

# Strategic Planning



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## Leader's Guide

*How to use BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS in your regularly scheduled meetings.*

Welcome to *BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS: Your Complete Guide to Leadership Training*. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you develop leaders who can think strategically and biblically about the church. Selected by the editors of *Leadership Resources* and *Christianity Today International*, the material comes from respected thinkers and church leaders.

*BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS* is not just another program. Each theme contains materials on the topic you choose—no tedious program to follow. The materials work when you want, where you want and the way you want it to. It's completely flexible and easy to use.

You probably already have a monthly meeting with board members or regularly scheduled meetings with other committees or groups of leaders. *BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS* fits easily into what you're already doing. Here's how to use this resource at the beginning of a board or committee meeting:

**1. Select a learning tool.** In the theme of "Strategic Planning," you'll find multiple handouts from which to choose specific training tools:

- ◆ an interview
- ◆ assessment tools
- ◆ case studies
- ◆ devotionals
- ◆ how-to articles
- ◆ activities
- ◆ resources
- ◆ sample retreat

**2. Select a handout.** Suppose, for example, you have decided that your board or team needs to assess its understanding of change. There are two assessment options in this theme: "Price of Progress" (p. 5) and "Pool of Support" (p. 6). Select the one that best fits what you want to accomplish.

**3. Photocopy the handout.** Let's say you selected "Price of Progress." Photocopy as many copies as you need—you do not need to ask for permission to photocopy any material from *BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS* (as long as you are using the material in a church or educational setting and are not charging for it).

**4. Prepare for the discussion.** We recommend you read the Scripture passages and identify key discussion questions. How will you apply the principles to specific decisions your church is making?

**5. Lead the discussion.** Each handout can be read within 5 minutes. After you have allowed time for reading, begin the discussion by asking one of the provided questions. Be ready to move the discussion to specific issues your church is facing.

Most *BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS* handouts can be discussed in 15 or 20 minutes. Your board, committee, or team will still have plenty of time to discuss its agenda.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at [www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com](http://www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com).

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## Sticking to Your Mission

*The importance of saying no.*

Joshua 24:15; Isaiah 61:1-3

*Called the father of modern management, Peter Drucker is one of the leading thinkers about the modern organization. A Christian believer, he has also spent many years studying and consulting with nonprofit organizations. In this interview he says that effectiveness requires leaders to pay attention to what's working well in the church.*

### How do you gauge the effectiveness of a church?

*Peter Drucker:* All nonprofits have one essential product: a changed human being. This is a different approach from business. In business, the goal is not to change the customer; it's not to educate the customer; it's to satisfy the customer.

But nonprofits aim for change. Hospitals seek to change sick patients into healthy ones. Schools aim to change students into educated individuals. The church's aim is to make a difference in the way the parishioner lives, to change the parishioner's values into God's values.

### How important is it for a church to develop a distinctive vision?

A unified, clear vision is essential, and yet nonprofits almost always have a number of constituencies, each of which wants something different emphasized. When you look at churches, the mission is clear. It comes straight out of the Gospels—to bring the gospel to all of mankind. Very clear, very simple. I'm not saying it's the easiest, but it's the simplest.

### What are the key steps in arriving at a common vision?

You have to know when to say no. That's particularly difficult for a church. But some things are not your responsibility.

Often people feel the church exists to take care of problems. Yet the effective ones know what their mission is, and they make no apologies for sticking to that. At times we all have to say, "The need is there, but this ministry is not for us."

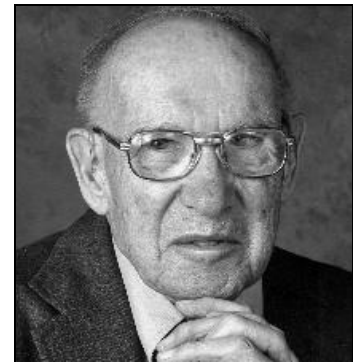
The church is the only organization that is not entirely concerned with the kingdom of this earth. We're the only one with another dimension. And for that reason, many good concerns around here are not our primary focus.

### What is the role of leadership in implementing that direction?

The key question for a leader is: What can I do in this organization that nobody else can do? And several questions emerge from that: What did the good Lord ordain me for? What are my strengths? What am I good at? Where have I seen results? Few ask these questions because few of us even know how we perform. We've been trained to notice our weaknesses, not our strengths.

### How does a leader get an accurate reading about his or her strengths?

The absolutely reliable method is to think through what your key activities are, and every time you do something in a key activity, write down what you expect to happen. Nine months later look at what really happened. Within a year or two, you find out what your strengths are.



**PETER DRUCKER**

*"At times we have to say, 'The need is there, but this ministry is not for us.'"*



## **Sticking to Your Mission** *continued*

### **What kinds of things should church leaders monitor?**

Their intentions, their actions, and whether the results were the expected results.

For instance, I may discover when I put a person in charge of a particular ministry, my batting average is very high. Apparently when it comes to people decisions, I do well.

On the other hand, perhaps I find that most times when I've started a new program, it flounders. And when I ask what I did wrong, often I can identify a bad habit. It may be impatience. I insert myself in the activity and discourage the people delegated to lead it. If you pull up the radish every two weeks to see how it's going, it will never survive.

Part of the leader's job is to set the spirit of the organization. That doesn't mean simply to lay out policy and plans, but to exemplify them, to pay personal attention to the areas where the vision is being worked out.

### **What is the essence of effective church ministry?**

I don't know how I would define success, except I surely would ask myself whether we're making a difference in the way people see what's truly important in life.

The key is the commitment to be available to people. You may have heard the old proverb: "When it rains manna from heaven, you have to have a big spoon." When the opportunity is there, when the person is receptive, you are there, and you've established a trust.

### **To Discuss**

1. What ministries are we involved in currently that another church in the area is also involved in? Should we continue to participate in those ministries?
2. What have we recently said no to? Why?
3. What is the mission of our church? Do we all agree what it is?



## Price of Progress

*3 questions to answer before starting a new ministry.*

Galatians 1:10; 1 Kings 22:5

*Wise planning considers all possible consequences of an action. Here are three cost questions to ask before beginning a new program:*

**1. Will this distract us from our primary mission?** I came to Elmbrook Church fresh from ministry in Europe to countercultural youth. Shortly after my arrival, I discovered that one hundred young people, most of whom had dropped out of organized religion, were meeting at the home of one of our members. When I met them, I learned they felt they were not welcome at church. I persuaded them to come one Sunday morning. When they showed up in blue jeans and T-shirts, the congregation reacted with consternation; many parents were concerned that their teenagers be kept separate from the perceived negative influences of these young people.

My vision, on the other hand, was to build a church that bridged the gaps between the disparate groups. How to reconcile the two?

This conflict could have been costly, but I was willing to pay the costs (potential lost members and lost credibility) to reach the alienated youth, who were central to my mission at Elmbrook. We eventually created a special Sunday school class to bring together adults and the countercultural adolescents. The class studied the Book of James together; the teaching responsibility was divided between one older and one younger person. The class was an immediate success.

**2. How much turmoil will this cause?** Many years ago, as the church grew rapidly, we needed to create small-group opportunities. But people said they couldn't give another weekday evening in addition to Wednesday, the traditional evening for our prayer meeting. We looked at the numbers attending the Wednesday meeting, evaluated what they were doing, and decided to substitute small groups on Wednesday evening for this traditional service.

Some people, who never attended the Wednesday evening service, said, "We've always had a Wednesday evening service" and vowed to leave the church. Our groups have prospered, though, so much that six new churches have been born, thanks to them.

**3. Whom are we choosing to lose?** With every decision, we lose someone, either someone now in the church or someone who may have joined in the future. The question isn't whether we will lose people, but who.

When our church broadened our musical styles, we implicitly chose to lose those adamantly committed to traditional organ and hymns, although in fact few actually departed—a credit to their grace and the quality of our music ministry.

—D. STUART BRISCOE

### To Discuss

1. Is Paul's attitude in Galatians 1:10 applicable in church controversy about change? Why or why not?
2. Is it biblical to "choose to lose" some people? Why or why not?
3. Often people who resist change are seen as unspiritual or deadwood. How does our church treat people who resist change?



## Pool of Support

*5 categories to help identify the people you need.*

Luke 5:1-11; Romans 12:11

*Growth requires change, so churches need to know how individuals will respond to new initiatives. People tend to fall into one of five categories:*

- 1. Innovators** (2 percent). Dreamers and visionaries, they are not often acknowledged as leaders or policy makers.
- 2. Early Adopters** (18 percent). Respected and influential, they know a good idea when they see it.
- 3. Middle Adopters** (60 percent). The majority, they react to ideas rather than generate their own. Inclined toward maintaining the status quo, they are more influenced by those opposing change.
- 4. Late Adopters** (18 percent). The last to endorse a new idea, they often speak against change. They may never verbally acknowledge acceptance of a new idea but will eventually go along if the majority supports it.
- 5. Never Adopters** (2 percent). They often sow discord after change is adopted and will eventually leave if they don't get a following.

You won't need to work hard to convince Innovators and Early Adopters of the value of your new idea. Late Adopters will not be convinced before the idea actually becomes reality. But if you can convince the majority of Middlers to support the initiative, you are on your way. Most Middlers prefer the known to the unknown. This does not mean Middlers are closed to reason or cannot catch the excitement of a new vision. But they tend to support the status quo unless given a good reason to change, or are assured that change will not result in a loss of quality. Earlies are generally well-respected. Their words are given serious consideration and their leadership is usually followed. Make a list of your Earlies, then solicit their active support. Ask them to endorse the new proposal in formal meetings and informal discussions. Explain that hallway conversations often influence Middle Adopter members more than anything else. And let them know that in committee meetings, their support may make the difference between failure and success.

—CHARLES ARN

The above categories are taken from *Diffusion of Innovations* by Everett M. Rogers.

### To Discuss

1. Who are the Middle Adopters in our congregation?
2. Which category does most of our leadership come from?
3. How are the Late Adopters and the Never Adopters shaping our discussion about change?



## Hard Decisions

*How one church handled the process of change.*

1 John 4:7-8; 19-21

**The Case** After establishing a new vision statement, First Church called a new pastor. The church began to thrive and to experience a significant turnaround. Charles Johnson, the new pastor, was a visionary leader with a track record of leading healthy churches. Within six months of his arrival, the church had grown from 125 to 180 in attendance. Steve Phillips, the board chairman (who had waited patiently for change to occur in the church) was delighted that Pastor Johnson had come to the church and met regularly with him, discussing their shared vision for the future.

After a few meetings, the two became convinced that three things had to change for the church to have the resources needed to grow and to reach its potential: The church secretary, an older woman with long tenure, needed to step down; the part-time youth pastor also needed to step down; and an ineffective ministry needed to be terminated. The pastor and board chairman began making plans to address these problems.

**What Would You Do?**

- ◆ What are the potentially explosive issues facing these leaders?
- ◆ How would you create a process to implement the necessary changes?

**What Happened**

Pastor Charles and Steve gathered the church leaders and reminded them of their new vision to reach the lost through the ministry of the church. Pastor Charles pointed out the discrepancies between what the church was currently doing and the need to accomplish the vision. The church leaders affirmed that they would stand together in making the needed changes.

Pastor Charles then met with a labor lawyer to discuss the legal ramifications of letting people go: what the church could and could not do. He set up meetings with key people in the church to discuss the plans, while keeping confidential what was necessary.

He then met separately with all the people involved—the secretary, the youth pastor, and the leaders of the ministry to be terminated—on the same day to tell them of the decision. All were told how this decision was related to the new vision of the church. Pastor Charles finally implemented a plan to honor those let go for their service to Jesus Christ and the church over the last several years. The result was minimal flack over the dismissals and cancellation of the ministry and more rapid growth in evangelism and Sunday attendance.

—PAUL BORDEN

**To Discuss**

1. The story never mentions why the youth pastor and secretary needed to be fired. Should people be released simply because “they don’t share the new vision”? Why or why not?
2. What is the pastor’s role in leading change? What is the role of church leadership in bringing about change?
3. First John 4:7-8 points out clearly the role love should play in Christian community. How does this passage apply when implementing change?





## Demographics That Matter

*How to find specific information about your community.*

Luke 15:8-10; 11-31

**The Case** “I don’t think we really understand our community,” Susan insisted. For a moment, the banter around the table stopped. The other eight members of Pine Valley Community Church’s strategic planning team waited for Susan to continue.

“Our plans for outreach assume that agriculture will continue to drive our valley’s economy,” she said. “But has anybody noticed the kind of people who are moving into our valley? They’re a white-collar crowd. We’ve been talking about ministries that will reach the boomer crowd. But did you see the article in Sunday’s paper about the number of twenty-year-olds who live in the valley? I don’t think we can make plans until we take time to understand our community.”

Rod chimed in: “Maybe we should hire a consultant to profile our community.”

Jerry, another member, frowned: “We can’t afford that. How can we get the information we need?”

### What Would You Do?

- ♦ Where does a church look for helpful information about its community?
- ♦ How does a church decide which group to reach out to?

### What Happened

As the discussion continued, the team members realized they could function as their own demographic consultant. Susan offered the first suggestion: “I’ll stop by the Chamber of Commerce tomorrow on my way home from work. I believe they have put together a community profile that they send out to prospective businesses and individuals who inquire about moving here.”

Dave, a high school teacher, piped in: “I’ll visit with Pine Valley’s high school principal. I think he has a good handle on the growth rate in the valley. They would also know what some of the trends are and what kinds of problems teens will be facing in our valley in the future.”

Other members suggested visiting friends in key leadership roles: a newspaper editor, a bank president, and a manager at Wal-Mart. Another suggested a simple demographic analysis of the congregation, which could be compared with the profile of the community from the Chamber of Commerce. Someone else mentioned checking with the county historical society for ideas on trends.

By the end of the meeting, the group left prepared to gather information from multiple sources. They scheduled a meeting for the following week, confident that they would gain information about their community needed to make their plans more strategic.

—STEVEN D. MATHEWSON

### To Discuss

1. Who are some key people who may know where the community is headed?
2. If we put together a community survey, what kinds of questions should we ask?
3. How do the demographics of our church family match up with those of the community?





## Jesus' Strategic Plan

*His instructions still apply today.*

Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20

**Read** *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).*

**Comprehend** Jesus was resurrected. He had hung around for a while to establish the validity of his breach of death. His three-year training camp for disciples was over. Now was the time to send them into the field. What was his plan, the final grand instructions for his people before he disappeared for good?

It wasn't a command: Go do this! It wasn't a warning: Watch out for this! Jesus' final words were an absolutely accurate prediction and a plan. First the followers would receive power, which they did at Pentecost! Then they would be witnesses, which they also were at Pentecost—and until their deaths. A ragtag band of fallible yet empowered disciples turned the world on its ear.

What can we learn from Jesus for our planning? First, Jesus had a goal: To be witnesses in order to make disciples, baptize them, and incorporate them into the church and its teaching (Matthew 28:18-20). That goal still stands.

Second, Jesus provided a staged process to meet the goal. It wasn't one day the Upper Room, the next Japan on the far side of the world. No, the stages made sense. First, there was Jerusalem, familiar yet unconquered territory. Within any congregation—a church's "Jerusalem"—remain people to be touched with Jesus' grace. These people may know the church, but they haven't yet met the Christ.

The second stage was Judea and even Samaria. These are the near neighbors, people a whole lot like the folks in the pew but oriented in extremely different ways. They may speak the same language and occupy the same neighborhoods, but they don't yet live in the same spiritual reality as Christian disciples. They need to be reached.

The final stage was "the ends of the earth," Rome even—the godless, gods-filled other space festooned with foreigners. Horrors for the devote Jew! But fertile fields for a disciple like Paul. This field used to be across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans for American Christians; now such fields fill the adjoining block.

Last, we learn of the power to fulfill the strategic plan: Our plans are dust without the whirlwind of the Spirit to make them an all-consuming tornado.

—JAMES D. BERKLEY

- Discuss**
1. Using only the record of our church's activities during this past year, what overarching goal would a future historian decide was our church's chief goal?
  2. Are there subsets of people within our congregation who yet need to be evangelized—children, nonattending spouses, infrequent attenders? What plans might reach them?
  3. What can our church do to better fulfill Jesus' strategic plan for our congregation's "Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth"?



## No Good Substitute

*God's people plan as they carry out his mission.*

Proverbs 16:3; 29:18

**Read** *Commit your work unto the Lord, and your plans will be blessed (Proverbs 16:3).*

**Comprehend** I have always been impressed with how people in the Bible planned strategically as they sought to carry out the mission of God:

- ◆ Moses appointed officials over the people of Israel and had them serve as judges.
- ◆ David planned and provided for the building of the temple and left everything needed for Solomon to complete the task.
- ◆ Nehemiah made careful preparation and plans for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in order to restore security and self-esteem to the people of Israel after the Babylonian captivity.
- ◆ As the time approached for Jesus to complete his mission, he set his face like a flint toward Jerusalem. It was as if Christ had orchestrated the events of his final days on earth in order to accomplish God's divine plan.
- ◆ The apostle Paul developed a missionary strategy of proclaiming the gospel and establishing churches in centers of commerce from which the gospel could be taken to outlying villages.

Throughout biblical history, godly people have been strategic planners. Prayerful and thoughtful analysis and preparation are the keys in designing for success in the work of God. The five phases of effective planning include: 1) analysis, which asks, "Where are we?" 2) visioning, which asks, "Where are we going?" 3) planning, which asks, "How are we going to get there?" 4) funding, which asks, "How are we going to pay for it?" and 5) implementation, which asks "How are we doing?"

The purpose of strategic planning is to create a set of priorities that enable us to act courageously and responsibly today to advance toward the future with a greater expression of God's work in the world. It is an intentional effort to seek the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to discern the will of God.

My experience as a preacher is that the Holy Spirit often moves just as well in the quiet of my study as he does in the pulpit; there is no substitute for good planning and preparation. As Solomon once wrote, "Without revelation and a vision, the people cast off restraint" (Proverbs 29:18).

—PETER BARNES

- Discuss**
1. How effective is our church at making plans for the future? Why?
  2. What are our church priorities, given the limited resources God has given us?
  3. Which of the five phases of planning does our church need to improve?



## Unconventional Wisdom That Works

*Doing things differently can pay off.*

Proverbs 2:1-6; Philippians 1:9-10

*Some keys to church planning seem to run counter to common practice. But applied intelligently, they can result in stronger, healthier churches.*

**1. Ignore your weaknesses.** The usual pattern for planning in churches goes something like this: size up the ministry, identify any major weaknesses, develop and implement a plan for removing them. Yet this strategy is counterproductive: time spent worrying about weaknesses siphons away time and energy better spent on identifying and developing strengths. Instead of taking a creative and proactive approach, planning ends up defensive and reactive. The result is most often a mediocre program.

Churches, like individuals, have been gifted and called to do some things uncommonly well—and other things not at all.

**2. Don't grease the squeaky wheel.** Every church has its chronic and vocal naysayers. The natural response is to grease the squeaky wheels—to cater to their complaints in hopes of silencing them. Unfortunately, it seldom works, because complaining is what squeaky wheels do.

Too much attention to the squeakers can convey the message that the best way to have influence is to complain. More important, it may mean that leaders listen to 20 percent of the people—the complainers—while neglecting the other 80 percent—the producers.

**3. Make fuzzy plans.** The common assumption is that the best-run churches have the clearest and most detailed blueprint for the future. But more often effective churches make “fuzzy plans”—flexible plans that give general direction without committing anyone to an irrevocable course of action.

For example, many churches commit to a highly detailed and restrictive annual budget. The planning process is drawn out and intense. Then once the budget is adopted, it can't be changed until the next year. In anticipation of unexpected needs, view your budget not as a rigid ceiling on expenditures but as an educated (and somewhat hazy) guess of income and expenses in the coming year. So if something breaks, it can be fixed. If a badly needed piece of office equipment becomes available at a good price, it can be purchased. Ministry is then freed to move ahead.

—LARRY W. OSBORNE

### To Discuss

1. What are the dangers in not greasing the squeaky wheels?
2. Making “fuzzy plans” seems to be a recipe for financial slippage. How does a church keep a rein on expenses while still remaining open to opportunity?
3. What weakness should our church be ignoring?



## Steps To Start a Ministry

*Identifying the needs and implementing the program.*

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; Matthew 5:14-16

*While specifics will vary from church to church, the following steps in creating ministries are integral with a successful planning process:*

- 1. Start with a need.** A ministry should not be considered unless it meets a specific need in the life of the church. Just because someone is willing, or a ministry meets a need in another church, or the church is encouraged by a denomination or parachurch group to take part does not mean a need for a particular ministry exists in your church. Listen to people. A question as simple as “How can this church better serve you and your family’s needs?” can revolutionize ministry.
- 2. Match the need with the mission.** There are countless needs that can be met, but not all fall under the purposes and mission of a church. In fact, an attempt to meet some needs could actually hurt a church’s commitment to its purposes and mission. Limited resources must be allocated strategically in order to cover the specific purposes and mission of a church; otherwise they will suffer.
- 3. Wait for a leader.** When a need that matches a church’s purposes and mission is discovered, the temptation is to immediately launch the ministry. Yet a ministry without a leader is doomed to suffer—if not fail. The people involved in that ministry will also suffer.
- 4. Build according to giftedness.** Rather than merely filling in slots on an organizational chart with names of people willing to serve, the process of finding people to serve in a particular ministry should involve determining what gifts are needed for a particular role and then matching people with those gifts to that particular role. With this approach, a church will have teachers teaching, leaders leading, administrators administrating, and counselors counseling.
- 5. Review regularly.** All ministries should be evaluated regularly to determine whether they continue to meet a need, continue to serve the purposes and mission of the church, continue to be well led, and continue to have the necessary team of people in place. If one or more of these goals is no longer being met, the ministry should be ended, or at the very least, temporarily suspended while the deficiency is addressed.

—JAMES EMERY WHITE

Adapted from *Rethinking the Church* (Baker) by James Emery White.

### To Discuss

1. What are common characteristics of successful ministries in our congregation? What can we learn from those not as successful?
2. How well are we doing matching people with their areas of competence? How does that ideal square with the reality of a smaller congregation?
3. How well does our church review the health of its ministries?



## Sharper Image

*Some planning begins with building self-esteem.*

Romans 15:14; Ephesians 2:19-21

*How a small church thinks about itself is as important as what it does. Here are preliminary steps to creating a strategic planning process:*

**1. Cultivate a positive perspective.** Often a deficient attitude, not just the lack of skills, can hinder a church's development. Smaller churches know well what they can't do. But what about what they can do?

I often hold up in our church the good things the church is accomplishing. Even small things, when lumped together, give a sense of accomplishment. Strengths may include fellowship, a good Bible study program, small groups, Sunday worship, or an effective children's program. Smaller churches should develop their strengths intentionally; that gives healthy self-respect and a strong reputation in the community.

**2. Develop a clear purpose.** Often the smaller church has no clear purpose. Establishing one becomes easier when the church has already specialized in one or two areas. The process then becomes one of understanding the scriptural mandates for churches, seeing where the church is going, and developing a purpose that combines the two. A church's purpose, then, emerges out of the gifts and natural aptitudes of the church.

**3. Make the church attractive to visitors.** I'm an amateur radio operator, and two stores in my area cater to ham radio needs. One, about fifty miles away, has a prominently displayed sign that reads: THIS IS NOT A RADIO CLUB—NO LOITERING. The other, almost twice the distance, greets people with a pot of coffee and donuts. I drive the extra distance because I feel welcome there.

Smaller churches may unknowingly project a negative image. Buildings may be run down; there's not always money for proper upkeep. Bulletins may look amateurish. The people of the church don't often see these things because the church is so familiar—but visitors do notice.

Occasionally I do a walk-through around the church facilities with church members as though they were first-time visitors. We answer questions like: What does the general appearance of our facilities communicate about the congregation? How at home do new people feel? I apply the same technique to our Sunday activities.

Whatever we decide to do, even as a small church, we need to maintain a sharp image before the community, one that says, "We know what we're doing, and we intend to do it well."

—GARY HARRISON

### To Discuss

1. How does our purpose statement as a church reflect our unique strengths?
2. What's one area of our physical plant that would be inexpensive to spruce up?
3. Recall a recent visit to another church. What were some first impressions? What can we learn from them?



## Revitalizing Your Vision

*Before planning must come passion.*

*This activity can help revitalize any congregation, whatever its size. The process will take four to six hours, but the results are the first steps toward a renewed focus and passion.*

**Session 1** (60 minutes). Begin the day with a motivating-type speaker who will tell stories of small, declining churches that have turned around and today are growing, healthy, and effective. Use stories in which God used lay people to found significant ministries or help turn churches around. All of the stories need to show how a new vision played a key role in the change.

**Session 2** (90 minutes). Divide people into teams of five or six and have them gather around tables. Give each team large blank sheets of newsprint and magic markers. Instruct team members to recall events in the church in the last twenty or thirty years that have been the most meaningful to them. Ask them to relay to their team the most significant, important, impressive, and humorous memories. Each team needs someone to record these recollections with a brief title on the newsprint.

During the last part of the session, someone from each team stands and reports the events recorded at his or her table. The facilitator may need to help this person elaborate on the most poignant stories. After each table makes its report, the pages of newsprint should be taped to a wall. To wrap up the time, the facilitator recounts the great things God has done in the church the last several decades. Then spend several minutes in short prayers, thanking God for what he has done through them, their leaders, and the congregation.

**Session 3** (90 minutes). With the same teams sitting at the same tables again, have them write down what they would like to see God do in the next ten years (in a world of unlimited resources). Repeat what happened during last session: each team stands up and reports its list and then tapes the newsprint to the wall. Again, the facilitator helps the speakers elaborate on key dreams. Then any or all should be asked to give brief prayers to God, asking him to accomplish these dreams in the church.

**Session 4** (90 minutes). During this session, from the lists on the wall, the facilitator draws parallels between the past and the present. He or she should show how the groups want God to work in the future as he did in the past, even though the specifics may be different. Also, the facilitator should point out the need for change for the new vision to become a reality. The past incurred a cost, and the same will be true of the future.

**Post Event.** Collect the newsprint lists and edit them. Put the list of past victories and future dreams in as many church publications as possible. Create a brochure for the congregation. The pastor should then preach a sermon on each of the top ten dreams, demonstrating that the future will be built on the past. Then assemble key leaders to begin to work on a vision statement to focus the church outward.

—PAUL BORDEN





## Personalized Strategy

*How volunteers can create a plan that works.*

Volunteers need a clear picture of how their service will make a difference. This activity defines expectations for a specific position by developing a MAP (Ministry Action Plan):

- **M — Momentum Goals.** What goals, if fully met this next year, would provide momentum in my ministry area or in the church as a whole?
- **A — Activities.** What are the ongoing activities in my area of responsibility that require faithfulness?
- **P — Possibilities.** What ideas require resources beyond my control?

**1. Develop a MAP worksheet with blank sections under M, A, and P for recording brainstorming ideas.**

**2. Begin with the A section and list activities that require consistent fulfillment.** For instance, serving as lead usher may involve such weekly tasks as making sure other ushers are at their stations, that offering plates are available to each usher, that two people deposit the offering in the safe, etc. It may also include periodic tasks such as scheduling, recruiting, and serving communion.

**3. Move to the M section to identify those goals which if fully met this year would create momentum.** Ask questions like:

- ◆ What common recurring problems cause discouragement? How could I resolve them?
- ◆ What could be done to improve the quality of service of volunteers in this area? For instance, improved orientation, training sessions, or a monthly meeting for communication and fellowship.
- ◆ What could be done to involve more volunteers? For instance, new recruitment strategies—involving certain groups like youth to serve periodically.

**4. Of the M ideas brainstormed, select two or three that would create the most momentum.** Make them specific, measurable, and attainable. For instance, “To conduct an orientation for all ushers serving in the fall season by September 15.”

**5. Develop some action steps for accomplishing each momentum goal.** An orientation session for ushers may include: develop a vision statement for the ministry by July 1, or develop an agenda for orientation by July 20, or create handouts covering each item on the agenda by August 10. The accomplishment of action steps gives a sense of progress toward the goal.

**6. In the P section, write down any ideas for momentum goals requiring resources (people or money) beyond your authority.** For instance, if you were to take the ushers on a tour of churches to meet their ushering team, that may require approval from a church finance committee and need to be included in the church budget.

**7. Make a final copy of the MAP.** Meet once or twice a year with a supervisor to make adjustments and celebrate successes!

—WAYNE SCHMIDT





## Further Exploration

*7 resources to take your planning to the next step.*

**1. Advanced Strategic Planning** (*Baker*) by *Aubrey Malphurs*

Don't let the "advanced" part scare you. A great source for vectoring your church direction.

**2. Change: Learning to Lead It and Living to Tell about It** (*Fairway Press*) by *Jock Ficken*

This book is especially helpful for the older congregation whose leadership believes the best is still yet to come. To purchase copies, contact: Jock Ficken, 555 E. Benton St., Aurora, Illinois 60505. Or you can e-mail the author at [Jficken@saintpauls.net](mailto:Jficken@saintpauls.net).

**3. Practical Project Management** (*SkillPath*) by *Michael Dobson*

This book is not specifically written for churches, but its nuts-and-bolts approach to getting things done will help you implement your new ideas.

**4. Renewing Your Church through Vision and Planning** (*Bethany*) by *Marshall Shelley, general editor*

This is a collection of essays and practical articles on the strategic planning process. Contributors include Eugene Peterson, Lyle Schaller, Leith Anderson, and Ken Blanchard.

**5. Rethinking the Church** (*Baker*) by *James Emery White*

You won't agree with everything in it, but the entire book should be read and discussed by your leadership team. Chapter 6—"Rethinking Structure"—gives the why behind church programs and committees.

**6. Strategies for Change** (*Abingdon*) by *Lyle Schaller*

Your church doesn't have to be big to benefit from this book—a great source of ideas because of the specific examples from real church situations.

**7. 12 Keys to an Effective Church** (*Jossey-Bass*) by *Kennon Callahan*

This is the classic of the classics on helping church leaders identify strengths and moving the church ahead with clarity and a sense of mission.



## Sample Retreat Schedule

*How to create a weekend retreat on the theme of “Strategic Planning.”*

*BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS expands easily into a retreat format. Here is a sample retreat schedule you may follow for the Strategic Planning theme. The purpose of this retreat is to challenge board members and leaders to rekindle their passion for what God can do in the congregation.*

### Friday Evening

- ◆ 8–8:45 P.M. Opening Devotional: Begin the weekend with “No Good Substitute” (p. 10), a devotional about why God’s people make plans. You can either photocopy and pass out the devotional or use the handout as your notes for the opening talk.
- ◆ 9–9:45 P.M. Break-Out Session: Hand out copies of “Hard Decisions” (p. 7), a case study, and break into teams of 3 or 4. Reconvene for the last 15 minutes and discuss as a group the right and wrong ways to bring about change in the church. Develop a “code book” for how your church plans to handle the change process—for example, you may want to come up with a list of values your church wants to uphold during the strategic planning process.

### Saturday Morning

- ◆ 9–9:15 A.M. The entire day will be spent using “Revitalizing Your Vision” (p. 14), an activity that will last four to six hours. Set up the activity by explaining its purpose and your hopes for the rest of the retreat.
- ◆ 9:15–10:15 A.M. Session 1 of “Revitalizing Your Vision.”
- ◆ 10:15–10:30 A.M. Break.
- ◆ 10:30–NOON. Session 2 of “Revitalizing Your Vision.”
- ◆ NOON. Lunch.

### Saturday Afternoon

- ◆ 1–2:30 P.M. Session 3 of “Revitalizing Your Vision.”
- ◆ 2:30–2:45 P.M. Break.
- ◆ 2:45–4:15 P.M. Session 4 of “Revitalizing Your Vision.” Make sure the last few minutes are spent in quiet reflection as well as sentence prayers of thanksgiving.

Close the weekend by challenging your team members to pass on to others in the church the vision discovered during the weekend. Make sure the newsprint from the activity is collected and that the ideas on it are captured and incorporated into a strategic plan.

You can create similar retreat plans for any of the other BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS themes. Simply determine what you want to accomplish and select the handouts that support your objectives.