We love these four steps. You know, building change capacity in the church or really any organization we serve. You're able to remove, and we need to remove, culture busters. Certainly we need to have a learning culture where everybody is learning new skills and getting mastery, which provides good sense of life-giving work.

Fourth, to tell time where to go. Again, I just love that. It reminds me of my dad's saying, "Not only work for money, but make money work for you." Maybe here we tell time where to go, and we make time work for us. How can our listeners find out more about your course and where to sign up for it?

Pam: Our listeners can find the course "Lead Change in Your Church" online at threefoldtribe.com. As a gift to our listeners, there's a 20 percent off coupon code for our listeners who are interested in the course: FLOURISH. We look forward to serving you and having you participate.

Al: Wow! That's great. You go online to threefoldtribe.com. After you sign up for the course there's a code called "FLOURISH" to type in. That will give you a 20 percent discount. Tell us the price of the course, Pam.

Pam: The course is priced at $79.

Al: Okay! Then a 20 percent discount on that. It's an hour and a half long. It will give you all of this information and more so you can begin to implement change in your organization, the change you've prayed for. Pam, given all you've experienced in the ongoing transformational greater health of culture, give us one thought you'd leave with ministry leaders.

Pam: Don't fear change. Fear *lack* of change, which leads to organizational death. Equip your people to lead transformations. Above all, pray.

Al: All right. Pam Marmon, founder and head of Threefold Tribe, equipping the high-functioning church, thank you for sharing your wisdom, insights, and stories. Thank you for extending your ministry to leaders who have been listening, benefiting, and praying for change for a long time. Thanks for all you've shared with us today.

To our listeners, thank you for investing this time in your workplace culture. This is Al Lopus reminding you that a healthy culture drives greater influence and growth in your organization. I'll see you again soon on the Flourishing Culture Podcast.

Male: For a free transcript of today's podcast, visit blog.bcwinstitute.org. Join us next week for another one-to-one interview with a respected Christian leader. The Flourishing Culture Podcast with Al Lopus is a presentation of the Best Christian Workplaces Institute, helping Christian organizations set the standard as the best, most effective places to work in the world.