

Missional Imagination: What is God calling us to be and to do in the 21st Century?

Presenter: Stephen Harrison

A changing and challenging world calls us to use imagination in our thinking and acting in mission. Stephen's sessions will provoke us to open ourselves to new ways of seeing, being, dreaming and doing in response to all God is calling us to do and be in the 21st Century.

Session 2: Stick your head out of the pond: Seeing ourselves more clearly

To be a church with missional imagination we need to be clear about who we are and what we are for. In this session we will dig deeply into our identity, values and structures to gain greater clarity about our reason for being.

Suggested Reading

Legacy: What the All Black can teach us about the business of life – Kerr

Six Values Medals – De Bono

Introduction

If we are going to be missionally imaginative we need a strong sense of who we are and who we want to be. These are our anchor points or boundaries. Boundaries are important to creativity.

Who are we right now?

Sometimes a particular thing. A piece of art. A poem. Something speaks to us and reminds us of what is most important to us or maybe what we want to be. For me the poem Strong in the Rain by Kenji Miyazawa does this.

Strong in the Rain: Kenji Miyazawa

When I hear this poem it makes me think of some of the things that make me love the Jesus I find in the Gospels. Often when we are very familiar with something...like the the Gospels it becomes harder to see what is special about it. This poem gives me new lenses to see with. It helps me re-see what I love about Jesus.

Or this Coke Ad which if you suspend your cynicism for a second is quite remarkable.

Video: Coke Security Cameras

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRmeOC0FFoQ>

This taps deeply into my sense of the Kingdom of God as I see it described in the New Testament.. Everything is turned on its head.

So why is it that these things help me to see what I value, and what I want to be, what I am more clearly.

It is like this.

Story: Fish

There was once a baby fish who swam up his mother and asked: "Mom what is the water that I hear so much about?" His mother said, "Silly guppy. Water is all around you and within you and gives you life. If you want to know what water is, just swim to the top of the pond and lie there for a while. Then you will find out what water is. Another time, there was a little bear cub who walked over to her mother and asked, "Mom, what is this air that I hear so much about?" Her mother said. 'Silly little bear. Air is around you and within you and gives you life. If you want to know what air is, just stick your head in the stream. Then you will find out what air is."

Golden Rules – Wayne Dosick

The point is this. There are some things like: culture, values, identity that become invisible to us because they are like the air we breathe. We only really become aware of them when we step outside them. The poem and the ad let us step outside them in a tiny way.

If we went overseas and experienced a very different culture we would become aware of what is important to us...because of its absence or the presence of something else we have never really seen before.

Or maybe we go to a church that is very different to our own....and we see things that make us realise what is important to us.

Well I can't take you overseas or to a different church in order to take you out of your culture.

But I can try and shift your perception enough to feel like you are sticking your head out of the pond.

So let's start with values.

Netflix Values

Why it is that large corporations and business and sporting teams always do work on developing their values (even if the execution isn't always perfect.)

If you go online you can find videos about the values of every major company. Watch this...

The Value of Values at Atlassian

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xiwyk3ouul>

The reason there is a focus on values is because it is understood that culture which is largely shaped by operating values has a huge impact on what happens. Operating values shape culture and as the saying goes 'culture eats strategy for breakfast'

You might be familiar with the saying:

What you walk past is what you are willing to accept.

What gets noticed, rewarded or measured gets done.

In a school the behaviour you don't pull up, every time, just keeps happening.

One of the best things I was ever taught in behaviour management is that it doesn't matter the severity of the punishment...but that you do what you say you will do every time.

What this all comes down to is...you can't say you value one thing....and do nothing about it...what you do reflects what you value....

So you might say...well why articulate your values....wouldn't it be better to live them. We need to do both....by articulating you identify what you need...you can then work out how they will be expressed...and then try to live them.

Now my guess is that churches often want to say...well our values are...the values of Jesus or Christian values or the values of the Gospel.

Of course!

But there are different kinds of values.

De Bono Value Medals

- Gold Medal Values: Human Values
What are the values core to us as Christians?
- Silver Medal Values: Organisational Values
What values will help us achieve our goals?
- Steel Medal Values: Quality
What would make our work quality?
- Glass Medal Values: Innovation / Simplicity / Creativity
- Wood Medal Values: Environment / Human Impact
- Brass Medal Values: Perceptions

Activity: Netflix Values [20 min]

Read the Netflix Values.

What are the values of the Anglican Church right now?

Silver

Steel

What evidence do you see of this?

Name one value that might be most important for our future?

(If we want to be a more missional church or to be healthy and growing)

Describe what that value would look like in action?

Suggest three things the church might do if it held that value.

What is our vision statement

Most church vision statements are all the same:

They often state things that are obvious, boring, uninspiring.

What is important ultimately though is how seriously the statement is made.

If your vision is to know Christ and make Christ know.

How have you got to know Christ? How have you made him known?

How many people have got to know Christ through you?

Have you been faithful to your vision statement? Have you done it effectively?

Whose vision statements are these?

Microsoft (at its founding): A computer on every desk and in every home.

TED: Spread ideas.

Etihad Airways: "We seek to reflect the best of Arabian hospitality in everything that we do."

Harley Davidson "To fulfil dreams through the experiences of motorcycling."

Disney: To make people happy.

Amazon "To be the world's most customer-centric company."

Matthew 28:19 (NRSV)

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

This is a great vision statement.

One Nation, One people, One Book - Elisabeth 1

Preach the Gospel, Die, Be forgotten – Count Zinzendorf

Activity:

Looking at what we do, write a possible vision statement for the Anglican Church (Use seven words or less)

The test: Would a stranger looking at us from the outside agree?

A presence in every community.

A church is every suburb.

Pastoral caring for anyone.

To give people an experience of the 1970's

Promoting organ music

Activity:

What would you like the statement to be? [10 min]

Builders of neighbourhood.

Helping people take next steps with Jesus.

Helping people to experience God.

A place where faith and real life intersect.

Marie Kondoing the Church

Who is Marie Kondo?

Cleaning Guru

Throw out anything that doesn't spark joy.

The Church might need to Marie Kondo....but...

Story: The Touchstone

When the great library of Alexandria burned, the story goes, one book was saved. But it was not a valuable book; and so a poor man, who could read a little, bought it for a few coppers.

The book wasn't very interesting, but between its pages there was something very interesting indeed. It was a thin strip of vellum on which was written the secret of the "Touchstone"!

The touchstone was a small pebble that could turn any common metal into pure gold. The writing explained that it was lying among thousands and thousands of other pebbles that looked exactly like it. But the secret was this: The real stone would feel warm, while ordinary pebbles are cold.

So the man sold his few belongings, bought some simple supplies, camped on the seashore, and began testing pebbles.

He knew that if he picked up ordinary pebbles and threw them down again because they were cold, he might pick up the same pebble hundreds of times. So, when he felt one that was cold, he threw it into the sea. He spent a whole day doing this but none of them was the touchstone. Yet he went on and on this way. Pick up a pebble. Cold - throw it into the sea. Pick up another. Throw it into the sea. The days stretched into weeks and the weeks into months. One day, however, about mid-afternoon, he picked up a pebble and it was warm. He threw it into the sea before he realized what he had done. He had formed such a strong habit of throwing each pebble into the sea that when the one he wanted came along, he still threw it away.

<http://www.agiftofinspiration.com.au/stories/attitude/Touchstone.shtml>

Two things.

- I don't want us to throw away what is of value in the habit of tossing stuff out.
- What if the habit has lost its meaning?

We can only Marie Kondo if we know our vision and values.

What are you willing to let go of? What must you hold onto....even if it means dying.

If something isn't worth dying for it isn't worth living for.

Another way of looking at it is **Open hand - Closed hand**

What do you have a closed hand on?

What do you have an open hand on?

We have travelled forward in time and discover that the Anglican Church is healthy and growing – what did it do? Saved the world from disaster – what did it do?