

missional values

what are values?

Values are those things held in high esteem, prized, of worth or importance.”

Many struggle with the concept of values. I have had extended conversations with church planters trying to express their values who constantly revert to statements about activities or purposes. Values express our deepest convictions and passions, how we want to be known, how we expect to behave or, as church planter Ralph Moore suggests, what we want as our epitaph.

Stuart Murray Williams, Urban Expression

a Biblical example: The Jerusalem Church

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. **43** Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. **44** All the believers were together and had everything in common. **45** They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. **46** Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47** praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

What are the values that might have undergirded the life and practices of the early church?



relationship between vision, values, and strategy

Vision is about:

- WHERE AND TO WHOM we are called to go (our purpose or task).

Values shape and give fragrance to:

- WHY we operate together as we do (our community).

Strategy is:

- WHAT we may need to do to get there (relating to vision/purpose).
- HOW we function and relate together (relating to values/community).

absolute and relative values

When developing values for our fresh expression of church, we need to be aware of the distinction between absolute and relative values.

Absolute values

As Christians we derive our absolute values from our understanding of the nature and character of God. We aspire to be like this because we understand God to be like this. Across all forms of church, both inherited and fresh expressions, we might reasonably expect to see a high degree of commonality in the absolute values that are both espoused and operative. Perhaps the most obvious absolute value is love.

- God is love (1 John 4:16)—the absolute absolute value;
- God so loved the world (John 3:16)—the key missiological value;
- The greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13)—the derived key ecclesiological and discipleship value;
- Love the Lord your God...love your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40)—the discipleship lifestyle based on the absolute value of love.

Relative values

Relative values are formed by the particular needs and culture in, and amongst which, churches are formed, grow, and serve. We choose these values because they are important in order to be missiologically effective in our context. So in Asian cultures, for example, a particular value is placed on hospitality.



Sometimes relative values are simply a matter of choice and preference. This is particularly true when it comes to values that shape the worshiping life of a developing community. A fresh expression amongst professional musicians may place a high value on excellence, while another with teenagers may place a high value on everyone to participate. The particular blend of absolute and relative values that a fresh expression adopts will determine its own distinctive flavor or fragrance.

key roles for values

Values play a key role in each of these vital related areas:

- Ensuring that a fresh expression is indigenous/culturally appropriate—missiological dynamic;
- Forming the identity of a fresh expression—ecclesiological dynamic
- Shaping the leadership team—leadership dynamic

Our values or their values (the missiological dynamic)

- We need to consider carefully the values we hold and the values held by the culture that we are engaging with. Which values are shared? Which values are distinctive?
- We may need to let go of some of our own relative values to become a truly indigenous expression of church.
- We may need to challenge and model some counter-cultural values where the Gospel challenges those of the focus community.

This means we need very wise discernment of the difference between:

- the core of the Christian faith and the nature of God from which we derive our absolute values;
- the relative values we hold as a particular Christian community
- values which are important to a particular culture

What common values might there be between the fresh expression and the host venue that enable the fresh expression to be culturally authentic?

What distinctive values might there be which are necessary to ensure that the fresh expression is authentically Christian?

values that often shape fresh expressions of church

Community-in-mission

You can think of the Trinity as having a community dimension. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate so closely to each other that they are also (in ways we don't fully understand) one person. But they are not inward looking. Their love and energy flows outward in creating the universe, sustaining it and saving the world from sin. There is a sense in which the Trinity is community-in-mission). Fresh expressions are Christian communities-in-mission.

Experimentation

God has built experimentation into the heart of creation. Some experiments will work and some experiments won't work out as well as you'd hoped, but a value of experimentation gives courage to risk for the sake of the gospel.

God's people formed by Word and Sacrament

God works through communities—Israel in the Old Testament, for example, or the community of disciples established by Jesus and home-based expressions of church in the New Testament. Building a sense of the community of God's people is an essential aspect of fresh expressions.

Immersion in culture

To save the world, God immersed himself in human culture. God became human in Jesus, whose everyday life was shaped by the culture in which he lived and served. Following this example, fresh expressions seek to be part of, and to fit, their cultural contexts.

Transforming culture

Jesus did more than just live in a culture and serve people. He called people to change how they lived. He proclaimed the Kingdom of God—the reign of God that transforms individuals and society. Fresh expressions are in the business of personal and social transformation.

Sacrifice

Jesus died so that human beings and creation could have new life. Dying to live is part of the fresh expressions journey. Christians may have to allow their preconceptions of what church should be like to die, so that new forms of church can come alive.



Reproduction

Jesus told his followers to reproduce what he had done with them. He had made them disciples: they were to do the same throughout the world. The church has always spread by reproducing itself—not reproducing clones, but Christian communities with both their own identities and something of a family likeness. Fresh expressions are the church reproducing yet again.

Cultural diversity

When the Spirit came at Pentecost, the different ethnic groups gathered in Jerusalem didn't start speaking the same language: the disciples were empowered to speak in different languages. This was a Godly affirmation of cultural diversity. Fresh expressions respect cultural variations when they take different forms to fit different contexts.

Unity

When Christ returns, all ethnic, class, gender, age, and other barriers between people will be destroyed. People will live in unity. That unity becomes something of a reality when inherited and fresh forms of church affirm, support, and have fellowship with one another.

The fullness of God

The Spirit goes out into the world, seeking to draw people back into the heart of God's love. Fresh expressions follow this "outward" and "inward" movement of the Spirit. They go out in mission to the world, praying that they can join the Spirit in drawing people into the heart of God. This inward movement towards God is the task of lifelong discipleship, which is central to the calling of fresh expressions.

But each fresh expression will have distinctive values that make them who they are uniquely called to be as they seek to be missional, incarnational, formational, and ecclesial.

Read this story: <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/stories/safespace>

What values undergird this fresh expression?

Read this story: <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/stories/sanctus1>

What values undergird this fresh expression?



What absolute values need to be at the core of the fresh expression?

What relative values are important to make your community authentic in its context? Identify 5 values that you consider key to your fresh expression.

- What do each of these words mean to you? (*define the value*)
- If you were “successful”, what would the evidence show? What story would be told? (*how do you evaluate if the value is being lived out*)
- What strategies will you engage to live out these values? (*determine action steps*)

| | | |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Adaptability | Exploration | Multiplication |
| Adventurous | Evaluative | Open |
| Achievement | Faithful | Passionate |
| Appreciative | Flexibility | Positive |
| Authentic | Friendliness | Practical |
| Balance | Fun | Prayerful |
| Boldness | Futuring | Prepared |
| Collaborative | Generosity | Proliferate |
| Communication | Giving | Proactive |
| Connection | Growth | Strategic |
| Creative | Honesty | Systemization |
| Determination | Hopeful | Reflective |
| Daring | Hospitality | Relationship |
| Discernment | Humility | Resourceful |
| Disciplined | Humor | Risk-taking |
| Discipling | Incarnational | Serving |
| Diversity | Inquisitive | Team Building |
| Effective | Inviting | Teamwork |
| Empathy | Joyful | Trustworthy |
| Empowering | Leadership | Vision |
| Encouraging | Loving | _____ |
| Enthusiasm | Loyalty | _____ |
| Excellence | Maturity | _____ |
| Experimental | Maximize | _____ |



resources

Mission-shaped Church, CHP, 2004, chapter 4.

Paul Bayes, ***Mission-Shaped Church: Missionary Values, Church Planting and Fresh Expressions***, Grove Evangelism Series #67, Grove Books, 2004.

Dave Male, ***Church Unplugged***, Authentic, 2008.

Aubrey Malphurs, ***Values-Driven Leadership***, Baker Books, 2004, especially chapters 1-5.