

Missional Churches Value Authentic Relationships

by Kevin Wilson

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Time of Gathering

Over the past 20 years, more and more mainline denomination churches have stopped using a number of traditional worship practices, such as pastors wearing vestments. Brainstorm some of these changes in worship. Talk about some of the reasons churches have made these changes.

Defining “authentic”

Complete the definitions. Then, as a class, brainstorm real life examples for each definition.

Authentic: _____ or _____, not _____ or _____.

A _____ which is considered trustworthy because _____ supports the _____.

People who _____ have their _____ and _____ match their _____.

Biblical Support for Authenticity

Discuss why the following Bible passages support Christians and churches being authentic:

Colossians 2:20-23

James 3:9-10

Matthew 23:27-28

1 John 1:5-7

1 Peter 3:15-16

Biblical Stories of Authenticity among God’s People

Discuss how the following Bible stories illustrate “authenticity” among God’s people.

Acts 17:10-12

2 Samuel 12:1-13

Galatians 2:11-21

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Acts 5:17-32

continued

“Authenticity” Explains some Distinctive Practices of Missional Churches

Discuss the “pros” and “cons” of the following examples of churches being “authentic.”

First Lutheran Church has a policy of allowing any member to review all the financial books with the congregational treasurer. When asked why, the church president says, “We want to keep the trust of the congregation, so we are open and honest in every area of ministry.”

After a Bible class, a relatively new member approaches the class leader. He says he was uncomfortable with how openly the leader talked about Biblical views of sexual relationships. The leader answers: “I could sense some discomfort in class, but as a church we deal with real life issues in a straightforward way.”

Community Lutheran Church has very informal worship services, from worshipers in jeans to a pastor in khakis and a polo shirt. When asked why, the pastor said: “Our members and most visitors see dressing up in suits or vestments as being unauthentic. We stress being real here, focusing on God and relationships and not on traditions.”

Risks of Authenticity

Discuss how the following Bible passages suggest risks for churches being overly “authentic.” Then talk about whether these also apply to conventional churches.

Galatians 6:4-5

Romans 14:1-6

John 4:19-24

Why Missional Churches are Authentic Churches

Christians who left other churches because of perceived _____ are more likely to return to churches that value authenticity.

The older segment of the “_____” generation highly values authenticity. Christians and non-Christians alike from this part of this generation are attracted to authentic organizations.

Churches that stress authenticity are generally _____ because they are less likely to avoid confronting sin and more likely to deal with challenges and issues.

Authentic churches tend to deal with issues from _____ in sermons, Bible classes and seminars, which is attractive to many in the “Buster” and “Millennial” generations.

Authentic churches define their mission according to the “authentic” source, _____, as opposed to what other churches have done or denomination heritage.

Time of Sending

During this week, think about how your church is authentic or could be more authentic. Also ponder examples from other churches. Be prepared to share your thoughts next week.

April 2007. Kevin Wilson is a Mission and Ministry Facilitator for the Ohio District, Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. Accompanying Leaders' Guide, and other studies by Kevin Wilson on characteristics of missional churches, are also available from the Center for U.S. Missions.