

TREASURE IN CLAY JARS: PATTERNS IN MISSIONAL FAITHFULNESS  
Patterns as Indicators of Missional Congregations  
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*Treasure in Clay Jars* defines a missional church as “a church that is shaped by participating in God’s mission, which is to set things right in a broken sinful world, to redeem it, and to restore it to what God has always intended for the world.”<sup>1</sup> Barrett further describes a missional church as seeing itself as “not so much sending, as being sent.”<sup>2</sup> The patterns used to describe what such a missional church “looks like” are: (1) discerning God’s specific missional vocation; (2) learning a Biblical model of discipleship; (3) taking risks in contrast to the surrounding culture; (4) demonstrating the congregation’s specific ministry vocation in the community; (5) worshiping as public witness to the community; (6) depending on the Holy Spirit’s guidance; (7) pointing to the reign of God; and (8) providing leadership to members through a person or team.<sup>3</sup>

Barrett’s methodology was to apply the patterns to several churches as illustrations of missional faithfulness. As Barrett told the stories of these churches over and over, what stood out was that the churches were engaged in useful service to their specific communities, generally not in a top-down display of mercy or compassion, but as servants of the Word and their neighbor. These churches identified with the communities they ministered to. Some of the churches moved their ministry site, while others had members move into the neighborhood of those they served, giving up luxuries and lifestyles they were accustomed to. Members of these

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<sup>1</sup> Lois Y. Barrett et al., *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004, x.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See generally, Ibid., xii-xiv.

churches, like God in Christ, left behind their positions in the world to become like those they served.

Mostly, the missional churches employed strategies that could be considered good business or organizational practices. They spent time defining the mission and vision of their congregation, and continued to monitor the congregation's activities as they pertained to that clearly defined mission and vision (i.e. "map making").<sup>4</sup> The missional churches were willing to "self-define" and allow outsiders to know how to connect with them. They employed good adaptive leadership principles, including collegiality and permission-giving.<sup>5</sup> They challenged the "fundamental operating assumptions of the twentieth-century church..."<sup>6</sup> The missional churches budgeted, but "when needs come up, they spontaneously allot money to address them."<sup>7</sup>

*Treasures in Clay Jars* shows that missional congregations cannot only be defined as "Lutheran," or as "church," or even as a "group of people who live responsibly." Missional congregations need to better define why their congregation exists in the world. Missional congregations rally around a community need and endeavor to serve those needs as an extension of God's service to us in Christ.

## Reference

Barrett, Lois Y., ed. *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns of Missional Faithfulness*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 55, 145.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 78.