

BREAKTHROUGH PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHURCH

What kind of church can reach Munich with spiritual power? What kind of church can attract people to Christ and draw them into the community of the redeemed? What kind of church can overcome the negative perceptions that many have of the modern church? MICC is called to powerfully impact our modern and postmodern community, and is prepared to adapt to our culture without compromising God's truth in order to fulfill that calling. Here are some points of reference on our church profile:

- 🦋 **Purposeful and expectant**—we commit to reaching the lost by cultivating a praying, worshiping, equipping, witnessing body of believers.
- 🦋 **Faithful and flexible**—we honor the mandate of mission rather than man-made tradition. We seek to be innovative and flexible, yet never violate the authority of Scripture.
- 🦋 **Gracious and relational**—we emphasize God's love, acceptance and forgiveness and foster relationships so people can meaningfully share their lives together.
- 🦋 **Attractive and engaging**—we creatively develop ways to capture the interest of contemporary urban people in order to introduce them to Jesus Christ.
- 🦋 **Loving and caring**—we demonstrate equal concern for the needs of believers and for those not yet saved.
- 🦋 **Joyful and celebrative**—we worship God for His holiness, obediently relate to Christ's Lordship and actively draw on the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 🦋 **Vital and dynamic**—we equip people to discover and use spiritual gifts, and empower people to minister to others.
- 🦋 **Growing and reproducing**—we seek to facilitate the growth of believers, and so break through barriers which limit growth in order to multiply ourselves by supporting other new witnessing churches.

Adapted from Linus Morris
Christian Associates International

9. UNITY IN DIVERSITY

In Colossians 3:11, Paul describes the New Covenant community as a place where "there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all." Here at MICC we express the truth that there is no British, no Irish, no German, no Italian, no American, no Turkish, no Singaporean, or no Japanese, but Christ is all and in all. Our common bond in Christ is stronger than any family or national ties. It is a blessing each Sunday to see a foretaste of heaven, knowing that God has called out for Himself a people from every tongue and tribe and nation and we get to experience it right here.

10. COMMUNICATION IN THE BODY

This means that we value communicating individually with one another. We strive as leadership within the church to communicate effectively with everyone else. We let people know how they can be involved, we let people know of prayer needs. We're committed to communicating with you and hearing from you the needs that you have, the concerns that you have.

For us, healthy communication—praying for one another and encouraging one another daily—is a vital element in getting to the place where God is calling us to go.

BOASTING ONLY IN THE CROSS

All these treasures must be traced back to a very significant foundation. Paul writes in Galatians 6:14 "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

It may seem strange to you to boast in the cross. If you had been there when Jesus was crucified, it would not have been a pleasant sight; it was shameful and repulsive because the righteous Son of God died a cruel death by execution in an unjust way. Yet it's on the basis of what Christ completed on the cross that everyone of these ministry strategies, every one of these ministry priorities is grounded (1 Cor. 15:16-19; 57). If Christ is not raised, we have no hope. Let's go out to the pubs and get drunk. Let's stay away from work. Let's waste our lives on all kinds of useless, high-spirited, fast living in *this* world, because we have no hope.

But the good news is that Christ *has* been raised and because of the cross, all of these ministry strategies are not about MICC. It's not about us and what we're doing, but it's all about Jesus, His glory and His fame.

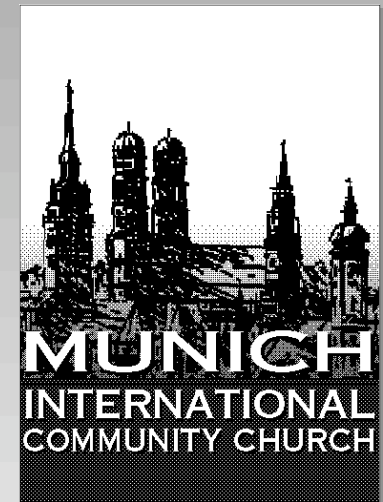
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WORTHY TREASURES: OUR CORE VALUES IN MICC

GLORIFYING CHRIST
PRIORITIES FOR MINISTRY
GROWING IN UNITY



HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

In MICC, we believe that God is calling us to be a significant, growing presence in this city. We believe that God is calling us to be a developing, growing and equipping place. We believe that God is calling us to be a reproducing church. We believe that we're to be a home for many people from many different lands, a place where believers can introduce their friends, their co-workers, their friends, their neighbors, to the gospel, and to life in Jesus Christ.

But the question remains: how are we going to get there?

Today, the trend is to identify an organization's "core values" to help them know how they're going to fulfill their mission and vision. We're a little hesitant to call these "core values" exactly because it is a little trendy. The idea of "values" can be different from what God reveals as ministry priorities for us. Three or four of us could get together and say, "we value this" but the bigger question is, what does *God* place a value on? What is it that *God* is calling us to and how is it that *He* would have us use the cultural diversity and the individual giftedness that we have in MICC? How would *He* want us to achieve *His* purposes?

Since we're looking for something more established and eternal, we're calling these *Worthy Treasures*. These are ten sound premises that we believe are worthy of building upon.

1. GOD-CENTERED MINISTRY

God's first commandment is, "I am the LORD your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, the house of slavery, you shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20). In Revelation 5-6 we see the worship of the Lamb enthroned in heaven where all the angels and the elders bow down and cry, "Holy Holy Holy."

There's none like Him, He is the only one worthy to receive our praise. Our ministry seeks to be centered upon Jesus Christ; He is at the core of all we're doing. That's the only thing that will give Him honor. A man centered ministry won't do it. A fun-centered ministry won't do it, a people-centered ministry won't do it.

If we don't focus upon God then we'll invariably center on other things that are not worthy treasures—not worthy of our affections, our focus, or our energy.

2. THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

We believe that God's Word—the Old and New Testaments—are utterly reliable, truthful, and inerrant. God has spoken and He has not stuttered, and our ministry relies on the final authority and sufficiency of the Bible for all matters of faith and conduct.

We are not to study the Bible to fill our minds with trivia and to satisfy our curiosity. Jesus prayed in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through your truth, your Word is truth." The Word of God is God's primary instrument in changing us. It is His tool to change the way that we think, live, act and feel—so that our thoughts, our emotions, our affections, and our commitments are transformed by His word. The Word of God is a tool; it's not a toy.

Also, the Word of God should not be used as a weapon. We don't use the truth of God's word to beat someone who believes a little bit differently than we do. That's not the right use of God's word. It *is* the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17) but it is to be used as a sword against the enemy of our souls, and not against God's people.

3. PENETRATING OUR COMMUNITY

In the Great Commission Jesus tells his disciples to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). This call means we are to be penetrating the community around us with the Word of God. As a church we will penetrate on a *personal* level; our reaching out to others will be *personal* and *relational*, not *programmatically*.

The primary way that we will penetrate the community is one family, one person at a time. Why? Because some of us live in Eichenau and have a community, and others live in Neuperlach and have a community...and God sends us out from this place to those other places where we can be salt and light individually in those communities and we can penetrate those communities. This is also true of our workplaces: some of you work for BMW, some work for The Gap, some work for the Patent Office, some have an office in your home; some of you are in German schools, some are in international schools. Every one of us has a community to penetrate as an ambassador of Jesus Christ and to declare "The Kingdom of God is here and I am a messenger sent from God to bring a message of reconciliation." That's what 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 is all about—penetrating our community.

4. GIFTEDNESS AND MINISTRY PASSION

As a church we want to encourage a kind of ministry and personal development in which people serve according to their gifts and passions. You can develop ministry in a church by standing up and saying, "We need 16 people to serve in this ministry, and we're going to lock the doors until we get 16 volunteers."

That's one way to do it, but it's not effective—you have four people that are happy about doing it, four who couldn't care less and eight people who say "I really wish I was doing something else." 1 Corinthians 11-12, Ephesians 4 and 1 Peter 4 describe how, through identifying and deploying spiritual gifts, and combining those gifts with individual ministry passion, we can be fulfilled and fruitful (Gal. 5:22-23) as we glorify God in our service.

5. LIFECHANGE IN SMALL GROUPS

Jesus had a small group. He called them disciples—twelve men that he met with regularly, that he was involved with in ministry training and personal development. Jesus knew that there were huge numbers of people he couldn't humanly reach. He spoke to the large crowds, but he invested his life in twelve and even more intimately in three.

The early church met daily in homes and devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42ff). The New Testament commands us to love one another, to pray for one another, to encourage one another, to rebuke one another, to restore one another. It's very difficult for us to obey the "one another" commands while we are in church between 4:00 and 5:30 on Sundays. The only way to obey these verses is to be involved in a smaller group of people. If you're not in a small group, get in one! Join one for encouragement, for discipleship, for growth, for your walk.

In the course of ministry in MICC, the small groups are the central place where discipleship, nurture, pastoral care and evangelism take place. In small groups we're reaching out to people and drawing them in to the life of the church.

6. STRONG CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

We have a huge number of families at this church with a lot of children. We have about 150 children from birth to age 18.

Why do we do that? Is it because that's what churches traditionally do? Because you have to have a place where you can stick the kids while the adults meet and talk about things that are over the kids' heads? Is that why we do it? No.

Do we do it because we've always done it that way? No.

Do you know why we do this? Because we have a heart for the next generations. We're not just concerned with the short term issue of holding meetings today. Just as Paul says in Romans 1 that the gospel has been passed from faith to faith, from generation to generation, we recognize that we have the privilege of communicating the gospel from parents to children—from one generation to the next. Psalm 78 reminds us, "Ask your father and he will tell you what God did for the people of Israel".

Having a heart for the next generations means we think of what God might do with our lives. The reason **we're** here is that there were faithful men and women in the 17th through 20th centuries who passed on the gospel, who treasured the word of God, who encouraged the worship of the Triune God, who penetrated their community, who served one another according to their giftedness, who saw their lives changed in relationships. We are their legacy, and God intends for us to leave one behind for his glory.

7. PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL

We ought to ask ourselves: "Is prayer crucial to our ministry or is it essential?" To answer that, let's talk about air and breathing. Is air crucial, or is air essential? It's essential. You've got to have it. If you don't have air—life will be over soon. That's pretty convicting when you talk about prayer that way, isn't it? Is prayer essential? Prayer is essential for everything that we do. Peter writes in 1 Peter 4:7 "The end of all things is near, therefore be clear minded and self-controlled, so that you can pray." Notice the order there: the end of all things is near. We might think it's time to pack up and go up on the mountain and just wait. No, he says, get your head straight. Be clear minded, be self-controlled. Why? so you can get out and do all the things that need to be done and minister because the end of all things is here? No, so you can pray.

8. DEVELOPING LEADERS

Paul, in Ephesians 4:11-12, says that God gave gifted men—apostles and prophets and evangelists and teaching shepherds—to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up and mature the body. In a church our size, the pastor can't do everything. That's why we have elders and deacons and other leaders. The elders in MICC share the responsibility for the oversight of the ministry; they're personally accountable for the spiritual care of the families that God has brought to MICC. We have small group leaders and Sunday school teachers and others who are also responsible for this kind of personal ministry.

Ours is not a centralized, bureaucratic kind of ministry, but a decentralized, active and involved network of caring leaders. As Paul challenged Timothy to select and train faithful saints who would be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2), we train leaders to unleash a towering tidal wave of ministry to extend God's fame in the world.