

## CONGREGATIONAL VALUES

*The operative goal is to nurture healthy involvement of the membership  
that will establish and maintain a mission emphasis  
grounded in the true nature and values of the congregation.*

Congregations operate by a core value system. The congregation's value system is formed within the developmental process of its personality. Values become embodied in the social, emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual responses and actions of the congregation. The more leadership recognizes the congregation's value system and honors it by helping the congregation to live in and through its core values the healthier the congregation will be. When the values of the congregation become the framework for the congregation's response to the challenges of being the church today, its response will be more authentic and inspire the members in their service and mission. Recognizing and honoring the value system of the congregation is essential for good health and well-being.

As an expression of the congregation's personality type, the values arise as the preferences working in combination shape interests, focus, and reactions. These preference responses solidify what is valued into a system upon which there is reliance for continuity, stability, and direction. The personality based core value system becomes the foundation for attitudes and actions of the congregation. The congregation's core values will be reflected in its spiritual nature. Each personality type is drawn to differing scriptural passages and theological constructs. For

example, Kingdom of God, Children of God, and Servants of the Lord will not resonate with each personality type. The core value system will find expression in and through the six areas of congregational life: worship, education, witness, service, stewardship, and caring for each other (fellowship). These six areas of life-together will each be emphasized differently in individual congregations and by various denominations in accord with their personality preferences. One will focus on worship, while another will value witness or service; music thrives in one congregation, while another, unless it is engaged in physical involvements and accomplishments, will not thrive at all. There will be a more vibrant disposition within the congregation as responses within these six areas are conducted according to the core value orientation the congregation holds and in proportion to the degree each of these six areas reflects the congregation's preferences.

At base, values appear to have their genesis in the preferences of personality type. The combination of preferences of one's personality, along with the powers of the intellectual, physical, emotional, social and spiritual, work to both interpret and synthesize beliefs, experiences, actions, expectations, and cultural emphasis into a core value structure. While realities and perceptions greatly influence values, it appears that they are, for the most part, shaped or nurtured by one's personality preferences. The congregation which prefers Extroversion (E) will tend to value more a public expression of corporate life and spirituality, while the congregation preferring Introversion (I) will value characteristics of a more private expression of life together and personal faith. The dichotomy can be overly simplified as Public

Religion vs. Private Faith. The Sensing function (S) gives the congregation an orientation, which values details and experiences, and directs the congregation to the past or present. Compare that to the congregation preferring the Intuitive function (N). This function has a creative focus, which appreciates new ideas, possibilities and change. It orients the congregation toward the future. The preferences of the judging functions equally assist in shaping the value structure of the congregation. The thinking (T) function generates a focus on structure, rules, and logic, while the Feeling (F) adds an emphasis of making decisions to create and maintain relationships. The social interactive attitude of Judging (J) promotes a focus on goals and schedules, while the perceiving attitude (P) heightens flexibility and spontaneity in the value structure.

Tables 10.1 and 10.2 outline the influence preferences have on the shaping of values in the congregation. They depict the values expressed through type preferences in congregational personalities.

# Congregational Values

Table 10.1

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## The congregation values energy it receives from E or I?

Congregations, that prefer Extraversion tend to value people and activities. They direct their energy into programs both for the membership and the social community. They are energized by people's involvement in these activities.

Congregations preferring Extraversion value:

- public religion
- more immediate decision processes
- open discussion of ideas or plans
- a variety of activities and experiences
- verbal communication
- helping others by being attuned to social issues and concerns

Congregations that prefer Introversion tend to value worship, spirituality, and theology. They will be energized by ideas and insights into people, social concerns and/or religious issues. For some this will be sufficient, but others may be propelled into action.

Congregations preferring Introversion value:

- private faith
- delayed decision processes
- contemplation of plans or ideas
- a focus on thoughts and ideas
- written communication
- those who address social concerns individually

## The congregation values gathering information from S or N?

Congregations, that prefer the perceiving function of Sensing value gathering information through what they have experienced and the facts and details they perceive. They value an orientation to the present or the past.

Congregations preferring Sensing value:

- that which is tangible
- practical applications
- looking to the past or present
- being factual and concrete
- experiences and doing tasks
- the presentation of information step by step

Congregations that prefer the perceiving function of Intuition value gathering information through inspiration. They focus on the big picture with the interconnectedness of facts. They value an orientation to the future.

Congregations preferring Intuition value:

- possibilities
- ideas and new insights
- looking to the future
- being creative
- understanding the ideas behind the task
- information that depicts big picture with focus on relatedness to other concerns

# Congregational Values

Table 10.2

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## The congregation values making decisions T or F?

Congregations that prefer making decisions through the judging function of Thinking value understanding the logical consequences of a choice or action. They tend to be objective and analytical focusing on cause and effect. Their goal is an objective standard of truth.

Congregations preferring Thinking values:

- cause-and-effect reasoning
- being “tough-minded”
- what they “do” as a congregation
- being reasonable and fair
- mutual respect among members
- impersonal, objective truth
- considering the benefits of something new

Congregations that prefer making decisions through the judging function of Feeling, value consideration of more than what is important to them. How will offers be affected? They make decisions based on their people-centered values. A primary goal is harmony.

Congregations preferring Feeling value:

- being guided by people issues
- being “tenderhearted”
- who they are as a congregation
- being compassionate and accepting
- harmony among members
- who will be affected and how
- knowing the interpersonal affects of something new

## The congregation values working together through J or P?

Congregations that prefer to use their Judging process to organize congregational life value being structured and organized. They try to control and regulate life. They are adept at making decisions, coming to closure and moving on; they like things settled. They value being planned, scheduled, and getting things done.

Congregations preferring Judging value:

- being scheduled
- having a plan
- deadlines and outcomes
- working consistently
- knowing what has been decided
- avoiding last minute pressures

Congregations which prefer to use their Perceiving process to experience and understand life value being flexible and spontaneous. They have no need to try to control life. They value options and are open to changes. They rely on their ability to adapt and be resourceful to get them through many situations.

Congregations preferring Perceiving value:

- being spontaneous
- having options
- processes/the journey
- working casually
- keeping things open-ended
- energy received from “the last minute”

Having a specific congregation in mind, reflect on the values displayed of Tables 10.1 and 10.2. Which of values in the congregation are being encouraged by leadership? Are those values consistent with the preferences expressed in the congregation's personality type? Are the members actively enthusiastic and engaged in the life of the congregation? As a leader, do you perceive the congregation as its personality dictates, or are you projecting on to it the way you want it to be, based more on values with which you are comfortable?

Congregations have learned to try to be something they are not. Congregations have disclosed values for a preferred way of being but try to function in another way because they are still being directed by a previous leader's expectations and demands. As leadership affirms the core values of the congregation the easier it will be for the congregation to trust and further develop its ability to build appropriate actions grounded in the framework of its value system. The operative goal is to nurture healthy involvement of the membership that will establish and maintain a mission emphasis grounded in the true nature and values of the congregation.

Understanding the foundation of the congregation, the value system, is essential before leadership attempts to improve response by changing its polity and leadership model. Too many congregations have restructured staffing, organizational polity, and programs only to experience fail anew. Frequently the changes have been inspired by a leaders previous experience in a different congregation, a church self-help book, or a seminar given by an expert who installed similar changes in his church. A failure will occur when the foundation on which

they are building the new creation is not considered and is of a different value base than a previous success. Before one builds it is important to know the strengths and limitation of the foundation. Do the blueprints you developed for revitalizing the congregation simply start with the visible structure, or do they build on the foundation that is already set-in-stone?

The new leadership of First Church was going to bring the love of God to this rigidly structured congregation. They set out to “change the atmosphere,” which they judged to be stuffy and off-putting. Pastors would no longer be titled “Senior” and “Assistant”: they would serve as co-pastors. Along with giving up the title of Senior Pastor some responsibilities of this position shifted to lay leadership. A lay member of the governing board was selected to be the President and chair the meetings. The new emphasis was on being friendly, hospitable, and open. “It is important to be more laid-back, less rigid,” the pastors told the congregation when criticized for consistent failure to start right on the hour. The congregation expressed its bewilderment in the new leadership style by expressing confusion in knowing with whom “did the buck stop?” Needless-to-say, this remodel of ministry blew apart in the first storm of challenge. First Church valued a hierarchical structure with clear lines of authority and defined responsibilities supported by efficient policies and procedures. If change was recommended, this congregation needed to be convinced through solid logic why it should change; it needed to know what would be the benefits of the new way. First Church has an ESTJ personality type.

This congregation knew it had been ignored and dismissed by the new clergy team. The leadership did not value its values. The new clergy team articulated values informed by their personal preferences of Feeling Perceiving NFP. They wanted to “break the ice” of this cold congregation and get them “to warm-up to visitors and to each other, and to be laid back, less rigid.”