

## **The Value of Graduating From Disney University**

**By: Steve Jones, FEB Canada President**

Often there is a lot of talk about the importance of “vision” and “mission” when it comes to the life and ministry of a local church; but what about values?

I enjoyed a leadership development gathering a few years back at Disney University, located at Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Disney claims that values are the most critical thing to care for. Your vision may change, but your values often do not, so you've got to get them right.

I was blown away when I toured the Disney parks asking employees (from fun ride operators to cleanup crews) what Disney's core values were—without exception every employee could share how these values directed their daily mission and fulfilled Disney's ultimate vision.

Without values, any organization suffers.

### **The Story of Dr. Goldberg and Bruno**

I grew up in a small, largely English-speaking suburb of Montréal. We lived a five-minute walk from a corner drugstore and a grocery. I remember walking up Pine Beach Boulevard as a young boy fetching bread or milk for my mom. Mr. Goldberg ran a very efficient little pharmacy and convenience store. My mom knew him well. The grocery store was next door and the proprietor was Bruno. The paint on the wooden meat enclosures was chipped, and he still threw sawdust on the floor to keep the flies down. I've never seen that since. Each store, side by side, had its weaknesses and its strengths. But as the 1960s ended and the 1970s began, Mr. Goldberg noticed the needs of customers were changing. More customers wanted to get in and out of the store quickly, rather than chatting with the proprietor. Others wanted a greater selection of merchandise, and so some of his customers were leaving and going to the newly opened Dorval shopping mall. None of us had seen anything like it before. The age of the shopping mall had begun. Mr. Goldberg must have sensed the dissonance and interpreted it as an ultimatum for change. Bruno kept throwing sawdust on the floor.

Mr. Goldberg chose to survive and even thrive despite the new shopping mall. We no longer asked for our Life Saver candy rolls from behind a counter; Mr. Goldberg had installed a self-serve candy counter. My brothers and I were in confectionary heaven! He hired another pharmacist so prescriptions could be dispensed quicker. Bruno, on the other hand, kept throwing sawdust onto the floors of his dimly lit grocery store.

By the mid-1970s when we moved from Montréal, Bruno's grocery store was bankrupt while Mr. Goldberg's drug and convenience store was flourishing.

Why did one business thrive while the other failed?

Mr. Goldberg demonstrated how an organization can refocus its values on the original impetus for its success. Values are those expressed or understood truths that direct how we're going to operate on a daily basis. They demonstrate how we're going to fulfill our mission and vision—whether we're going to value honesty or innovation while we fulfill our mission as a pharmacy or grocery.

Our values should support us in focusing on mission. Fulfilling our original purpose is worth an interruption or even suspension of familiar ministries, programs, and even values. Churches are faced with a similar dilemma. Like Bruno, we can persevere in our comfortable ministry habits but the result will be churches closing in record numbers across Canada.

The United Church of Canada have staff members whose job is to sell the thousands of empty church buildings they have. Even our own Fellowship of churches has planted well over 200 new churches since 1990, but we have remained an association of about 500 churches over the past 30 years. Churches close.

What do our values say about our eagerness to fulfill mission? Are we willing to face reality, possibly giving up some sacred cows, for the glory of God? The values we carefully choose will help or hinder us in this noble cause.

Let's get our values right and thrive.

Have a blessed week,  
Steve