

Tool #9: Program vs. Paradigm

Is holistic ministry a program ... or a paradigm?

The answer, of course, is *both*! Ministry programs should flow from a missional paradigm. A ministry program without grounding in a missional paradigm is in danger of becoming divorced from discipleship, spiritually stagnant, and eventually secularized. A missional paradigm that does not give birth to contextualized activities is like faith without works—dead (James 2:26).

Discuss the following chart. Examine whether your church simply runs programs, or whether programs are rooted in a broader missional paradigm. Is the church moving toward a missional paradigm? What might draw the church to develop this paradigm?

Ministry Program	Missional Paradigm
has specific, contextual objectives	is the overall purpose for the church's existence
answers the question, "What do we do?"	answers the question, "Why are we here?"
bounded in time and place	ongoing, organic
distinct from other church activities	interconnected with all of church life
associated with a particular group (such as a task force or volunteer team)	the calling of every Christian
establishing a program requires organization	establishing a paradigm requires empowerment
a new program means added activity	a new paradigm means a change in activities
requires congregational resources	requires congregational ownership
evaluation measures effectiveness	evaluation assesses faithfulness
invites church members to become involved	invites church members to become disciples
might eventually no longer be needed	is essential as long as the church is in the world
is separate from participants' personal lives	kindles transformation in members' personal lives
(add your own)	(add your own)