

CHAPTER 4



NAMING A SHARED VISION

CHAPTER 4

NAMING A SHARED VISION

OVERVIEW

Because of the lay leader's position on the Church Council and the Leadership Development Committee, as well as their knowledge of the laity and ministry, it is important that the lay leader be equipped to assist in the visioning process for the local church. The following material on "NAMING A SHARED VISION" is intended to assist the Local Church Lay Leader in the effort to enable the church to develop, communicate, and implement its vision. It outlines the components of a vision and gives examples of two processes that could be utilized or altered in developing a vision that can be named and shared by the congregation.. It includes questions for a Vision Statement Audit, outlines the difference in mission and vision, and lists questions to consider for discussion; a visionary audit for the individual and lists resources that are available.

NAMING A SHARED VISION

FOR SURELY I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU, SAYS THE LORD, PLANS FOR YOUR WELFARE AND NOT FOR HARM, TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE WITH HOPE. Jeremiah 29:11

One of the areas of opportunity and responsibility of the Lay Leader relates to the vision of the local church. The "Guidelines for Lay Leader/Lay Member – Connecting the Visions and Plans of Your Congregation and your Annual Conference" lists **Name Shared Vision as** one of the five essential leadership functions." Communicating the vision and needs of the local church to the annual conference and general church is listed under the section "Called to Love and Serve as a responsibility of the Lay Leader. If anyone other than the pastor in a church has the opportunity and awareness to see that the church vision is named, clearly written and communicated it is the Lay Leader. You have the opportunity to work with both the Church Council and the Committee on Leadership Developing toward that end. Our intent is to provide information to assist in formulating your own process for developing a vision statement – or if your church has one – to evaluate it on current information.

George Barna defines vision as a clear and precise mental portrait of a preferable future, imparted by God to his chosen servants, based on an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances." Vision comes from God through the leaders. It emerges out of the depths of the leader's own discipleship. It is a compelling picture of what the community of faith would look like if it was truly effective in living out its beliefs and values through its mission.

If the life of the church is driven by its mission, then it will be led by its vision. Vision is a clear picture or image of the desired present and the preferred future. Vision is the end toward which mission drives. All of the various programs and ministries in a congregation are focused through the lenses of the mission statement directed toward the realization of the vision.

Visioning involves looking beyond the images that can be seen physically. Vision pertains to concepts & feelings. Many parts of a vision cannot be expressed in absolutes. A vision involves quality, values, drive, effort and atmosphere. A vision provides excitement as we look ahead. It focuses on possibilities, not problems. It is the spark that motivates action toward goals and objectives.

Vision answers the question, **WHAT HAS GOD CALLED US TO BE AS GOD'S PEOPLE?** For the congregation, Vision answers the question, **WHAT HAS GOD CALLED THIS CONGREGATION TO BE AS GOD'S CONGREGATION?** This question applies both to the present and the future. Vision is a gift from God. For the congregation, that gift may be given to individuals or to a small group of people. Dreaming and vision do not come easily to everyone. Frequently, a vision granted to one will blossom into dreams in others, which will blossom into ideas for implementation in others.

As a gift, vision needs to be something we clearly ask God to provide. We spend time in prayer to determine God's plan for our future. We know God has a plan for us; God has said so. The vision needs to be clearly communicated to the leaders of congregational teams, so that others can see and claim the vision and spark the dreaming and planning process.

Components of vision include:

Values – What is the right thing to do? **Imagination** – the instigator of invention that leads you to investigate the unknown; **Servant's Heart** – Jesus demonstrated his servant's heart & told us to do likewise; **Innovation** – looks at what is and seeks to improve it; **Optimistic outlook** – Be realistic and accurate but seek what is positive – seek the possibilities & solutions – obstacles become opportunities; **Nurture** – Help people to make the transition from today's view to the future view – without a vision the people perish (or go to another church).

CONSIDER:

- *Specific Goals:* What are your goals for the future? How do you see your mission changing or involving in the next 5 years? How might your target be changing?
- *Specific Needs:* What are the specific or emerging unmet needs of your community & church? What are the critical issues? How will your future resolve these issues?
- *The Big Picture:* Look to the future, test several philosophical and directional assumptions about your congregation. Which path shall the congregation take?

"Vision" will provide:

Unity among leaders, volunteers & the congregation. It will provide **direction** for all actions, plans and decisions you need to make; **focus** for leadership, volunteers and members of the congregation; **information** on the plans & direction the congregation is taking; motivation to inspire the entire congregation; **enthusiasm** as it creates an attainable dream; **inspiration** as it calls for the best in people & the congregation; **anticipation & expectations** of future events; **humility** as we realize our dependence on God to prepare the way to our future.

1) AN EXAMPLE OF A PROCESS

CRAFTING AND CASTING A VISION IS A LEADERSHIP PROCESS

Michael W. Foss is "Power Surge – six marks of discipleship for a changing church" offers the following process that worked effectively in his church. Vision emerges from the spiritual depths of the leader's own discipleship including ongoing prayer, bible study and reflection. The importance of leaders who practice the mark of discipleship and tend seriously to their own spiritual lives must be underscored. Out of the divine chemistry of the leader's relationship with God comes a vision for the future of the community of faith.

Significant leaders are invited to attend an orientation meeting. (Senior leader invites attendees to participate in a congregational study process that will set the stage for a thoughtful and prayerful assessment on: 1) Internal & external demographics of the areas the congregation is presently serving and hopes to serve in the future; 2) Present programs and activities; 3) Gather data, share, evaluate, reflect on what it means for the ministry and mission of the congregation. This is the context for the vision, which the senior leader prayerfully sets before the leadership group. After the vision is vocalized, breakout groups provide opportunity for frank and open discussion followed by a plenary session in which breakout groups share insights and concerns with the larger groups. Based on that information, two weeks later, the senior leader presents a revised vision to the same group – process repeated – as many times as necessary until the "vision" excites, motivates and claims the loyalty of those participating. Then the vision is brought to the church board for adoption. Others are enlisted – then the vision is shared with the congregation. A congregation's vision will require modification, adaptation every two to three years if the church is to remain responsive to its context and the God who calls it into mission

2) AN EXAMPLE OF A PROCESS

DEVELOPING A VISION - Aubrey Malphurs in "Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century" suggests the following steps:

- Realize the importance of having a vision to ministry
- Understand the definition of a vision for your church.
- Work the process of developing or giving birth to a vision (focusing on the participants)
- Communicate the vision
- Implement the vision empowering committed leadership teams
- Preservation of a vision – over coming obstacles

A general method includes a combination of 6 steps.

1. Envisioning Prayer - The process is bathed in prayer. (Vision wisdom & insight, vision community and visionary leadership)
2. Thinking Big - small visions do not motivate.
3. Written brainstorming – collecting and recording content.
4. Determining the contents. – Provides a skeleton later to be fleshed out with more information. **Contents can include: purpose, mission, values, strategy, people, and location.**
5. Questioning – Is the vision clear? Can others understand it? Is it challenging? Is it future oriented? Is it realistic – yet stretching? Does it inspire passion? Is it culturally relevant?
6. Demonstrating Patience – Can't be rushed – whatever time it takes.

Other methods for developing your vision in relations to the general method listed above includes

- Expanding your ministry mission statement. Malphurs recommends the formation of a mission statement prior to the vision statement.
- Study other vision statements
- Dream big dreams – For highly visionary – intuitive people. Retreat setting – what will the ministry look like years from now? What do I see when I envision this ministry in the future. Record the image.

Communicating the vision

Develop a team: - “I – my we – our” Leaders must become & recruit others to be vision casters who cast and recast the vision in such a way that people are inspired to own and follow the vision. Develop a Team Approach & empower the team. Empower through self-worth; personal confidence; servant leadership; accomplishment; delegation; modeling. Encourage by recognizing individual ministry accomplishments & celebrating joint accomplishment as a team. (For practical helps see Team Ministry – A Workbook for Getting Things Done, by Schey & Kallestad, Abingdon Press, and Cokesbury)

Maintain clear lines of Communications: Keep people informed; communicate face to face; communicate in a group context; seek to resolve conflict. In order to effectively communicate: Understand the audience; use expressive language; speak positively; speak with charisma; speak with conviction

TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO DEVELOP

- Special Program
- Arts: Skits - drama - Song
- Newcomers Class
- State of the Ministry Speech
- Brochures – audio and video tapes – web page
- Utilize visual images – that communicate and remind people of the ministry’s vision – using ears & eyes. Examples are:
 - a. Slide-tape presentation
 - b. Well designed logo – used on letterheads, memos signs, newsletters, advertising, bulletins, vehicles, products, music slides, banners
 - c. Lapel Pin
 - d. Tapestry or banner

VISION STATEMENT AUDIT

1. Is my vision clear: Do the people in my church/ministry understand it?
2. Is it challenging: Does it move my people to action?
3. Does it create a picture: Can they see it in their head?
4. Is it future oriented: Does it present a picture of the ministry’s future?
5. Do I believe that it can be: Is it feasible?
6. Am I convinced that it must be: Am I passionate about it?

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A MISSION AND A VISION

	MISSION	VISION
<i>Definition</i>	statement	snapshot
<i>Application</i>	planning	communication
<i>Length</i>	short	long
<i>Purpose</i>	informs	inspires
<i>Activity</i>	doing	seeing
<i>Source</i>	head	heart
<i>Development</i>	taught	caught

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- How vital is vision to ministry?
- Who are the driving wheels of your church's ministry? Who among them are visionaries?
- Have you spent time praying and asking God for the right vision for your church? If yes, what thoughts have popped into your mind/
- Is your tendency to think big or small? What would it take for you to think bigger than what you think now?
- In every ministry/church, the primary leader is responsible for the communication of the vision. Who is that person? Is the job being done? Are others helping to cast the vision?
- Are you aware of any critical deficiencies or problems with the status quo that relates in some way to your church? What are they? Can any of these situations, be a context for your vision?
- Are there any untapped or unexploited opportunities in your community that your church could use as a context for casting your vision?
- How would you rate yourself as a speaker and potential vision caster?
- Who makes up your church community? Who is the constituency for your vision?
- Does your dreams excite you?
- What practical method for communicating your vision would work in your church?
- If you have a "vision statement" when was the last time it was evaluated?

VISIONARY AUDIT

I tend to a) dislike new problems b) like new problems

I work best with 2) facts b) ideas

I like to think about a) what is b) what could be

I like a) established ways to do things b) new ways to do things

I enjoy skills that 1) I have already learned & used b) age newly learned but unseen

In my work I tend to a) take time to be precise b) dislike taking time to be precise

I would describe my work style as 2) steady with realistic expectations b) periodic with burst of enthusiasm

I have found that I am a) patient with routine details b) impatient with routine details

I am more likely to trust my 2) experiences b) inspirations

I am convinced that a) seeing is believing b) believing is seeing

Interpretation: All of the “a” responses are characteristic of practical realists. They are the hard workers of ministry who catch a vision through using their senses. All of the “b” responses are characteristic of more intuitive people for whom vision comes naturally.

RESOURCES

“Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century”, Aubrey Malphurs, Baker Book House Company, Available from Cokesbury

“Team Ministry – A Workbook for Getting Things Done”, Stephen L. Schey & Walt Kallestad, Abingdon Press, Cokesbury

“Power Surge – Six marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church”, Michael W. Foss, Fortress Press, Cokesbury

“From Nominations to Leadership Development” A CD/Video resource for the Committee on Nominations/Lay Leadership available through the Conference Communication Office. Relates visioning and the mission to the process of selecting and developing leaders for the local church.