



# Seeing the Church with 20/20 Vision



Scenario Narratives  
Union Baptist Association  
Prepared October, 2008

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**Disclaimer**  
 This report is the result of a project designed and facilitated by Union Baptist Association. These scenarios represent a set of possible alternative futures; they are neither predictions nor preferences. Together, the set provides an analytic tool for evaluating and making informed choices and strategic decisions about the future, today.

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**Union Baptist Association**

UBA is an alliance of autonomous self-directing Baptist congregations of diverse sizes, ethnicities, and styles of worship. While Union Baptist Association began almost 200 years ago with a geographically based identity, more and more churches identify with the UBA vision summarized in the motto: *Transforming our world from the inside out!* But more than words and slogans, this vision guides a way of life at UBA as we pray for this city as well as plan and budget to accomplish what we believe God is leading us to do.

**UBA Vision:**

*Healthy reproducing congregations cooperating to transform our communities, Houston, and the world*

## Introduction

“At a gala event held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., on October 15, 2007, Kathleen Casey-Kirschling— born one second after midnight on New Year’s Day 1946—became the first Baby Boomer to file for Social Security benefits. Over roughly the next 20 years, close to 80 million of her fellow Boomers will follow suit. Almost one in five Americans will be in life’s golden years, up from about one in eight today.<sup>1</sup>

This retirement avalanche began during the tenure of the second U.S. President who is a boomer himself. And while the boomers will likely occupy the Oval Office for years to come, scores of other offices around the nation are experiencing generational turnaround. This population shift is just one of many changes affecting the future of the nation and the church that has been called to reach it. The purpose of these scenarios is to systematically consider how a variety of changes will serve to shape the city of Houston and the resulting demands of ministry by the year 2020. These scenarios are meant to illustrate a set of plausible stories of the future in which critical uncertainties manifest themselves in ways that challenge strategic decisions being made in the present day.

Since the dawn of time, humans have been dreaming about the future and trying to predict what might happen. Those who use scenarios understand that the future cannot be predicted, but the future can be better understood. Those in Houston are acutely attuned to the difference between forecasts and predictions, even if they cannot articulate the difference. When a hurricane is in the Gulf of Mexico and bearing down on the fourth largest city in the United States, Houstonians don’t ask their weather forecasters where the storm *will* hit, but rather they ask where *might* the storm hit. It seems ridiculous to prepare for a hurricane as if it has only one predetermined path towards land. Similarly, preparing for any one set of future events is just as risky. As in the purpose of a hurricane forecast, the scenarios that follow are intended to prevent people from being surprised by how the future unfolds.

## The Process of Scenario Development

A group of eighteen leaders from around the Greater Houston area met at Trinity Pines Conference Center on October 9-10, 2008. The group was divided into age cohorts: “emerging leaders,” those under the age of thirty-five, and “established leaders,” those between thirty-six and fifty years old. Each group was then given a focal question around which to build their scenarios: “With what kind of world—and what kind of city—will the church be engaged in the year 2020?” The cohorts remained divided until the basic scenario logics were constructed and then came together for discussion.

It is important to note that the purpose of this project was not to forecast what the future of the church would look like in the year 2020, and it was not to forecast what model of church would be necessary for the year 2020. The underlying assumptions behind the focal question were first, that the church as an entity would exist, and second, that a variety of church models would be present in the year 2020

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<sup>1</sup> “No Country for Young Men”, (McCardle, 2008): <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200801/aging-boomers>

just as various expressions of church have existed throughout human history. Therefore great care was taken to avoid forecasting about the church or local congregations specifically, but rather to focus on the kind of world that might exist in 2020. As a result of this project, it is hoped that when developing engagement strategies on the global or local level, all forms of church would be considered—whether they currently exist or need to be created.

The process used for this project is very similar to the scenario development process pioneered by Royal Dutch/Shell and currently used by the professionals at Global Business Network.<sup>2</sup> However, rather than begin the process with a time of building awareness of current trends, discussing past discontinuities and challenges to current mental models, the participants began identifying driving forces according to STEEP categories (social, technological, economic, environmental, political) and ranking them by their importance and uncertainty.

The drivers and uncertainties discussed by the two groups were:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tolerance of diversity</li> <li>• Ethnic population shifts</li> <li>• Immigration</li> <li>• Global workforce competition</li> <li>• Low income job competition</li> <li>• Consumer attitudes toward debt</li> <li>• Generational shifts</li> <li>• Birth rates by generation</li> <li>• Caring for the elderly</li> <li>• Changing timelines for age-associated social milestones (marriage, children, retirement)</li> <li>• Generational differences</li> <li>• Changing national religious profile</li> <li>• Historical religious norms</li> <li>• Perceptions of the church</li> <li>• Church metrics</li> <li>• Online forms of spirituality</li> <li>• Online forms of community</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional loyalty</li> <li>• Global power shifts</li> <li>• Global relationships</li> <li>• Global pandemics</li> <li>• Emerging global economy</li> <li>• Global monetary relationships</li> <li>• National political diversity</li> <li>• Economic disparity</li> <li>• Sources of energy</li> <li>• Forms of energy-based economies</li> <li>• Micro business</li> <li>• Mass transit needs</li> <li>• Education effectiveness/attainment</li> <li>• Local/national governance</li> <li>• Freedom to move around the world</li> <li>• Speed of “instant” communication</li> <li>• Speed of technology</li> <li>• New language for communication</li> </ul> |
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Initially, the two groups identified different expressions of very similar drivers. After discussion between the two groups, participants agreed that the two factors detailed below—“Global Power” and “Tolerance of Diversity”—were the two most important and uncertain in light of the event’s focal question.

**Global Power**

Established leaders chose this uncertainty because its axis describes the breadth of national strategies that can be born from either a sense of global leadership or submission. Emerging leaders focused on the relationship between power and wealth: in times of economic growth, a nation’s sense of power is

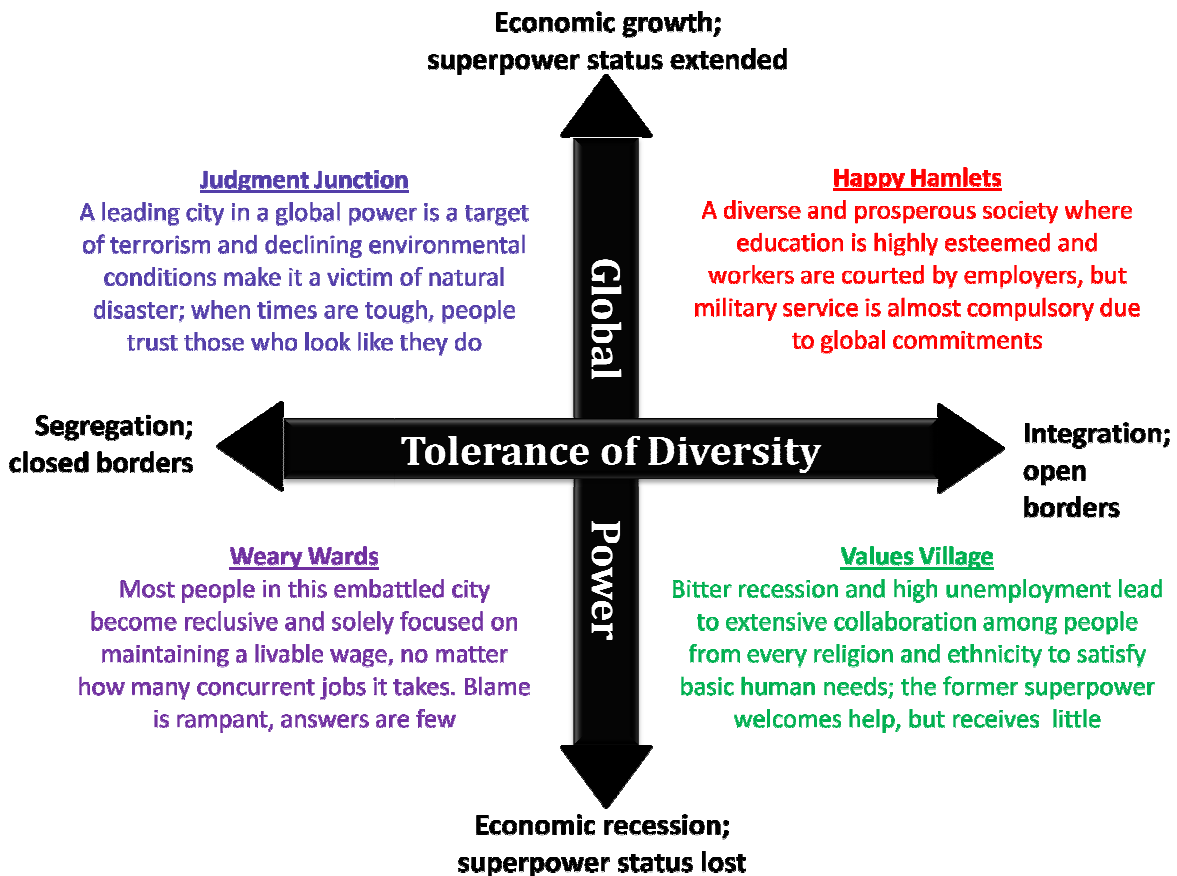
<sup>2</sup> Global Business Network: [www.gbn.com](http://www.gbn.com)

maintained or extended, while in times of recession, status and power can be lost to those with more viable economic foundations.

**Tolerance of Diversity**

Emerging leaders chose this uncertainty because its axis describes how people can choose to embrace pluralism and culture or choose to isolate themselves through ethnic or ideological segregation. Established leaders added that this dynamic would be heavily influenced by the nation’s immigration and border control policies, which themselves are a product of a nation’s acceptance or resistance to various forms of diversity.

The scenarios that follow, although written by UBA staff, are based upon original material created by the participants. The two groups originally each had built a scenario set using their selected drivers. However, after the groups were brought together and the similarity between the two sets was evident, the two sets were homogenized into one set of scenarios. Considerable care was taken to assimilate as much information as possible from the original stories. Some liberties were taken with the creative nature and fictional details of the scenarios in an effort to lend the underlying ideas credibility. For instance, since the World Meteorological Organization issues the names of hurricanes and repeats the cycle of names every six years—allowing for the retirement of names which represent particularly powerful or destructive storms—the names used for 2008 hurricanes will be the same names used in 2020.

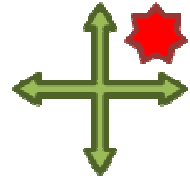


**Scenario Comparison Table**

	<b>Happy Hamlets</b>	<b>Judgment Junction</b>	<b>Weary Wards</b>	<b>Values Village</b>
<b>Framing Uncertainties</b>	↑ Global Power → Integration	↑ Global Power ← Segregation	↓ Loss of Power ← Segregation	↓ Loss of Power → Integration
<b>Lead Character</b>	Aiko Nakamura, a Japanese immigrant educated in Tokyo and the U.S., works for Shell Energy helping employees take full advantage of employee privileges aside from a competitive wage and benefits package.	Harris County Judge Julio Verdes, a second generation Hispanic lawyer from Houston, must make command decisions when Houston becomes a victim of terrorism just ahead of two hurricanes making landfall in Galveston.	Willaim Moore, an online adjunct sociology professor for multiple universities, engages students about racial and ethnic divides in times of recession—all from the comfort of his Sugar Land office.	Jason Wu, a Buddhist social worker and Bobby Turner, an African American Army veteran, discuss the needs of Pasadena residents in times of deep recession but while mobilizing the strength of community partnerships.
<b>High Concept</b>	A diverse and prosperous society where education is highly esteemed and workers are courted by employers, but military service is almost compulsory due to global commitments.	A leading city in a global power is a target of terrorism, and declining environmental conditions make it a victim of natural disaster; when times are tough, people trust those who look like they do.	Most people in this embattled city become reclusive and solely focused on maintaining a livable wage, no matter how many concurrent jobs it takes. Blame is rampant, answers are few.	Bitter recession and high unemployment lead to extensive collaboration among people from every religion and ethnicity to satisfy basic human needs; the former superpower welcomes help, but receives little.
<b>Potential Implications for the Body of Christ</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Temptation for the church is to become about the production; providing entertainment</li> <li>• The gospel is deemed increasingly offensive and irrelevant in this highly educated, economically abundant, pluralistic society</li> <li>• Coaches, gurus and guides are used to seek pluralistic answers to life’s questions in this atmosphere of high spirituality, but declining religiosity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture is bombarded with subtle prejudice toward those in economic hardship – temptation for the church to confuse material provision for spiritual blessing</li> <li>• Denominationalism rises and new networks form seeking homogeneity in purpose, doctrine and expression</li> <li>• Increase in “missions from a distance” – more money for the system but less emphasis on personal evangelism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The church tightens its belt and turns to the care of its members first, concern for community second.</li> <li>• Church budgets will be devoted to meeting human needs, not extraneous buildings and large professional staff.</li> <li>• Decrease in international fervor for missions because of being overwhelmed with domestic needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church must learn how to exist alongside other faith groups; ironically, society will be very intolerant of groups that are viewed as intolerant of others.</li> <li>• Denominationalism decreases as lines that divide people in all areas of society continue to blur.</li> <li>• Tax-exemption status is no longer available to churches or other groups with any “discriminatory” policies.</li> </ul>

## Happy Hamlets

### Drivers: Economic Growth and National Power; Open Borders (Integration and Tolerance of Diversity)



June 2020AD

Shell Energy, Office of Strategic Partnerships (OSP)

Aiko Nakamura, Managing Director

“Thank you sir, I will. And you have a great day also.” Smiling as she taps her earpiece to disconnect the call, she taps it again and says, “Jen, you can send in my next interview in ninety seconds.” With the audio command “Jen,” Aiko’s voice would immediately be in the earpiece of her assistant thanks to preprogrammed audio cues. Aiko liked the instant communication, and she knew the specific figure like “90 seconds” would make Jen smile.

Aiko just needed to quickly review the file for her next interview before it started. Her workspace was a panoramic 36 inch wide touch-screen computer display built into the top of her desk, but set at a 30 degree angle to be more ergonomic. With a few taps on the virtual keys and sliding her fingers across the filing system, she expands the application and background check of her next interview. She enjoyed meeting the new employees. Shell required that they meet with her during their third pay period to allow them some time to get used to their work but not long enough to get entrenched in their extracurricular activities. Memorizing a few of the pertinent details from the file, she hears a muffled knock at the door and in steps Jen.

“Aiko, this is Justin,” says Jen, as a black man of medium build and height walks into the office.

Standing and extending her hand, Aiko welcomes Justin and motions to the chair in front of her desk. Jen leaves and closes the door as Justin takes his chair, and Aiko begins the interview.

“Justin, I’m so glad to meet you. Thank you for coming all the way downtown for this interview. I know the personal interview might be a little old fashioned, but we here at Shell really consider ourselves a big family, so I wanted to meet you personally. As you know, being hired by Shell is really only the first step to being part of the family. This is the fun meeting, Justin—the meeting where we help meet your goals and solidify your place in the company. It is because of meetings like this that our family members choose to stay with us for more than four years, one of the highest employee tenures in the country!”

Pausing to take a breath, Aiko can see Justin glancing around the office and taking in the view from one of her three, fortieth story windows. “Well,” Justin began, “I love your view, but I prefer my commute.”

Smiling warmly, Aiko answers, “Well we can’t all work in a micropolitan hub, or it would cease to be micropolitan wouldn’t it?” The term “micropolitan” was coined to describe the old European concept of a village surrounded by greenspace and then modified to the early twenty-first century concept of a garden city. Plots for homes, businesses, parks, healthcare, entertainment and recreation are all designed to fit in the same amount of space that used to be allotted to large neighborhoods. Not many of these areas exist, but a few of the major businesses have invested heavily in these hubs because of the convenience and comfort they provide to employees. Shell has an office building in the Katy hub

where Justin bought his home, and because Justin's job in marketing can be done away from any of the manufacturing locations, the hub is an ideal location to live. Far enough away from the city to avoid the metropolitan hassles, but located one block from a light rail station, Justin's trip to Aiko's downtown office this morning was probably no longer than fifteen minutes.

"Your file says that you were born and raised in Houston, which struck me because these days I see as many immigrants and naturalized citizens as I do natural-born citizens. Your file also says you obtained your marketing degree from Texas A&M in two years," said Aiko. "I didn't realize that the Armed Forces Extension Credit system would apply to a marketing degree."

"Yes ma'am" Justin responds. "I was in the first year of incentive-based service. I signed up and did my two years in the Army—stationed stateside thank goodness—and was able to get almost two years of basic credits completed before being honorably discharged. I went to College Station, qualified for a veteran scholarship that covered 50% of my tuition, and paid for the other half with the money that I earned while serving. Taking eighteen hours a semester for the remaining two years, I graduated number three in my class."

"How were you so lucky to be stationed in the U.S.?" Aiko asks. Aiko's nephew and niece are both stationed overseas at the moment, both in African combat situations.

"The military uses 'short-termers' like me for a lot of the stateside administrative support, enabling them to use those with extensive training in one of the twenty-five active theaters. Of course, guys like me with chronic asthma didn't used to be allowed in the military. But, the need for bodies made me eligible for a desk assignment, so I took the free education. With incentives like these, the President can continue staving off the rumors of reinstating the draft."

Her interest peaked, Aiko decided that another moment of tangent discussion wouldn't hurt anything. "So, you don't think they will reinstate the draft? I only ask because my kids are teenagers now, so I'm very worried that they will have to serve even if they don't want to."

"Ma'am, the recruiting posters are correct—they do need anyone willing to serve. Tribes warring against each other, non-state sponsored terrorist groups continuing to proliferate, further need for securing aide and relief workers—not to mention being the world's favorite target—stretches our forces pretty thin. But ma'am, the common misconception about the military is that it still operates with the mindset and organization of thirty years ago. Units are smaller, more technological, more self-sufficient and local commanders have more control over their operations. The military was forced to become more efficient, and frankly ma'am," Justin says with a wry smile, "we are good at our jobs."

Smiling, Aiko responds, "Of course! Don't get me wrong, I'm a big supporter of our troops. I have family in Africa right now. I'm just trying to understand all of the changes going on. But you speak as if you're still in the Army using that 'we' reference. Do you have plans to go back in?"

"No ma'am. I would if asked, but I only say 'we' because they are really good at instilling pride and camaraderie in two years."

"I see," Aiko answers. "Well, we here at Shell are proud to have so many veterans working for us, and we are very happy to have you working with us. I was scanning your hiring assessments and comments, and the people in HR are very impressed by you. So, while you do great work for us, let's see if we can't help you out in other ways."

"Well ma'am," Justin begins, "I did really appreciate the housing discount that I qualified for through Shell Realty. Not many fresh college graduates can afford a home as nice as mine."

"Justin, we use first names here. You're not in the Army anymore," Aiko responds, smiling. "You noticed that I called my assistant by her first name as she does when addressing me. So drop the ma'am stuff if you can overcome your training. Now then, my office is dedicated to making sure that employees want to stay with us as long as possible. We don't want you to have to repay that housing discount, so our target is to have you stay at least the minimum five years. And we do that through our network of strategic partnerships, just like it says on my door."

"Well, *Aiko*," Justin says with visible strain, "what does that title mean anyway? I've heard rumors about extended education but I'm not really up to speed about what happens in this meeting."

"I love it when people play right into my hands, so thanks for asking," Aiko answers with a broad smile. "In this booming economy, when knowledge workers such as you could work for a number of different companies, we want to make sure that we are as attractive to our employees as they are to us. Gone are the days when a paycheck and health insurance was enough to recruit someone. Even the plant workers are more sensitive to wanting to work for energy companies that are deeply committed to long-term environmental viability, which is why we make that commitment in all of our energy programs and help our employees live that kind of lifestyle."

Glancing around the spacious office, Aiko continues, "You'll notice that there is not one sheet of paper in this whole office – in fact, this building is so efficient it contributes electric power to the grid rather than depleting it. Not all companies can say that, you know. Actually, some of the power from our building serves to keep the lights on at the homeless shelter two blocks over. Powering three stories isn't easy for them, but they haven't had an electric bill in two years, and we're very proud of that."

"Wow, and here I thought you paid *me* for marketing," Justin says with a slight laughter.

"True enough, but I don't have the degree that tells me how best to say what I just said to two hundred different cultures. That's why we pay you," Aiko replies. Watching Justin nod, Aiko begins asking her routine litany of assimilation and aspiration questions. "How long are you going to wait before getting your master's degree?" she asks, assuming that Justin will want to complete his entry level education.

"Does Shell really shorten the work week of someone in graduate school?" Justin asks with visible curiosity.

"Yes. We ask salary employees to take at least two classes per semester in exchange for a thirty five hour work week. We have twelve different universities that partner with us in regard to reduced tuition and approved degree plans. My office's web portal is where you will go to start the application process and secure the necessary approvals. It usually doesn't take more than seventy-two hours to finish the

application process. And once you graduate,” Aiko continues, “you can take part in up to three Shell electives. But while you’re in school we ask only one elective at a time.”

“Shell electives?” Justin asks.

“Of course!” Aiko exclaims. “We don’t want just a bunch of working drones around here. Shell electives are opportunities for recreation, enlightenment, political involvement, and social networking. Not only is one required per semester for promotion, but many of our employees find that this is a way for their sense of community to be deepened.”

For the first time in the interview, Justin looks timid. “If you don’t mind my asking,” he says almost muttering, “how does your sense of community deepen if you just hang around people from work all the time?”

“Justin,” she says with a smile and long exhale, “would we do that to you? The title on my door says ‘partnerships,’ and that’s what we mean. We want our people to have enriching relationships with people outside of Shell as well as have deep connections with people inside the company. That’s why we offer a range of partnerships to take advantage of. We sponsor sports leagues across the city, reading groups, opera appreciation groups, publishing entities for local writers, meditation spaces, culinary appreciation kitchens—well I could obviously go on for a long time. I coordinate relationships between Shell and community involvement opportunities, and where none exist, I help create them! Here, look at this list for a minute while I excuse myself, and we’ll talk when I get back.” With a motion of her hand, Aiko taps her desk display and transfers one of the windows to the flat panel monitor on the wall next to her desk that had, until a moment ago, displayed a photograph of a tropical island. Aiko smiles again and exits across the room, leaving Justin staring at a list of over one hundred “Shell electives.”

Justin stands up and walks over to the wall panel, sweeping his hand down the display to see more options toward the end of the list. “She’s right,” Justin thinks to himself, “they really do have options for every kind of activity. They have partnerships with religious prayer rooms, professional societies—even political action committees for parties that represent less than 10% of the population like the Crescent party or Rainbow Coalition. They have classes to learn urban planning, architecture, medicine, nutrition...”

The list starts to become overwhelming so Justin wanders over to one of the windows to change gears. Looking down he can see the park bounding the junction of Chinatown, Salvador city and Little Delhi. He closes his eyes and imagines being able to see across the whole metropolitan area, from Sealy to Anahuac, from Conroe to Lake Jackson—one gigantic metropolis with hundreds of cultures living as neighbors stretching across more square miles than any other city in the country.

Just at that moment, Aiko reenters the room with two cups of coffee and a pleasant smile on her face. “So, did you see anything that interests you?” she asks.

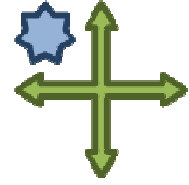
“Oh sure,” Justin responds. “I am going to start school right away, so I’m really just looking for one elective. It’s an impressive list, really.” Watching her nod and set the coffee down, he continues, “I’m a pretty traditional guy, so I was looking for a partnership with any of the local churches and I didn’t see

any, even in the category with the prayer rooms and religious classes. Why is that?" Justin asks with honest curiosity.

Staring blankly back at him, Aiko is visibly stumped. "Well..." she begins without the slightest hint of confidence in her voice and looking awkwardly back at the wall monitor, "I guess we've never been asked for one."

## Judgment Junction

### Drivers: Economic Growth and National Power; Isolationism and Intolerance of Diversity



June, 2020<sup>AD</sup>

Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (OHSEM)

Harris County Judge Julio Verdes, Director

The horror of the situation washed over him in stunned silence. It wasn't the first time that Judge Verdes had felt overwhelming stress in this position, but it was the first time that he was truly at a loss for words and for any ideas on what to do next.

"Judge, are you there?!" screamed Donald Lee, Executive Director of the Houston Port Authority.

Judge Verdes sat motionless at his desk, staring at his wall display. Viewing the ancient 80" plasma display bolted to the concrete wall of his crisis center office, he surveyed the different divisions of the screen. First, the real-time count of residents remaining in the mandatory evacuation zone. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security mandated that each home had a sensor to monitor the heat signatures of each person on any given property. The monitoring began in 2015 as a way of finding people in disaster situations, mobilizing emergency response units, ensuring evacuation when required and was also employed by private civilian security firms to guard properties in off-peak times. Finding the summary statistics, Judge Verdes could see that the greater Houston area was 45% evacuated, and 88% evacuated from the mandatory zones. Many people had the resources to leave Houston once it became apparent almost a week ago that the hurricanes had a good chance of finding Houston. The economy has been good to some, but brutal to others. Undoubtedly, the evacuation was indicative of the disparity between rich and poor, only now it was being portrayed as "those who left" and "those who remained behind."

His eyes moved next to the live-feed satellite weather map showing Hurricane Arthur, bound for Galveston Island, now just 300 miles off the coast. Next, he saw the broader satellite picture, showing Hurricane Bertha—a mere two thousand miles behind Hurricane Arthur—also bound for Galveston. With the day's advanced weather modeling, it was a virtual certainty that both hurricanes would hit Galveston and then Houston within forty-two hours of each other. The past eighteen months of extremely warm temperatures had supplied the ocean with an abundance of warm water: breeding grounds for hurricanes. Rarely can one hurricane follow another one, but the Category 3 Arthur hadn't consumed enough warm water to weaken the Category 4 Bertha, and now Houston was preparing to be viciously attacked by these two fast-moving disasters. Every year in the last twelve had seen an increase in hurricane activity over the previous year, but to have two hurricanes hit the same place that close together was truly the nightmare. Or so Judge Verdes had thought.

"What did you say, Don?" Judge Verdes stammered frantically.

"There has been a container explosion in the port, and radiation detectors everywhere are registering counts of over 3,000 millisieverts! We have an initial death count of approximately 500 from the explosion on ships and land. Port workers all over the place are starting to vomit, and with the tropical storm wind speeds around here, whatever was in that container could be anywhere by now!"

“Don, do you have any record of authorized radioactive materials coming into the port today? Do you know where the carrier came from?”

“Judge Verdes, with the borders being as heavily patrolled as they are, I think we have to declare ourselves a victim of radiological attack. And a perfectly timed attack too, with the winds blowing and it beginning to rain, whatever it was will be poised to inflict maximum damage to people and ground resources.”

With two taps on his keyboard, Judge Verdes had opened their conversation to the earpieces of the city council, the local politicians who were hunkered down in a different part of the OHSEM bunker, and state and national homeland security officials monitoring the situation from other parts of the country.

“Ladies and gentleman, the port of Houston has just experienced an explosion containing radiological materials. We are now about six hours from landfall of Arthur’s eye wall, and Bertha’s eye wall is only about forty-two hours behind. I am hereby notifying you that I am halting further evacuation efforts and I am ordering all residents in the ten county region to remain in their homes if they have not already left. I will be issuing instructions over each household internet interface, commandeering cell phone signals and notifying television and radio that this is a national security emergency. We can no longer allow people outdoors because of exposure to radiation, and we can no longer allow people to leave the area for fear of spreading contamination. I will also be shutting down public water utilities for fear of water contamination. Please begin acting according to protocol.” With a tap on the keyboard, all the open signals were cut off and with a few more taps, emergency protocol instructions had gone out in two hundred languages, each person receiving in the language they indicated on the national register. Judge Verdes was now alone with his thoughts.

Outside his tiny office, he could see his emergency management staff begin to scramble around the command center. Hurricanes were a common occurrence because of the environmental conditions set in motion decades ago, but a radiological attack was only something they had trained for on the very rarest of occasions. The fallout of the device would be determined by the radioactive element and the size of the dispersion. Three thousand millisieverts wasn’t enough to immediately kill, but it would lead to instant radiation sickness—and possibly death—for hundreds at the port and surrounding area, not to mention cancer for thousands down the road. The ground water would have to be tested and purified before human consumption could begin; top soil would need to be approved before any agricultural trade could be approved; and travel in and out of Houston would be severely restricted in the coming months. The booming U.S. economy would be affected, given Houston’s primacy of trade for all forms of energy, but it was too early to tell how much damage would be done. Recovery from the hurricanes was already going to be the largest undertaking of any major city in history, but now outside help would stay away for fear of radiation poisoning.

Geopolitically, this would be the last straw. Since the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979 forty-one years ago, there were thirty-four major incidents of terrorism against Americans until 2008, and the same number since 2008. Tribal militias proliferated faster than national militaries could document them, and to meet these threats, most national militaries were comprised of hundreds of brigade-size units—fast, self-sustaining and highly specialized. Because of the rise in tribal loyalties around the world, the general public had become suspicious of anyone with ethnic or linguistic ties to those groups. The increasing

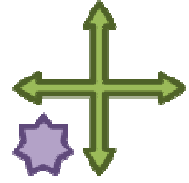
intolerance for undocumented residents would reach a fever pitch, and anyone without citizenship was likely to be deported very soon. This had been coming for some time now, which is why so many ethnic communities had put an emphasis on obtaining legal citizenship. Association no longer had to be proven; a person just has to resemble someone else to be a victim of segregation. Of course the myth of the “American melting pot” was still around, but everyone understood “American” to be a term that resembles whoever they saw in the mirror, and the term “enemy” represented everyone else. The national military couldn’t recruit fast enough to achieve all the stated military goals: secure the borders, patrol for civil disturbances and mobilize a worldwide terrorist hunt that has little respect for global treaties, international cooperation or national sovereignty. Thankfully for them though, the intense segregation and suspicion amongst the people mean many were ready to sign up. Aside from the hostile implications, there was a civic upside to tribalism: a change in the voting majority. Hispanics, more than any other ethnicity, learned the power of having a large voting bloc and mobilized the majority of Houston residents to obtain legal status and vote along ethnic lines. Judge Verdes was himself a beneficiary of this movement.

Global movements initiated by tribes were frequently based on religious authority, though rarely was any effort wasted in proving such claims through doctrine or sacred texts. It had become the calling card of tribal militias to claim authority from on high and then execute a ruthless pursuit of their aims, whether they supported the claims of that religion or not. As a result, religious communities suffered the same segregation as ethnic communities. The U.S. population now claimed to be less than 68% Christian- a 10% dip from twelve years before. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism are all increasing, but only slightly. The U.S., as a whole, now favors a high spiritual interest without being tied to titles, leaders or doctrines. Churches, mosques and temples were increasing, but the size of their flocks remained static. When not scurrying for cover because of weather or terrorist attacks, the economy afforded many people the opportunity to do anything they wanted within the safe confines of their homogenous gated communities, including worship among other social tangents. Those not included in inwardly-focused communities view religion as social networking for the upwardly mobile – irrelevant to the downtrodden and oppressed.

Judge Julio Verdes blinked hard and shivered, alerting him once again to the hustling people of the emergency command center. He was a second generation lawyer, but the first generation to hold any public office. He was elected by the voting majority of Houston—Hispanic, lower middle class, nominally Christian but sporadically faithful—just like him. It was the non-voting public that drew his attention now. Tens of thousands were trapped in their homes, living off only the food and water that they had prepared in advance, living without the air conditioning that would keep them cool but would bring radioactive particles in to their homes. The city was too divided and suspicious to help each other in the coming days. And history would ask, “What was the man in my office doing while this catastrophe unfolded around him?” Glancing again at the picture of Hurricane Arthur increasing its intensity, Judge Julio Verdes thinks the same thing, and knows there is no good answer.

## Weary Wards

### Drivers: Economic Recession and Loss of National Power; Isolationism and Intolerance of Diversity



June 2020AD

Private Home in Sugar Land, TX

Homeowner: William Moore- husband and father of two

“Look at this kid, driving around with no thought to the others around him,” Will thinks to himself. “Hey, others have places to go too, you know,” he mutters to himself, defiantly. “I have to get to the office. I can’t believe how late I’m running.”

Arriving at his desk, he sits with coffee cup in one hand and “one-device remote control” in the other. “We may be in a recession, but thank goodness for technology,” he thinks. Right before the economy took its dive twelve years ago, Will’s company bought a 60” LCD plasma display. At the time, it was just for his computer, but now everything runs through the display and the remote in his hand. At the top right corner were the thermostat controls for the office, and next to that were the pre-programmed settings for lighting in the office. Since it was relatively early in the day, he selects “setting one” which makes minimal use of the lighting fixtures but changes the brightness of the display to work best with the sunlight streaming through the blinds. Later in the day, the ambient lighting would increase as the sunlight decreased. It was one of the simple pleasures of life to not have to constantly adjust one’s settings. “Makes for a more productive day,” he thinks.

In other parts of the screen are real time updates of his normal traffic routes to work, constantly-updating weather information, choices of musical preferences and streaming news headlines from a half-dozen of Will’s favorite sources:

- There is looting going on in one of the more downtrodden suburbs. “What else is new?” he wonders. Whether people are driven by survival or hoarding to then resell what they steal, only stores with expensive private security can keep looters at bay. The perpetrators in this case are Hispanics robbing an Asian store, but tomorrow it will be two different groups of people at odds. “Thank goodness I live in an area where we don’t have to worry about that kind of thing,” he surmises. “Indians stay on their side of town, Chinese on theirs and we on ours. That reminds me, I need to run by our neighborhood market this afternoon and see if they have that laundry detergent I like. They were out last week.”
- There are long lines formed outside of the hospitals. “Not a good time to be a doctor,” Will comments to himself. Private medical practices are becoming more and more rare because of the economic hard times, and with the increase in politician’s preferences for more socialized medicine, more doctors work out of hospitals and belong to huge groups of practitioners, almost all of which are supported by a different major pharmaceutical company. “I guess if that’s the only way those people can get a diagnosis, that’s what they have to do.” Will didn’t have to do that. His and his family’s diagnosis was mostly performed by biometric readings that they submit to a central medical hub over the internet. Early century breathalyzer and diabetes testing technology had been adapted for home use, and now with a quarterly prick of the finger and exhale into a tube,

Will could know everything he really needed to know about his health. If medicine was required, the central hub sent it to him via mail; if serious tests were required, an appointment at a regional private medical firm was scheduled through his one-device. And all this for a monthly fee. “It’s completely worth it to save time and be more efficient,” Will thinks. “Sure, it was a little creepy at first to know that my medical hub on the net was in Indiana, but I got over it. It could be worse; it could be in another country!”

- The prices of wheat and rice are up again today. “Good news for the U.S., bad news for the world.” Inflation has impacted even the world grain consumption and production. Poorer countries cannot afford to import as much grain as they used to, which reinforces the hunger crisis in so many places. The warmer global temperatures make grain production more valuable because it is harder to achieve, so those that can afford food stay healthy, and those who cannot experience greater disease now than twenty years ago. Of course, the U.S. doesn’t export as much as it used to since the more pressing priority is to meet local needs. Most Americans are in the same bind – those that can afford healthy food have better health. Those that rely on government help but make do the rest of the time are the ones standing in long lines at the hospital. Those long lines of unhealthy people even have the government discussing incentives for people *not* having children.
- The Houston Texans acquired that free agent running back they were looking for. “I’m so glad that the league had to consolidate its teams. It makes it much easier to get the free agents we need,” Will says smiling. “Yes, it’s unfortunate that smaller market cities can’t have teams anymore, but hey, if you can’t afford them, they have to go.” In an economic downturn, the nation still needed social distractions. But with people less likely to attend games in person and more likely to take advantage of technology that streams games in custom settings, all sports leagues have had to reduce the number of teams. “There is too much going on in the world to worry about whether cities like Miami or San Francisco have football teams. *Those people don’t like football anyway,*” Will snorts.

Glancing at the time display on the bottom of the screen, he lets out a deep breath. “Okay,” he says exhaling, “10:30 am. Time to start the day.”

With a couple of clicks on the remote, the one-device display opens six video conference boxes. Smiling back at him in each of the boxes, are his six students registered through the University of Houston. “Good morning Professor,” says one as others nod in agreement. For a social science class in a major university, this is a full class for upperclassmen. Classes in the business school are usually web-cast lecture format to a hundred students, but this was a good turnout for sociology. Few people were really interested in academic disciplines that didn’t directly translate to making a living any more. But in an economy that was as much dependent on knowledge as it was skill, some students were depending on the continuing need for educators to be their meal ticket.

“Good morning class,” Will replies. “Today, I will be conferencing with each of you about your latest transmissions, and we need to discuss the relationships between faith and society. After all, we need to be well rounded sociologists, don’t we?” he asks.

“Professor, before we do that, can we discuss how we’re all going to make a living as sociologists?” one of his students quipped.

“No Justin, but thanks for asking. And as I stated last week when you asked, the downturn in the economy doesn’t mean that we all become farmers. The need for academic understanding will continue in the future,” Will retorts wryly.

Without making any attempt to stifle their laughter, another student responds jovially, “So we’ll all just marry medical researchers and become professors, so that by taking unsuspecting student’s money, we can continue to put food on our table. Isn’t that right Professor?”

“We’ll see how you all like your chances of becoming professors after we review your latest transmissions, okay?” Will replies with an expressionless face. Holding his seriousness for only a second, Will then poses a question to the class. “Based on your reading over the last week, what is the religious footprint on society today as opposed to ten years ago?”

“Does religion even have a footprint anymore? Or is it just the kind of print left behind on the beach - there one minute, gone the next?” one student responds. Another student adds, “The numbers say it all. More than 25% of adults ages 31-40 are unaffiliated with any major religion, and our generation has a higher rate than that. Since the clamp down on immigration nine years ago, the Catholic, Hindu, and Buddhist populations are in gradual decline. A massive shift of people who were raised Catholic but have since stopped claiming that religion is now more apparent because there isn’t the Catholic immigration to overshadow it. There has been a decrease in technical and medical job-based immigrants, so that has hurt Islam and Hinduism. And organized Buddhism has been hurt by a more spiritual generation, even one that might use Buddhist techniques, but still claims no affiliation. Islam has been helped by a high birth rate and a proclivity for the growing prison populations to convert to Islam, but it has barely made up the difference in lack of immigrants.”

“So,” Will begins, “religion no longer has any impact on society? Neither of you mentioned Christians. Why is that?”

“Because it’s too much work trying to figure out what kind of Christian someone is!” a student blurts out as others begin laughing. “I mean seriously, Professor. Christian denominations have been in a membership freefall for years now, and it seems that they are more concerned about their own membership woes than they are the social justice issues all around them.”

“Not only that,” another student begins, “but individual churches seem so much more detached than they used to. Big churches do their own work abroad, but most churches are just focused on keeping their members happy and helping them as much as they can. More and more churches are just groups meeting on the net, like this class. They study a little, they socialize, but in the end the imprint on society is minimal.” Another student adds, “Yeah, it’s like those churches that meet in homes – does anyone know what those things do anyway?” Silence is their answer.

Finally, another student shakes his head. “C’mon, we all know what the big churches are doing, regardless of faith background. They all sit in their buildings and pray, chant or sing, hoping that if they think enough happy thoughts, all of their problems will go away. That’s the dominant religion of the country now.”

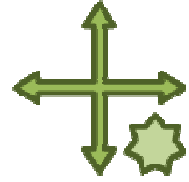
Discussion continues for a while longer until Will notices the time. “Individual conferences will take place at your appointed times. Unless there is anything else, class is dismissed.” With a tap on the one-device remote, his students are gone. Not ten seconds later, visual alerts of incoming video conferences begin flashing on the screen. With a couple of taps on the remote, four windows show up on screen with smiling students in each one. “Good Afternoon, University of Michigan Sociology 101.” With nods from each student, class began and ended promptly two hours later.

Two more classes, and the day is done. Now it’s time for the commute home. Will taps on the remote and calls his wife to find out what’s for dinner. After several beeps without an answer, Will’s wife pokes her head through the doorway to his office. “Will, I know you’ve been online all day around the country, but honestly, you don’t need to call me. Your ‘commute’ is across the living room from the office to the kitchen, and the only traffic on the way is your son. So get up Professor, and help me with dinner.” Smiling with a clear sarcastic overtone, she disappears around the corner.

With an embarrassed tap on the remote, Will sheepishly responds, “Yes dear.”

## Values Village

**Drivers: Economic Recession and Loss of National Power; Open Borders (Integration and Tolerance of Diversity)**



June 2020AD

Theravada Buddhist Community Center, Pasadena TX

Administrator: Jason Wu

11:30 am. The lunch hour rush is in full swing. Clients stream thorough the doors and into the dining hall. Some need to wait for a seat because the room is filled to capacity, but they don't mind. They just stand around the edges of the room, tray of food in hand, eating what they can with their free hand.

Jason watches a man come through the door and begin to pick up literature on the entryway table. He seems to be analyzing everything about the center – except where the food is being served. The man appears to be Hispanic, or maybe African American, well built and clean-shaven with a short haircut.

“No habla español,” Jason says, bowing slightly to the man.

“Me neither,” he answers, “so that’s okay.” In perfect Mandarin Chinese, the man asks Jason if he speaks English.

“Better than Chinese or anything else,” answers Jason. “My mother was second-generation Chinese but my dad was second-generation Laotian, so I don’t really speak any language that well. Do you mind if I ask how you came to speak Chinese so well?” Jason asks.

“Army basic training,” the man responds. “Everyone who has gone through in the last ten years got a pretty good dose of Arabic, Chinese or Russian. I picked Chinese when they grandfathered me into the new regs.”

Jason nods at the man’s story. This man is not the first veteran that has come looking for a meal, or clothes or a job. “My name is Jason Wu, and I am the director here. Can I help you get some food?”

“I’m Bobby Turner, and I actually didn’t come looking for a handout. I was wondering if I could help out around here for a while? I’ve got three months of Army discharge pay to live off of, and while I look for some work I thought I would volunteer in the meantime.” Pausing, he continued, “Do I have to be Buddhist?” the man asked.

“No, not at all. Beyond all Buddhists being accepting of other faiths, this facility receives some federal money, so there are no religious guidelines for staff or volunteers. Any dime from the government means no discrimination.”

Bobby nods as he looks around the room. “That must be how you held your tax-exempt status, huh? I read about the legislation taking away tax-exempt status from churches that use discriminatory hiring practices. But the IRS doesn’t care that you’re Buddhist?”

Somewhat taken aback to be talking shop with someone who just walked in the door, Jason feels an ease about answering these questions rather than the customary let down that he frequently has to give a potential client. “These days, the government just cares that we feed anyone who walks in the door. We receive some federal funding, but the government doesn’t have much to give these days. So they depend on private efforts like ours to meet the needs of people. We also cooperate with Hindu, Muslim and Christian groups around town. We each have a member sitting on the other organization’s boards. In fact, a Christian group actually meets in this facility to do addiction and depression support groups since they can’t afford a building of their own.” Slowly considering his next question, Jason decides to ask anyway. “Do you mind if I ask about your story? I’m going to need some details for the volunteer application anyway.”

“Same story as a lot of people,” Bobby began. “Fifteen-year Army vet, victim of the drawdown. Would have liked to have gotten my 20 years in, but pensions aren’t what they used to be anyway. Spent most of my time stationed in Central Asia, but then was pulled back to the U.S. in 2013 because of the President’s pledge of non-intervention. I spent a little while in Mexico shoring up the infrastructure, and a little bit of time on the border taking down the remnants of the border fence. After the Army exhausted every possible odd job assignment for me that was it. Honorably discharged and here I am.”

“Why Houston?” asked Jason.

“This was the closest major city to my last assignment. My parents are gone and I’m not married, so I figured this was as good a place as any.”

“I’m just surprised, that’s all,” Jason answers. “Seems that whoever can get out of here is doing just that. And with South America being the stable, prosperous place in the Western Hemisphere, you had a jump on everyone because you were halfway there.”

Bobby nods as he takes a few steps and glances into the dining room. “True, but you should see the jam of people who were stopped at the border because visas take years now, not months. Two years into the Global Identification Card program and they clearly haven’t worked out all the bugs yet. Anyone hitchhiking south must be really enjoying Belize this time of year.”

Walking from the entrance of the dining room to the small room down the hall that serves as the office for all administrators who use the building, Jason sits behind the room’s only desk and offers the only other chair in the room to Bobby. “Well, the U.N. has its hands full. Moving to The Hague, discussing a global currency and all the while trying to fend off pleas for economic help from us, I’m sure it makes for a full day.”

“I really can’t believe that the U.N. can even exist without the U.S.” Bobby snorts. “We used to *be* the U.N., but I guess that shows how far things have come. The world really does revolve around money. I suppose I should be happy that, with all the money in India and China, the U.N. isn’t in Bombay or Shanghai. But then again, what do I care about the U.N.? How can I help around here, Jason?”

Jason exhales as he takes a volunteer application out of his desk drawer. “Well, we are all trying to fill the gaps. Our facility provides meals, some basic job skills training and clothing to anyone who needs it. We do not try and provide spiritual direction. There are a few churches, mosques and temples in the

area that will try and meet that need. Honestly, aside from the need for more hands during lunch hour, our main need is going to surprise you.”

“What’s that?” asks Bobby without trying to hide his interest.

“Well, you saw the land behind the building. We have been approached by some of the local Christians to have sports leagues for the kids on that land. They don’t have church property of their own, and so they have proposed taking care of the land and helping out around here if we will administer and referee the sports leagues, and contribute a snack for the kids that participate.”

“Sports leagues for kids?” Bobby exclaimed.

“I know what you’re thinking. But consider a different point of view. We’re in a big recession right? Unemployment is almost 15%, and we’re well on our way to a depression like we had ninety years ago. Businesses are being closed, single family homes are being sold or abandoned in favor of multi-family housing and food and clothing are becoming more and more scarce. Because of declining nutrition and cramped housing, kids need an outlet for blowing off steam and staying in shape. No one can afford healthcare anymore, and the government’s universal healthcare is for serious needs only, so who is helping children maintain their health?”

Bobby’s expression changes to indicate that what Jason said is making sense. “I confess, I have never thought about it that way.”

Shrugging his shoulders, Jason admits, “Neither did I at first. But credit the Christians with that. I’m very proud of the global environmental effort that Asians have been leading for the last ten years, because we are seeing an immediate effect. But locally, it’s not the environment that needs help. We have more green space and emissions control than ever. Hardly anyone who owns a car still has a pure gas-burning model. But the country is poor, and people will eat whatever they can find. We have to help offset that effect by doing something to combat the ill effects of bad nutrition.”

“Plus,” Bobby interrupts confidently, “I know firsthand how tense people can be when they live in group housing. And that’s when everyone has enough to eat, a job to do and clothes on their backs. The tension in these apartment complexes must be off the chart,” Bobby adds.

“You’re right. So,” Jason says, inhaling deeply, “can I get you interested in running the kid’s sports leagues?”

Bobby started to smile. “It’s almost—what used to be—football season. Obviously, we’ll have to get around the need for pads. But yeah, I think I could get into that. One question though. I was raised Christian, and I gotta think that they are going to want some sort of half-time Bible lesson or something. How do I handle that?”

“I asked that question myself,” Jason begins, “but they were the first ones to admit that this is about affirming the social need for kids to play and be healthy. They told me that the U.S. has been the target of evangelistic effort from countries around the world and from a variety of religions for decades.

They're not worried about kids hearing their religion's message. They are completely at peace with handling their religious duties during other times and at different venues."

Wiping the shocked look from his face, Bobby reaches for the volunteer application. "Then I just have one question for you Jason," Bobby says raising his voice and smiling. "Are you ready for some football?!"

Jason, smiling but clearly not understanding whatever reference Bobby was making, responds enthusiastically, "Yes! But we are talking about soccer, right?"

## Wildcards

Wildcards are events that have a low probability but a very high impact. The drivers chosen by the participants are significantly influenced by global events, and therefore while wildcards may strain the limits of plausibility in some scenarios, they would nonetheless be significant “game-changing” events should they occur.

### **National Politics**

U.S. Presidential assassination

Significant increase in Muslim politicians

News laws restricting religious freedom and expression

Additional September 11-level terrorist attacks

### **Global Politics**

Degradation of relations between Israel and Iran

Increase of hard-line Russian policies and leadership

Economic recession or collapse

Major multi-state armed conflicts

Chinese democracy

### **Environmental**

Increase in global famine and disease (pandemic and epidemic)

Weather-related disasters, astronomical events

Abrupt climate change

Global water shortage

Extraterrestrial events (meteor strike, solar flare damage to satellites, etc.)

## Leading Indicators

On any long distance road trip with children in the back seat, one question will inevitably come up: “Are we there yet?” Leading indicators are like signposts along the highway, they inform us as we near our destination. In the case of scenarios, there are a variety of destinations and a variety of routes to take, so we must be vigilant in understanding what signposts mean as we pass them. Leading indicators generally come in two categories: events and variables.<sup>3</sup> An indicator of a scenario could be signaled when an event occurs, however there might be just as much to learn by acknowledging that a certain event is becoming more and more implausible. In the same way, variables that are continuous over time can serve as a leading indicator, just as if a variable decreases, reverses, or fluctuates wildly. Therefore, not only is it important to understand what leading indicators are for a given scenario, but disciplined effort must be applied to monitoring these indicators. If a series of indicators is missed, then the future will still be surprising even if the forecast was essentially correct.

	Happy Hamlets	Judgment Junction	Weary Wards	Values Village
<b>Framing Uncertainties</b>	↑ Global Power → Integration	↑ Global Power ← Segregation	↓ Loss of Power ← Segregation	↓ Loss of Power → Integration
<b>Leading Variable Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong domestic economy indicators</li> <li>• U.S. economy is among the world’s most healthy</li> <li>• Decrease in Christian churches planted</li> <li>• Increase in intentionally smaller churches</li> <li>• Increase in non-Christian religious organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong domestic economy indicators</li> <li>• Greater climate shifts</li> <li>• Increase in minority political candidates</li> <li>• Rise in “America-first” attitudes</li> <li>• Rise in reactionary politics</li> <li>• Greater tension between Christian and non-Christian groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak domestic economy indicators</li> <li>• Rise in virtual and online religion</li> <li>• Restrictions on religious freedoms</li> <li>• Increase in gated and planned communities</li> <li>• Isolated pockets of educational attainment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak domestic economy indicators</li> <li>• Dominating foreign investment into the U.S. economy</li> <li>• Places like India and China are seen as global economic and cultural leaders</li> <li>• Greater U.S. cooperation in U.N. and other world organizations</li> </ul>
<b>Leading Event Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lenient immigration policies</li> <li>• Mass transportation improvements</li> <li>• Increased allotments for green space</li> <li>• Houston’s energy companies become more involved with alternative energy production</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic terrorist attacks</li> <li>• Biometric or technological advancement applied to proving citizenship (“citizen-chip”)</li> <li>• Planned communities for ethnic enclaves or voting blocs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positions of power won by extreme right-wing candidates</li> <li>• Victorious elections for voting blocs organized by ethnic, religious or special interests</li> <li>• Socialization of healthcare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lenient immigration policies</li> <li>• Americans immigrate for better employment options</li> <li>• Popular following for internet and TV-based churches/pastors</li> <li>• Stricter environmental policies</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Bishop, Peter and Andy Hines, ed. *Thinking About the Future: Guidelines for Strategic Foresight*. Washington, D.C.: Social Technologies, 2006: 217-218.

## Conclusion

Scenarios are powerful illustrations of what is plausible about the future. However, what happens when we step back from the picture and are not happy with the result? Throughout 1941, leaders in the United States huddled around world maps and discussed scenarios of the future, taking note that France had fallen to Nazi Germany and that Great Britain was in its most desperate hour. Even after December 7<sup>th</sup> and the declaration of war that followed a few days later, the U.S. was still surveying the possible future as a spectator. But over Christmas of 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and military leaders from both nations devised a strategy to *shape* the future. Answers to “what if” questions were devised through scenarios, but plans were put in motion to answer the most important question of the day: “What would we prefer to happen in the future?”

After careful examination of the assumptions, conclusions and thoughts that went into building this set of scenarios, and after reflecting on the future worlds that would result from these factors, it is now our responsibility to apply this learning to our current circumstances. If plans and decisions are not made now, then we will still be unprepared for a future that we understand. Therefore, we offer these questions as a means of helping our readers digest the information presented in this report.

### Imagining the future to have unfolded according to each of the scenarios above:

1. Am I happy with how the future turned out? Why or why not?
2. How did the body of Christ enable the future to unfold as it did? Was it helping or hurting the world through its actions?
3. If the gospel successfully penetrated that world, what would that look like?
4. In light of that success, how was the church successful? What would be the most effective strategies for presenting the good news of the gospel to that world?
5. What would be my responsibility in helping these strategies to be effective? What is the role of my local church or my personal calling in helping to engage that world?

### In the event that the future did not unfold as you would have liked:

1. In comparison to the worlds presented in the scenarios, what is my preferred vision of the future?
2. Given the current state of the world, what must change or begin to change now in order to help bring about the preferred future?
3. What would be my responsibility as an agent of those changes? What is the role of my local church or my personal calling in helping to enact those changes?
4. What can I begin doing today that will help realize the preferred future?

*“You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.”*  
Acts 20:20 (NIV)

## Acknowledgments

The results of this project could never have materialized without the enthusiastic and thoughtful engagement of many people. Those people are listed below, along with the organizations which graciously supported their efforts.

- David Adams* ..... North Woods Baptist Church
- Jeff Berger* ..... Westbury Baptist Church
- Thomas Billings* ..... University Lutheran (Austin)
- Tom Billings* ..... Union Baptist Association
- Garry Blackmon* ..... Crossway Christian Fellowship
- Rickie Bradshaw* ..... Union Baptist Association
- Heather Burdeaux* ..... The Basilica Community
- Joel Burdeaux* ..... The Basilica Community
- Alex Carrizo* ..... Centro Cristiano las Buenas Nuevas
- Chad Clarkson* ..... Clear Creek Community Church
- Brad Dancer* ..... Wildewood Baptist Church
- Jerry Edmonson* ..... Fellowship of Cinco Ranch
- Josh Ellis* ..... Union Baptist Association
- Ricardo Escobar* ..... Houston, TX
- Richy Fisher* ..... Sugar Creek Baptist Church
- Ben Hays* ..... The Church in the Center
- Sally Hinzie* ..... Union Baptist Association
- Shannon Hopkins* ..... London, UK
- Nick Howard* ..... Houston Area Student Ministries
- Lee Hsia* ..... Houston's First Baptist Church
- Dian Kidd* ..... Union Baptist Association
- Bryant Lee* ..... Higher Expectations Church
- Campo Londoño* ..... Union Baptist Association
- Manny Longoria* ..... First Baptist Church South Houston
- Jeremy McKewen* ..... Richey Street Baptist Church
- Jeremy Pace* ..... The Village Church
- Ken Shuman* ..... Wellspring Church
- Timothy Sim* ..... Grace Fellowship Korean Baptist Church

Special thanks go to Jeff Waldo of University Baptist Church for his leadership and sacrificial dedication, without which this project would not have been possible, and to the staff of Trinity Pines Conference Center for their ongoing level of exceptional service.

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