



## APPLICATION TOOL 2

### Identifying Your Church's Culture\*

#### Viewing Your Church as an Outsider

Begin by analyzing your church's culture through the eyes of an outsider. Imagine that in the last month people from your community participated in your church's worship services, sat in on church programs, met several core people, and learned a bit of the history of your church. The goal in this first set of questions is to describe your church's invisible cultural "megaphone" as it is perceived by an observer.

1. What values are communicated most strongly when someone approaches your church from the outside?
2. What would an outsider, after sitting through several worship services, say your church values most?
3. What are outsiders' two to three leading perceptions of your church, after they have participated for a month in a variety of your church's programs and ministries.
4. How would an outsider describe the spirit (or attitudes) most prevalent at your church?
5. Read over your impressions, and sum them up. List a handful of values that the church seems to be broadcasting. How surprised are you by how they compare to what you want to be known for?

\* Adapted from *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out*, Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).

## Analyzing Your Church's Current Culture

Consider each of these ingredients carefully, and write your assessment of it.

1. Look at leadership and values.
  - Who are the culture setters in your church (pastor, church staff, volunteer ministry leaders, community members)?
  - What are the primary values exhibited by those who lead (pastor, church staff, volunteer ministry leaders boards/councils, influential members of the church)?
  - What are the real values coming from each major leadership group? How much unity exists between these groups? In what ways do they clasp?
2. Look at the mission statement of your church. Write your assessment of your mission statement, and how you are or aren't living it out.
  - Is your mission expressed in a serious written document that leaders and the congregation know and embrace?
  - Does your mission statement communicate what you really believe and live?
  - If it does, what are the cultural values it clearly spells out? If not, where are the gaps?
  - If you don't have a written mission statement, what is the implied or assumed mission.
3. Look at your symbols, ceremonies, and celebrations. Write your assessment.
  - What symbols do you see when you look around your church facility? What do these things say about what you really value? What do they communicate about your culture?
  - What ceremonies and traditions does your church honor? How popular are they with the congregation?
  - Who are the heroes in your church—the members who are most celebrated, honored, and emulated? What cultural values do those heroes represent?
4. Look at yourself as a leader.
  - What do I really value?
  - What am I really trying to do and build here at this church?
  - Is it my passion to build a kingdom culture that honors and serves God, or a culture that rewards me?
  - What are my measurements of success as a leader? Do they match up with what I say my real values are?

## The Bottom Line

Answer the following questions with some short, highly descriptive phrases.

1. How would I describe our church's current culture?
  
2. Now it's time to boil it down. As I look over the list I just made, what two or three phrases stand out as the key values that presently *drive* the culture of our church? Are these the values I am passionate about and the ones our leadership team believes that God wants for our church?