

Healthy Missional Marker #10

Fruitful Organizational Structures

By Peter Sjoblom

So, we've come to the last (but not least) of this series on the 10 healthy missional markers on the Covenant Church Vitality Pathway... Fruitful Organizational Structures.

I've led Veritas conversations in over 70 churches since we began these in 2009. I've been impressed with the openness to address where people see their church in relation to these markers. My hope is that these conversations help us to be talking about the right things relating to each congregation.

I've also wondered what led so many of us to such a critical time or, worse yet, to so readily embrace a stagnant culture. One of the consistent themes I see in healthier congregations is the ability to embrace evaluation as normal and natural. What I've also seen is churches which don't hold this as a norm have a problem introducing evaluation into the system.

I once worked for a large para church ministry which began an attempt to introduce accountability into the organization which previously had very little evaluation. As I managed a large urban staff I was surprised by how put off people were in being asked to be accountable. At the same time it was the first time I encountered the same accountability and I was somewhat suspect too.

The fact is that over a long period of time we had become accustomed to our way of doing things. These were good people, doing good work in most cases, but not used to assessment and evaluation. While introducing a new concept the fact is we were changing the culture. It was not a surprise to sense a resistance and it was also going to take time and input to make accountability an empowering initiative rather than an intrusion. But, over time, it worked and we all began to see the opportunities for learning and new creativity that came as a result.

For many churches evaluation is simply bucks and bodies. It is true that you need both for the church to be vital. But, bucks and bodies follow effective ministry over a long period of time. Many of our board, council, or leadership team meetings are de-motivational when all that is talked about is attendance and dollars.

As a result of assessing vitality, many of our churches have worked the 10 healthy missional markers into the evaluation processes of various committees and leadership meetings as a way of looking at their effectiveness. They don't necessarily address all of them at the same time but they often decide which ones may be more urgent and work from there. Identifying "quick wins" can be empowering for the church and can be the best tools to empower culture change.

It could be that the greatest opportunity for advancement in your church is to shape a more hopeful and empowering culture of assessment and evaluation enabling the structures of your church can be more fruitful.

Peace,