**Values Inventory[[1]](#endnote-1)**

One of the most important aspects of understanding the culture of a church is the exploration and clarification of its core values. Briefly defined, values are beliefs put into practice. While it is possible for a congregation to have “aspirational” values—collective behaviors that they would like to see—their culture consists of their actual values.

The values of a church are those things that are non-negotiable, that for which we would be willing to sacrifice everything. Although the form in which they are expressed may vary, Biblical values should never change. Core values should be marked by great passion. And these beliefs drive behavior that should reflect the actions and attitudes of Christ Himself.

An organization must know what it stands for. A study of values can be very powerful because it seeks to answer the question, “Why do we do the things we do? Why does it matter?”

Values are behaviorally examined. A church can look at its budget and determine its values. It can do so by looking at its calendar because we always make time for what is important to us. And finally reviewing its collective decisions helps a church know what its true values are. In other words, a church’s business meeting minutes offer clues as to its values. As values get clearer, so do the decisions needing to be made.

Why should a congregation spend time examining its values? First, they are frequently held without awareness. Congregational culture has been compared to a fishbowl. Asking your congregation to describe it is like asking a fish to describe water. Values are so much a part of us that it is difficult to talk about them in an objective fashion. Second, any attempt to implement change in a congregation will be futile without factoring corporate values into the picture. They function as railroad tracks within the organization. Even if a desire for change is present, congregational behavior will stay the same unless new tracks and patterns of behavior are established.

It may be helpful to compare the types of values as “real” versus “expressed.” It is, of course, possible to have expressed values that are not real. It is also possible to have real values that have not been clearly and passionately articulated. Great synergy takes place when a congregation’s values are both real and expressed. We can call those values “powerful” because they become the impetus for change in the congregation.

Powerful

*Leading the Exercise*

Distribute copies of the inventory below. Remind team members that they are surveying the values of the church, *not their own personal values*. Briefly define each value, adding any needed clarification. Instruct team members to complete the inventory according to the directions. (Note: you may want to add to the list. Be sure that team members are clear as to definitions.)

Write each value on butcher paper or tear sheets. (Probably two or three per sheet will be optimimal.) Allow sufficent room to the left or right for the placement of color coding labels. Give each team member a limited number of labels, probably four but no more than six. Ascribe a numeric value to each color, such as red – 1, blue – 2, etc.

Total the numeric value of the dots placed by each value. The top six represent the actual values of the congregation. After identifying the actual values, lead the transitional focus team in a discussion through the following questions:

* + Is this accurate? Why or why not?
  + What glaring omissions do you see? (Note: these can become aspirational values toward which the church will strive.)
  + How will actual values strengthen the transitional process? How will they threaten it?

**Values Inventory**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Not important | Somewhat important | Important | Most important |

***Directions***: Using the scale below, circle the number that best expresses to what extent the following values are important to your church (actual values). Work your way through the list quickly, going with your first impression.

1. **Preaching and teaching Scripture**: Communicating God’s Word to people 1 2 3 4

2. **Family**: People immediately related to one another by marriage or birth 1 2 3 4

3. **Bible knowledge**: A familiarity with the truths of Scripture 1 2 3 4

4. **World missions**: Spreading the gospel of Christ around the globe 1 2 3 4

5. **Community**: Caring about and addressing the needs of others 1 2 3 4

6. **Encouragement**: Giving hope to people who need some hope 1 2 3 4

7. **Giving**: Providing a portion of one’s finances to support the ministry 1 2 3 4

8. **Fellowship**: Relating to and enjoying one another 1 2 3 4

9. **Leadership**: A person’s ability to influence others to pursue God’s mission for their organization 1 2 3 4

10. **Cultural relevance**: Communicating truth in a way that people who aren’t like us understand it 1 2 3 4

11. **Prayer**: Communicating with God 1 2 3 4

12. **Excellence:** Maintaining the highest of ministry standards that bring glory to God 1 2 3 4

13. **Evangelism**: Telling others the good news about Christ 1 2 3 4

14. **Team ministry**: A group of people ministering together with synergy 1 2 3 4

15. **Creativity**: Coming up with new ideas and ways of doing ministry 1 2 3 4

16. **Worship**: Attributing worth to God 1 2 3 4

17. **Status quo**: A preference for the way things are 1 2 3 4

18. **Cooperation**: The act of working together in the service of the Savior 1 2 3 4

19. **Lost people**: People who are non-Christians and may not attend church (unchurched) 1 2 3 4

20. **Mobilized laity**: Christians who are actively serving in the ministries of their church 1 2 3 4

21. **Tradition**: The customary ways or the “tried and true” 1 2 3 4

22. **Obedience**: A willingness to do what God or others ask 1 2 3 4

23. **Innovation**: Making changes that promote the ministry as it serves Christ 1 2 3 4

24. **Initiative**: The willingness to take the first step or make the first move in a ministry setting 1 2 3 4

25. **Benevolence**: Caring for basic human (physical) needs, either within or outside the church 1 2 3 4

26. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

27. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

28. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 1 2 3 4

1. Aubrey Malphurs, Advanced Strategic Planning, 2nd Ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker Books), 110-113, 326 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)