

Leading Edge

A Resource for Leaders of Healthy Churches

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Churches today measure “success” by any number of things. In spite of repeated cautions and alerts, the big three are probably still the ABCs. You know: attendance, buildings, and cash. What would happen, I wonder, if we used a more biblical frame? Take the values and practices of God’s kingdom, for example. How might these be used to measure a church’s health?

As I was thinking about this, the following “yardstick” came to mind. Take a look then let me know what you think. I’d love to get your reaction to the possibility of this “values based” approach to church health.

Signs of Life Under God’s Reign

The church is a foretaste of God’s coming reign. Through it, people should be able to “taste and see” God’s gracious rule already at work. Use the following checkup to evaluate the life and ministries of your church.

Authentic Community: God sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit to demonstrate:

- commitment to the body of Christ throughout the world that surpasses our allegiance to our own nation, affinity group, economic system, or ideology
- Christ’s attitude of humility, servanthood, and sacrificial love as the fundamental principle in every relationship
- mutual accountability that translates commitments and beliefs into action
- a primary focus on Christ’s radical way of disciplined life together

What difference should this make in your church?	Ministries in your church that reflect this difference	2-3 things you can do in next 12 months to strengthen this area

Proclamation and Evangelism: God sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit:

- to announce the good news that God has provided reconciliation to the world through Christ
- to tell all nations and peoples of Christ's call to repentance, faith, and obedience
- to proclaim in deed and word that Jesus gave himself to set people free
- to offer in Christ's name fullness of life now and forever
- to call people everywhere to believe in and follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
- to invite them into the community of faith to worship, enjoy, and serve the triune God

What difference should this make in your church?	Ministries in your church that reflect this difference	2-3 things you can do in next 12 months to strengthen this area

Compassion: God sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit to exercise compassion in the world:

- with respect for the dignity of those in need
- with willingness to risk their own comfort and safety
- with readiness to receive as well as to give
- in dependant prayer
- in communion with the worshipping community

What difference should this make in your church?	Ministries in your church that reflect this difference	2-3 things you can do in next 12 months to strengthen this area

Shalom (Justice, Peace): God sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit to demonstrate God's just, peaceable, and loving rule on earth:

- dealing honestly in personal and public business
- exercising power for the common good
- supporting people who seek the dignity, freedom, and respect that they have been denied
- advocating fair laws and just administration of the law

- welcoming the stranger
- seeking to overcome the disparity between rich and poor
- bearing witness against all oppressions and exploitations
- redressing wrongs against individuals, groups, and peoples

What difference should this make in your church?	Ministries in your church that reflect this difference	2-3 things you can do in next 12 months to strengthen this area

Caring for Creation and Life: God calls the church in the power of the Holy Spirit to:

- use the earth's resources responsibly without plundering, polluting or destroying
- champion technological methods and processes that work together with the earth's environment to preserve and enhance life
- produce and consume in ways that make available to all people what is sufficient for life
- work for responsible attitudes and practices in procreation and reproduction
- use and shape earth's gifts to create beauty, order, health, and peace in ways that reflect God's love for all creatures

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Jim Fann is EFCA church health director.



800.745.2202
www.efca.org