

Discovering a Churches Values

Every Church has values! Values are the way we operate or the aspects that make us unique. There is no right or wrong mix of values. They operate like a recipe that derives its flavor from the way that the selection of individual ingredients are brought together.

Values are uncovered or identified and are consistent over time. Values dictate or determine our behavior, they also inform our vision. A churches Vision must be in line with its values, for this reason, values should be identified first before vision.

Process

The following are activities that will help the church uncover and identify values that are present in the life the church. All churches have positive and negative values and some values will be more aspirational than actual. The process will take time, involve prayer and a commitment from people to be honest about what is really happening or not happening.

Each activity can be done independently over a 2-3 hour workshop or activities 1 & 2 can be done over a full day. Activity 3 should happen at a separate time.

Activity 1 – Good memory exercise

Have everyone line up shoulder-to-shoulder in order of their attendance at the church from shortest years to longest years.

What observations can you make?

Handout a pen and pad to everyone and ask them to write down all the good memories they have of their time at the church and what people like about the church. People can sit down or go somewhere in the church to write down the things that come to mind. Give people 15-20 minutes.

Now ask people to get into groups (put people into groups) of 4-6. Handout butchers paper and pens to each group so that they can record the good memories and the things people like about the church. Have each person in the group share and have someone write them down. Make a note of the stories or things liked that are shared more than once. Give people 20 - 30 minutes to share in their groups.

Have each group share the two memories or activities that were mentioned more than once. Record each memory on a whiteboard or butchers paper to create a masters list. Note how many people also had the same memory or the things they liked. It's not uncommon to have a list of 20 – 30. Once all the groups have shared and there is a master list have a break. Encourage people to keep talking about their memories and the things they like about the church.

Have a Break

After the break, have everyone sit in one big group and re-examine the full list and put everything in order from most mentioned to least mentioned.

Starting with the most mention reflect on the memory or activity and ask what was good about it? What value or values do you think are present or highlighted? Start making a list of the values that are behind the good memories or activity. Are these values evident in any of the other memories or activities?

For example:

If a church camp was a good memory that was mentioned by a number of people. What was good about the camp? What values might be being reflected by the camp?

These might include:

- The Bible teaching
- Fellowship or relationship
- Fun
- The worship

Ask if these values are reflected in any of the good memories or activities. If one of the activities was the morning tea, fellowship or relationship might be also be reflected here. If that is the case you can cross off morning tea and church camp from the list.

The goal is to come away with a list of possible values that might be evidenced from the good memories and activities that everyone listed.

Activity 2

Below is a list of some values that are often found in churches.

- Individually read through the short explanations and select (Circle) the values that you think are present in your church. Choose these values based on how the church operates at the present time, not how you think it should be, or hope it will be in the future. Add any values you think are not present.
- When you first start by circling the values that seem to fit your church, you are likely to find that you have selected a dozen or more values. Go back and, of that initial list, reduce it to the top 9 strongest values.
 - A. **Biblically based.** We have a high commitment to the Word of God, we read it in services, encourage private reading and study of the Bible and it is the basis of what we preach.
 - B. **Generous.** We are generous in the way we use our money and also our time, church buildings, and other resources. We share what we have and we don't look to pay the "Bare minimum" we often go beyond what is expected.
 - C. **Friendly, Warm & hospitable.** We are welcoming to newcomers and seek ways to include people into the whole life of the church. We are a community even when it is not Sunday
 - D. **Tolerant.** We accept that people are different, have different views, and different approaches. We don't feel the need to change them to fit our system. We can accept people even if they don't change.
 - E. **Traditional.** We prefer and value the old and proven ways of church life. We have built up a way of doing things that work and most people in our church are aware of those ways (Traditions)
 - F. **Risk Takers** . We try new things and change old things to see if we can improve them. We often make decisions that might well fail. We don't need to know the outcome before moving ahead.
 - G. **Spontaneous in worship.** We like flexibility in worship. It is hard to predict what may happen in worship from one week to the next. Changes to orders of service etc. happen frequently and that does not cause us stress.
 - H. **Theologically flexible.** We don't see why theological positions should be a barrier to people. We have numerous people who hold different theological positions. We would encourage people to investigate the merits of these positions.
 - I. **A "Safe" environment for wounded people.** People feel accepted and safe in our church. We seem to attract wounded people who come here to heal. We have seen people's lives restored from some devastating circumstances.
 - J. **Evangelistic.** We look for, and find, numerous ways to connect with people and sharing the gospel is part of that connection. At any time there are numerous ways and opportunities for people to hear the gospel. This is a church attitude and not just the burden of a select few.
 - K. **Well organized.** Things in our church are orderly and well organized. When things are planned it is rare that little things are overlooked. We have confidence that planned events will be run well.

- L. **Authentic (“being Real” Transparent & open).** “What you see is what you get” typifies our church. People are no different on Sunday than any other day of the week. We don’t pretend! We don’t seek to hide our faults, either as individuals nor as a church.
- M. **Committed to high-quality corporate Worship.** What happens in our church services is consistently high quality, and we are known for that amongst other churches. We are often complimented on the high standard of our services. We tend not to allow amateurs have a go until they have risen to an acceptable standard.
- N. **Involved in Social Justice** As Church we are involved in a number of different ministries that seek to minister to and advocate for the disadvantaged in our society. We are keenly aware of, and responsive to, issues of injustice.
- O. **Politically active & involved** As a church (Not just a few individuals) we take an active stand in regard to politics. We connect with the political systems in order to bring about a more Christlike society.
- P. **Family Focussed** Families and children are a focus of our ministry at all levels. They are included and we make efforts to make every event family friendly.
- Q. **Oriented to marginalized ministry** We have a real heart for disadvantaged and isolated people. Our facilities are used by community groups who work with marginalised people. We have a reputation in welfare circles as a church who cares
- R. **Multi-cultural** Not only do we have people from different ethnic backgrounds but this is seen in, their presence at leadership levels, and also in the multi ethnic flavour of our worship style.
- S. **Relevant to the needs of the community** We base our decision making and ministry directions with a focus on what the community needs rather just what we would like. We keep abreast of the current community needs in our area and seek to respond creatively to those needs.
- T. **Prayer based** Prayer is a priority for us. Prayer in numerous forms can be seen in the life of our church. When issues arise our immediate tendency is to call the church to prayer.
- U. **A place of high participation by non- clergy people** We do not rely on paid clergy or staff to do all the work of ministry. We believe that all Christians are gifted for service and we create a variety of opportunities for people to be involved in the ministry of the church.
- V. **Led by strong, capable leadership** Our leaders (Pastor/s and elected leaders) give strong, clear leadership to the church. There is a high level of confidence, across most congregation members, in their ability to lead the church in a healthy way.
- W. **Strongly committed to supporting overseas mission** We support a number of overseas missions/ missionaries. Our support is not just financial but relational and also practical. This support is not just among a select few people.
- X. **A place of Doctrine and Orthodoxy** We defend the teachings of the Bible and are aware of the subtle dangers of false doctrine. We are cautious about who we allow to preach and teach in our church. We have regular and systematic teaching to increase people’s understanding of the Christian faith.
- Y.
- Z.

Rank the nine values you selected according to priority in the box below

| | Value |
|---|-------|
| 1 | |
| 2 | |
| 3 | |
| 4 | |
| 5 | |
| 6 | |
| 7 | |
| 8 | |
| 9 | |

Once everyone has selected their 9 top values, use the following master value list to determine a first look at what the Churches values might be.

Process

- Print, enlarge or write up the following Values Master List
- Facilitator should ask if anyone added any additional values and these should be added to the master list.
- Facilitator should work through the values one at a time asking people to indicate if they included that value in their list of nine. Normally people would raise their hands (think European Vision song contest). For example if there are 30 people attending the forum or vision day and 26 said that Value #1 Biblical Based was a value, the facilitator would place 26 in the score column. Once all the values have received a score rank the values according to their number.
- List the highest ranked values on a whiteboard or butchers paper. There should be at least seven and no more than 12.
- Reflect on the values.
 - Are these values actual or aspiration? (Are we actually doing them or just wish to be doing them?)
 - How are or will these values be evidenced? (Where do we see these values being exercised?)
 - If the Good Memory exercise has been done, which if any of the values were reflected in the good stories that were shared?
 - Write a Values statement for each of the ranked values that reflect how the value will be evidenced in the life of the church.
 - You will need to set aside 3-5 people as team to do this or empower the leadership of the church.
 - The values statement should be brought back to wider church within a month.

Master Values

| | Value | Score | Ranking |
|----|---|--------------|----------------|
| 1 | Biblically Based | | |
| 2 | Generous | | |
| 3 | Friendly, Warm, & Hospitable | | |
| 4 | Tolerant | | |
| 5 | Traditional | | |
| 6 | Risk Takers | | |
| 7 | Spontaneous in worship | | |
| 8 | Theologically Flexible | | |
| 9 | A “safe” environment for wounded people | | |
| 10 | Evangelistic | | |
| 11 | Well organized | | |
| 12 | Authentic “being real”, transparent, open | | |
| 13 | Committed to high quality corporate Worship | | |
| 14 | Involved in social justice | | |
| 15 | Politically active & involved | | |
| 16 | Family focused | | |
| 17 | Oriented to marginalized ministry | | |
| 18 | Multi cultural | | |
| 19 | Relevant to the needs of the community | | |
| 20 | Prayer based | | |
| 21 | A place of high participation by lay people | | |
| 22 | Led by strong, capable leadership | | |
| 23 | Strongly committed to supporting overseas mission | | |
| 24 | A place of Doctrine and Orthodoxy | | |
| 25 | | | |
| 26 | | | |

