



Congregational Awareness Studies

FOUR **self directed studies** **for church leaders:**

- Church Health
- Church Leadership
- Congregational Mission/Vision
- Planning for Evangelism

Table of Contents

Letter

1

Introduction to Four Awareness Studies

2

Welcome to our study on
Church Health

3

Welcome to our study on
Church Leadership

11

Welcome to our study on
**Congregational
Mission/Vision**

22

Welcome to our study on
**Planning for
Evangelism**

35



Welcome to the Awareness Studies. This is a set of four self-directed studies that we hope congregational leaders will use to identify the issues relating to their congregation, and its potential for growth.

This is an extension of a resource that was first developed as a study to discover the reasons for the decline in the membership of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and to make proposals for the recovery of congregational health. The 127th (2001) General Assembly authorized the distribution of these reports so they could be used by our congregations.

Our bias in these studies is our belief that the most effective way to reach out and evangelize with the Gospel is to do so from the basis of a healthy congregation. Healthy congregations by their nature are tools for evangelism. This is the underlying current in each study.

These studies have been prepared to help church leaders become more aware of issues in their own congregations, and of the context in which they do ministry and mission. Because no two churches are exactly alike, we do not attempt to diagnose or prescribe. Instead, we provide a number of annotated resources to assist church leaders in finding the best material for their own church situation.

These studies may be led by clergy or lay people and used at a leaders' weekend retreat or as a week-night study program. **They may be photocopied for congregational use. A downloadable version can be found at www.presbyterian.ca/evangelism. Click on resources and reports.**

We wish to thank Anne Saunders for writing the Biblical reflections for each study.

On behalf of the members of the task force and your regional staff, I pray that material in these studies will assist your congregation in advancing Christ in this new millennium.

Local resource persons, known as Local Champions, will be available to assist congregation with these studies and other relevant resources. These local champions, who also serve our denominations regional staff, are the primary contact people for these studies. They will have copies of resources which may be borrowed or purchased separately from The Book Room at 50 Wynford Drive, or other bookseller. Please speak to your regional staff representative for more information.

Rev. Dr. James Czegledi
Associate Secretary
Evangelism, Church Growth & Worship
Life & Mission Agency

Introduction to Four Awareness Studies

When we talk about a healthy church, we are not talking about a church that is perfect. There is no such thing. Author Peter Steinke states that a “a healthy congregation is one that actively and responsibly addresses or heals its disturbances, not one with an absence of troubles.” Health is not determined by a lack of problems, but rather the effectiveness and creativity that the congregation used to resolve its problems.

Healthy congregations are made up of healthy or mature individuals who seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that through the course of this study, leaders will be able to become more aware of the issues of the church health that relate to their congregations, and respond appropriately.

The 127th (2001) General Assembly authorized the distribution of the study group’s report on denominational membership decline and made proposals for the recovery of congregational health in a format to be used by congregations. The four studies and tools we have developed to help congregations look at health, leadership, mission and evangelism continue the work of the Life and Mission Agency’s study group that researched denominational membership and congregational vitality. General Assembly authorized us to present a detailed and systemic response with an action plan to deal with the challenges identified in the report.

The purpose of these Awareness Studies is to help encourage a dialogue among leaders in congregations in the areas of church health, leadership, mission/vision, and action plan for evangelism. We hope to increase and focus your appreciation of the gifts for the work of evangelism that the Holy Spirit has given you and your congregation.

Local resource persons, known as Local Champions, will be available to assist congregation with these studies and other relevant resources. These local champions, who also serve our denominations regional staff, are the primary contact people for these studies. They will have copies of resources which may be borrowed or purchased separately from The Book Room at 50 Wynford Drive, or other bookseller. Please speak to your regional staff representative for more information.

For the Study Leader

- 1) Read through the entire study. Each study provides the following sections:
 - a) Biblical Reflection (material for approximately 1 1/2 hours)
 - b) Background
 - c) Awareness Tools (material for approximately 1 1/2 hours)
 - d) Resources for Further Reading

Note: You do not have to use all the material in each section.

- 2) Choose an opening. For example, use the opening from the Biblical Reflection, a reading from the Background material, or draw on a resource of your own choosing.
- 3) Select material from the different section to create a study that takes into consideration your time allotment and your group’s characteristics.
- 4) Organize the material to ensure that opportunities for group participation are interspersed with the sharing of information.
- 5) Choose a closing. For example, use the closing from the Biblical Reflection, a summary and prayer based on the group study experience, or draw on a resource of your own choosing.

Welcome to our study on

Church Health

Purpose of this Study

1. To help church leaders become more aware of church health issues in their congregation.
2. To introduce the concept of systems thinking.
3. To encourage dialogue about church health
4. To provide awareness tools.
5. To reflect on a response to the issues in the context of our faith.

Preface

Several factors contribute to congregational vitality and growth. We studied congregations which were able to reverse the cycle of decline and rediscover congregational health, and found that they had a deep appreciation for these attitudes in common:

- ministry is a spiritual enterprise
- leadership incorporates a shared congregational vision
- mission and not maintenance is key; there is an openness to change
- evangelism is a priority
- congregations want to be healthy

This awareness study will focus on improving congregational health. It includes Bible study, an introduction, information related to the topic, awareness tools, and suggested resources.

The Life and Mission Agency wishes to thank Rev. Dr. Frank Breish for writing the section on Congregations as living Systems. To view this resource, go to www.presbyterian.ca/evangelism and click on Reports.

Biblical Reflection

Healthy Relationships and God's People

Arrange in advance for a layperson to lead this time of reflection.

Suggestions for the lay leader:

1. Ensure that participants have their own copy of this section of the study.
2. This reflection is a participatory exercise. As you work through the reflection, ask volunteers to take turns reading the text and Bible readings. Together, choose sections according to the time available and the nature of the group.
3. When you welcome everyone, invite them to
 - share their experiences and beliefs
 - provide opportunities for everyone to speak
 - listen to, respect, and value each other's words and silences.
4. Remember there are no right or wrong answers to the reflection questions.

The group will need: a green cloth, Bibles, pillar candle and matches, bowl of water, goblet, small loaf of bread or bun, picture or drawing of a rainbow, wedding ring, church's annual report or photo directory (or other item that people would recognize as a symbol for your church), hymn books (*The Book of Praise*, 1997) paper and pencils, different coloured pipe cleaners.

1. Call to Reflection

Set up a worship centre with the green cloth, placing on it:

- a Bible open to Exodus 20 (the Ten Commandments)
- a pillar candle
- bowl of water
- goblet and bread
- rainbow picture, wedding ring
- your church's annual report or photo directory.

Invite someone to light the candle as a visible reminder of God's presence among you. Look at each item in turn and note how it is a reminder of a covenant relationship. By being part of a church, Christians are saying, "We are God's covenant people." For a moment, focus on what that might mean for the way you relate to other people:

- in your church
- in the community around your church
- in the global community.

Unison Prayer

God of love
and peace
and justice,
you are our God;
we are your people.
Open our minds
and hearts
to new understandings
of what this means
for us and our church. Amen.

Sing #642 *O Master, let me walk with thee*

2. Relating Our Experiences

Invite group members to do this exercise with a partner or in small groups.

Think about a partnership or relationship you admire. This could be a business partnership, a marriage relationship, or a recreational partnership as in playing cards or sports. Share with each other the partnership you are thinking about. Then:

- List words and phrases that describe why you think these partnerships are admirable or healthy.
- List other people and factors that might put stress on the success or health of these relationships.

Come together and invite someone from each partnership or group to share their lists. Compile one list under the title *Healthy Attributes* and another under *Challenges*. People in a congregation are also in relationship with one another as the church. Look at your lists and reflect on them with these questions:

- What attributes and what challenges of these partnerships might apply to relationships within a church? Circle these.
- What additional attributes and challenges would group members like to add for a discussion about relationships within a church? Add these in a different colour.

3. Learning from Jesus and Early Christians

While Jesus did not speak explicitly about how to be a healthy church, he did speak explicitly to his disciples and followers about how to be in relationship with each other. Indeed, many of Jesus' teachings in the Gospel are directed to Jesus' followers about how to live according to God's ways. Jesus taught his followers by commenting on current controversies that he saw in their own words and actions or in those of others in their society. In the Book of Acts, we read stories about how Jesus' followers tried to live these teachings as they became the early church.

If time and group size permits, do the following reflection exercises together. Alternatively, divide into small groups and assign an exercise to each group.

Jesus' teachings

Read the following passages and after each discuss using the reflection questions:

Matthew 5:22-24 (anger)

Matthew 5:38-42 (retaliation)

Matthew 5:43-44 (enemies)

Mark 9:33-35 (ambition for power)

Luke 6:46 (say and do consistently)

Luke 12:22, 29, 33 (living selflessly)

John 13:14-15 (serving one another)

John 13:34-35 (love one another)

John 20:23 (forgiving one another)

Reflection questions

- What is Jesus teaching here about how his followers were to relate to one another?
- Why might this have been an issue for his followers?
- How is this teaching relevant for followers today? For people in your church?

Early Christians

Read the following passages and after each discuss the reflection questions.

Acts 2:42-47

Acts 5:32-35

Reflection questions

- What were the worthy attributes of the early Christian community?
- What might have been the challenges?
- How do you feel about this early Christian community setting the standard for churches today? For your church?

Gather as one group and share the discussion from small groups. Identify other teachings and passages from the New Testament that come to mind on this theme. Discuss how they might be relevant.

4. Responding

Invite group members to choose one of the following and respond either individually, with a partner, or as a group.

- **Creative:** Use different coloured pipe cleaners to create a symbol for relationships as God intends them to be. Add these to the worship centre. How could these be displayed for others in your church to see?
- **Pastoral:** Think of someone on your church roll who may feel in some way estranged or marginalized from your faith community. How could you show them God's peace, justice and love? Imagine a pastoral visit with them and role play this with a partner.
- **Outreach:** Think of people in the church's community to whom your church has not shown God's peace, justice and love. Outline a plan that would involve members of the congregation in reaching out to them.

- **Organizational:** Suggest a minimum of three steps that could be taken by people of your faith community to move closer to live as the people of God. How could these suggestions be shared with the rest of your church?

5. Closing

Sing #632 *Help us accept each other.*

Prayer

One: God, you sent Moses

All: and he spoke to us about your laws for peace.

One: You sent the prophets

All: and they reminded us of your passion for justice.

One: You sent Jesus

All: and he showed us your inclusive, limitless love.

One: Now may we be convinced of your ways

All: So that henceforth we live in peace, justice and love

One: with one another and with you our God

All: as the people of God. Amen.

Background

In recent years we have discovered that growing congregational health is complex. It depends on a number of factors. This has led to a shift in thinking from emphasising church growth to growing healthy churches. Anything that is healthy will grow. This is true of churches, organizations, and the plant and animal world. This idea is based on Christ's word to us and to His Church: "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6) Christ wants His followers and His Church to be healthy.

Healthy congregations deal effectively with their problems instead of denying them or allowing them to grow. They resolve conflict, effectively manage difficult people and deal with personal or turf issues and hidden agendas. Healthy congregations expect people to be accountable and responsible. They are purpose-driven churches with a clear focus, but they are not churches without troubles.

Healthy churches are driven by process, not by programs or by controlling personalities. The decision making process can be as important as the decision itself. In the past, emphasis was placed on how individuals acted in congregations. Today's thinking concentrates on a systems approach which takes into account the inter-relatedness of individuals and looks at the whole, instead of the part that seems to be the problem. No person or event is an island in systems thinking. Issues are not seen in isolation—everything stands in relationship and all aspects affect each other. This approach reminds us that the church is more like an organism than an organisation. When thinking from a systems perspective, it is important to consider the whole forest when we look at individual trees.

Churches become healthier when they begin to look at themselves from a systems approach. The New Testament depicts the church as a living system, similar to the human body. The body of Christ is made up of many parts, yet functions as one (Ephesians 4, I Corinthians 12). The various members and subsystems of a congregation are much like the body's organs, with living interaction between cells, blood vessels, nerves and muscles.

This is not a new idea for churches that are growing. They tend to function using an integrated and systematic process that includes long-range planning, yearly goals, budget retreats, personnel committees to handle staff issues, and regular membership roll reviews. These churches have realistic mission and vision statements and review the church's ministry in light of them.

When systems thinking is applied to a congregation, it recognizes the church as an emotional system—filled with people who have specific needs, gifts, worries and interests. The health of the emotional system determines how well the church functions. An unhealthy emotional system will undermine the best plans for ministry. One key expression of emotional forces in people's lives is anxiety. Anxiety is a natural by-product of any human sys-

tem. It can be either a positive or negative force for a church—a catalyst leading to growth or to destructive conflict. Church health focuses on how the congregation responds.

Anxiety is emotional pain, and is present in every human relationship or system. It is a strong motivational force in people's lives. It is often expressed as uneasiness, distress or anger. Healthy people, like healthy churches, manage their anxiety. They take responsibility for what they do and seek to change only themselves. Healthy people tolerate differences and encourage dialogue—life is seen as diversity. These people have a bigger view of reality and see themselves and the church with this perspective while living with a clear purpose or focus.

There are three types of anxiety.

- Anxiety caused by ordinary everyday pressures and stresses
- Anxiety caused by a stressful incident or situation. It can be acute, but eventually composure is regained.
- Systemic or chronic anxiety: Some people in the church can be super-sensitive. They generally appear to be distressed. Anxious people can pose a threat to church health because the church is unsure how to respond to them. If they are not responded to appropriately, they can spread anxiety throughout the church system.

It is important that leaders not respond to anxious people by becoming anxious themselves. When anxious people are involved in church activities, it is effective to partner them with a mature person who is capable of calming them. This encourages more acceptable behaviour by modelling new behaviours for those who feel chronically anxious. That being said, in many ways leaders are called to bear the anxiety of people as they consider change. People need to know that their concerns are being heard, that issues will be considered and (where possible) addressed and resolved. As a minimum they need to be answered. As leaders hear and respond to the anxious people, the people will be better able to cope with and even accept change.

The systems approach focuses on purpose, makes people responsible to the church and enables the church to deal with difficult people in a less personalized manner through policy and accountability.

Church health has more to do with **how** churches respond to incidents in church life, rather than **what** happens. How can congregations be hospitable and at the same time responsible? Too many churches tolerate too much immaturity. They struggle to satisfy by trying to make everyone happy. This is not the mission of the church. Because most churches are afraid of conflict, they often appease those who make the most noise or who utter threats. By its nature, the church is forgiving, but this often leads to welcoming immaturity and divisive conflict.

By responding to anxiety and immaturity issues responsibly, we can become aware of larger issues and be intentional about how to respond. Church leaders should not react to anxiety with anxiety. Instead, they need to have a clear vision of what the church is about and where it is going. They should focus on strengths and options, hold themselves and everyone accountable for their actions, and encourage dialogue that may lead to further growth and understanding.

Church health is all about leadership, both from the pew and the pulpit. Peter Steinke provides one model for church health. He believes there are four ways in which leaders contribute to the health of a congregation:

- Leaders calm the situation. They practice being a non-anxious presence. They cannot be effective if they are as anxious as the people they serve.
- Leaders are the most responsible for change. This is exercised through self-control and personal maturity.
- Leaders challenge churches. They see opposition, anxiety and conflict as opportunities to increase the strength of the church as they lead it to be more and to do more.
- Leaders keep the system in focus by not focusing on the anxiety of other individuals or their own. They help to create and maintain the purpose or mission of the church and evaluate decisions and directions in light of it.

Conflict in congregations is unavoidable. It happens naturally when two people or two ideas try to occupy one space at the same time. For example, some in the session may want the church to worship at 10 a.m., while other elders may want to begin at 11 a.m. It can be positive when it is addressed and can lead to growth and discovery. More often it remains unresolved and is allowed to fester until another issue triggers it. It is important for sessions to recognize potential conflict and deal with it in its early stages. Healthy congregations respond to conflict and view it as a learning opportunity.

10 Marks of Healthy Church Behaviour

1. A clear and shared sense of purpose, mission and vision
2. Everyone in the church is accountable and responsible for what they do
3. Effective communications
4. Outward community focus (mission)
5. Take risks and learn
6. Effective conflict management
7. Hospitable and warm communities of Christ
8. Disciple
9. Develop empowered leaders
10. Good givers of time, spiritual gifts and money

Exercises for the Congregation as a System

To read more about your congregation as a living system, go to our website <http://www.presbyterian.ca/> and click on **Congregation as a living system**

Answer the following questions using the following scales as appropriate:

5 = Always 4 = Usually 3 = Frequently 2 = Seldom 1 = Never

1. ___ Our congregation celebrates things God has done in the past.
 2. ___ Our members are aware of the history of the church.
 3. ___ Our congregation speaks openly about problems it has had in the past.
 4. ___ Our congregation hears about what is happening in the Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly
 5. ___ Our minister and representative elder attend Presbytery and Synod.
 6. ___ Our congregation has had someone attend General Assembly.
 7. ___ Our congregation knows what is happening in our community or neighbourhood.
 8. ___ Our congregation makes intentional contacts with our community or neighbourhood.
 9. ___ Our members have friends in our community or neighbourhood.
 10. ___ Our members invite people from the community or neighbourhood to church activities.
 11. ___ Our members know what the congregation's short-term goals are.
 12. ___ Our congregation evaluates its activities in the light of its goals or Mission Statement.
 13. ___ Our members have a clear vision of what they think our church should be in five years.
 14. ___ Our members are aware of the congregation's sacred cows and minefields.
 15. ___ New members and adherents are informed about our sacred cows and minefields.
 16. ___ In our congregation, minor problems do not grow into major conflicts.
 17. ___ People in our congregation laugh freely and without inhibition.
 18. ___ Our leaders make clear what they believe.
 19. ___ Our leaders listen to people who disagree with them.
 20. ___ Our leaders keep in touch with people who disagree with them.
 21. ___ Our leaders take responsibility when things go wrong.
 22. ___ Our leaders do not pay attention to anonymous letters or comments.
 23. ___ Our congregation makes a determined effort to provide information on issues and activities.
 24. ___ Our Session's decisions are clearly communicated to the congregation.
 25. ___ Rumours and gossip are ignored and squelched where possible.
- ___ SCORE

SCORE	CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH LEVEL
90 or more	High
60 - 89	Medium: requires attention
59 or less	Low: improvement needed

For Further Reading

To view an annotated bibliography please go to www.presbyterian.ca/evangelism/ and click Church health. Or see your Local Champion for a copy

Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church*
Fortress Press (1996)

Peter L. Steinke *How Your Church Family Works*
Alban Institute (1993)

Peter L. Steinke *Healthy Congregations*
Alban Institute (1996)

Video: *The Balance Act: The Congregation as Emotional System*
180 minutes, Peter Steinke

Video -*Drop out Tracks* Dr. John D. Savage
40 Minutes LEAD Consultants, (614) 864-0156, www.lead-inc.com

Conflict Management – Books from the Alban Institute

The Care of Troublesome People by Wayne E. Oates

The Care of Troublesome People by Wayne E. Oates

Church Conflict: The Hidden Systems behind the Fights by
Charles H. Cosgrove and Dennis D. Hatfield

Conflict Management in Congregations by David B. Lott, editor

Discover Your Conflict Management Style, Revised Edition by
Speed B. Leas

Managing Church Conflict by Hugh Halverstadt

For more information on Alban Institutes conflict management books, go to <http://www.alban.org/>

Every congregation is a web of systems and sub-systems. From this systems approach a congregation can be seen as a complex system of systems. To name a few, there are several easy-to-identify and understand systems operating in the congregation.

- Leadership/authority system
- Pastoral care system
- Minister's support system
- Property/maintenance system
- The financial system
- Friendship/fellowship system
- Education/communication system

What are the systems at work in your church? How do they relate to each other? Are they healthy?

For an exercise to help you be more aware of the systems at work in your church please see the Acts and Proceedings of the 128th General Assembly (2002) pp. 311 – 312.

Having completed this segment in the study, you may wish to begin the next part of this series which is entitled "Church Leadership."

Welcome to our study on Church Leadership

Purpose of this Study

1. To help church leaders become more aware of the issues related to church leadership in their congregation.
2. To reflect on how our church leaders are change agents.
3. To encourage dialogue about implementing change.
4. To provide an awareness tool.
5. To reflect on a response to the issues in the context of our faith.

Preface

Several factors contribute to congregational vitality and growth. We studied congregations which were able to reverse the cycle of decline and rediscover congregational health, and found that they had these attitudes in common: ministry is a spiritual enterprise; leadership incorporates a shared congregational vision; mission and not maintenance is key; there is an openness to change; evangelism is a priority; and congregations seek to be healthy.

This awareness study will focus on leadership in the church. It includes Bible study, an introduction, information related to the topic, awareness tools, and suggested resources.

The Life and Mission Agency wishes to thank Rev. Dr. Peter Coutts for the significant contribution he has made in writing this study on leadership.

Biblical Reflection Leadership and God's People

In advance, invite a layperson to lead this time of reflection.

Suggestions for the lay leader:

1. Ensure that participants have their own copy of this section of the study.
2. This reflection is a participatory exercise. As you work through the reflection, ask volunteers to take turns reading the text and Bible readings. Together choose sections according to time available and nature of the group.
3. When you welcome everyone, invite them to
 - share their experiences and beliefs
 - provide opportunities for everyone to speak
 - listen to, respect, and value each other's words and silences.
4. Remind everyone that there are no right or wrong answers to the reflection questions.

The group will need: a crown, long robe (i.e. choir gown or minister's robe) and a staff and cloth coat (i.e. cane and dressing gown)* Bibles, newsprint and markers, two pillar candles and matches, hymn books (*The Book of Praise*, 1997), basin of water, a pebble for each group member, and supplies to make a banner: banner paper, art supplies (e.g. coloured markers or paint, stickers, different types of paper, cotton balls, glue).
*Alternatively, display a picture of a monarch and a picture of a shepherd.

1. Call to Reflect

Place the crown, long robe, a staff and cloth coat before the group. Alternatively, display a picture of a monarch and a picture of a shepherd. Invite everyone to share a time when they have been appointed to be a leader of a group. (e.g. at school, home, work, community group, church) Do this by taking turns (for those who wish) standing up and putting on the crown and robe (or holding pictures) and saying "I remember when I was" Then ask two volunteers to dress-up, one as king and one as shepherd, and read together:

Group One (*king steps forward*): The Lord has anointed you to be ruler over his people. You shall reign over the people of the Lord. You will save them from the hand of their enemies (1 Samuel 10:1).

Group Two (*shepherd steps forward*): The Lord has raised you up to be a shepherd over his people. You shall bring the people of the Lord back to their fold. You will take away their fear and dismay. You will save them from going missing (Jeremiah 23:3-4).

All (*everyone steps forward*): The Lord has called us to lead his people. We shall lead by being a servant to those around us. We will lead by being the slave of all (based on Mark 10:43-44).

Unison Prayer

God, you call us to lead but like the disciples we think this means we will stand out in any group. We think we will be first, we will have a special place, we will be granted favours for our efforts. How confusing your words can be! How difficult our struggle to understand the implications of leading, like a king, shepherd, servant, slave. May we feel your power in us as we reflect on the leadership that Jesus offers. Help us discern the kind of leaders you call us to be for one another in our congregation and for our neighbours beyond our church walls. Amen.

2. Relating Our Experiences

Write the words "shepherd" and "king" on two different pieces of newsprint and generate words and names associated with these words—from the Bible, from your history and the world today. Silently reflect on

- expectations for leaders in your church
- differences and similarities between leadership in faith communities and leadership in secular society.

Invite group members to do one or both of these exercises with a partner or in small groups.

Recall a leadership role you have had. Take turns sharing the experience using the questions below:

Reflection questions

1. Whom did you lead?
2. What did you do as a leader?
3. What did the group members do?
4. What difference did you make to their spiritual life? To the life of the group/community?
5. How did the experience affect your own life?

Discuss the following quotation using the reflection questions that follow.

"You've observed how godless rulers throw their weight around and when people get a little power how quickly it goes to their heads. It's not going to be that way with you. Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave." (*The Message*, Mark 10:42-44)

Reflection questions

1. Who have been “God-less” leaders in your lifetime? What have been their outstanding characteristics?
2. Who have been “God-filled” leaders in your lifetime? What have been their outstanding characteristics?

3. Learning from Jesus

The disciples regarded Jesus as their leader. Jesus considered the disciples as apprentices or “leaders-in-progress” who would carry on his ministry after him. The religious leaders, the political leaders, Jesus’ followers, the oppressed and sick all expected Jesus to be a leader in some way. The four gospels give us glimpses of people’s struggles to understand what kind of leader Jesus was.

If time and group size permits, do the following two exercises together. Alternatively, divide up into small groups with each taking one section.

Read the passages and consider how the people mentioned struggled to understand Jesus as a leader. After each reading discuss using the reflection questions..

1. John 7:32-36, 45-51, John 9:13-17, John 11:47-53 (Pharisees, chief priests, Jews in temple)
2. Matthew 2:1-8; John 18:33-38 (political leaders Herod and Pilate)
3. Matthew 9:18-30; John 9:25-34 (suffering, marginalized people)
4. Matthew 19:16-22; Luke 12:13-21 (those wanting monetary wealth)
5. John 2:1-12; John 7:1-9 (Jesus’ family members)
6. Mark 9:2-13; Mark 10:35-40 (disciples)

Reflection questions

1. What were these people’s views about leaders? Do you think they wanted a leader? If so, what sort of leader did they want?
2. What did Jesus do or say that fit or didn’t fit with their idea of a leader?
3. What leadership qualities did Jesus reveal to these people?

Authors Bill Easum and Thomas Bandy introduced the metaphor of “spiritual midwife” to describe spiritual leadership as leadership that “helps others give birth to their full personal and spiritual potential.” Recall situations where Jesus’ leadership was like this. Then invite everyone to reflect on the following statements, lighting a candle as each statement is read aloud and then pausing for a moment of silence:

We remember the people in our lives who have been spiritual leaders to us.

We remember the people for whom we have been a spiritual leader.

End by saying “Thank you God for the gift of spiritual leadership among us. Amen.” Afterwards, gather the whole group together and invite them to share their reflections.

4. Responding

Invite group members to choose one of the following and respond either individually, with a partner, or as a group.

- Creative: While sharing more stories and views on this theme, use the art supplies to create a banner with biblical symbols of leadership. How could this be displayed for others in your church to see?
- Pastoral: Think of someone on your church roll who might be longing for spiritual leadership with respect to a certain life situation. How could you be a spiritual leader to that person or someone like them? Role play an imagined encounter with them.
- Outreach: What groups (or issues) in your community could benefit from a person/people in your congregation taking on a leadership role? Plan the steps needed to make this happen.
- Organizational: Suggest a minimum of three steps that could be taken by people of your faith community to encourage the kind of spiritual leadership demonstrated by Jesus.

5. Closing

In the end, Jesus went beyond the leadership model of the caring shepherd to become the servant or slave of others. He washed his disciples feet and he sacrificed himself on the cross for all humankind.

Person One: “You’ve observed how godless rulers throw their weight around and when people get a little power how quickly it goes to their heads. It’s not going to be that way with you. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not to be served.” (Mark 10:42-45, *The Message*)

Person Two: “If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourself long enough to lend a helping hand. Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself...when the time came he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn’t claim special privileges.” (Philippians 2:1-5,7-8a *The Message*)

Person Three: As spiritual leaders we are called to be in relationship with others. A spiritual leader’s words and actions affect others. Let us reflect silently on how we wish to affect other people.

After a few moments of silence, **Person Three** takes the basin of water to the nearest person, kneels in front, drops a pebble into a basin of water and watches the ripple effect. Then **Person Three** says to the person before them: “(person’s name), be God-filled. Go and create waves of God’s Spirit that flow into the heart of (your church’s name) Presbyterian Church and beyond.” Then that person takes the basin and kneels in front of the next person and repeats the ritual.

Sing #635 *Brother, sister, let me serve you*

Background

A recent search of the catalogue of the internet bookstore “amazon.com” for the keyword “leadership” produced more than 7,000 titles. This illustrates how leadership is a topic of growing concern within our society. In the face of increasing complexity and uncertainty, of rapid change in business, government, non-profit organizations... and churches... people in organizations everywhere yearn for authentic and meaningful leadership as a cure for their sense of insecurity in a changing world. We realize that there are several leadership styles and types. We believe that the leadership skill required for evangelism is that of change agent. Churches in order to reach new people in this century will have to try new approaches.

Therefore, our working definition of leadership is: “Leadership is about helping change to happen effectively.” Leaders help people see things as they really are, and help people imagine things as they can be. Leaders have influence on a group that helps that group choose to take a new direction. Leaders help a group live out its purpose and character more authentically. Leaders not only help people achieve goals; they also become better people along the way. Leaders provide a sense of security as people move from the comfort of the familiar to the uncertainty of the future. Leadership is an activity of the whole community in which many people make their own unique contributions.

This simple summary of some definitions of leadership illustrates the complexity of its practice. In every aspect it is about helping change to happen. Please see the Awareness tool (*Eight Stages for Effective Change*) for more information on helping positive change to happen in your congregation.

Each congregation is a complex social and spiritual organization. How a leader approaches one situation may be different from another. Add to this the fact that every church is different. This means that leadership is always contextual. Sometimes leaders need more of a task orientation — at other times more of a people orientation. Sometimes change requires a definite goal and solid planning; at other times change happens in an evolutionary way through trial and error. Sometimes leaders must hold up and champion a goal before their

congregations, calling people to take it up. At other times leaders have to help people together discover what is needed for the future. While every leader has their own natural style, our situations call leaders to vary their approach, depending on the issue and the context.

The qualities and practices of leadership fall into three general dimensions: Vision, Character and Faithfulness. While these are universal, as Christians we bring unique aspects to each of them. Christian leaders exhibited the three qualities of casting a vision, having moral character and being faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. Vision

If “leadership is about helping change to happen effectively,” leaders must have a sense of how to envision change. Most theories on how groups undergo change basically come down to three elements:

1. appreciating your congregation’s current reality (that is, what is happening right now)
2. the congregation having a sense of destination, goal or vision (that is, where should we go),
3. creating a plan to get from one to the other.

All these rest on how we see things.

Leadership writer Max DePree says: “The first task of the leader is to ask the question, ‘What is really going on here?’” This means asking questions like: “What is God doing in our midst?” Helping others ask these questions and accept the answers is the most crucial and difficult step of leadership. Why is this? We all can function with a degree of short-sightedness that does not help us see clearly how things could use improving. People find a great deal of security in the way things are. We easily find our current reality comfortable, even if it is not helpful. Helping people clearly see “what is really going on here” is also important for motivation. People tend to feel a greater sense of urgency to change when they become convinced that the way things are now no longer serve them. Of the three elements of envisioning change, this is the element that is most neglected.

The Old Testament prophets were in the business of helping the Jewish people appreciate their current reality. That was an essential part of their message. Page after page of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and other books record the assessments and critiques of God’s people in the ways they lived their lives. These prophets of God tried to help the people of God understand how they fell short in their relationship with God and with each other. They spoke of most aspects of human life: religion, relationships, economics, politics, the legal system, and so on. For these prophets, helping people appreciate their current reality and the need for change was a vital step towards renewal as a people.

But a church also has to have a sense of what it could aspire to become. An old saying about ships and leadership illustrates this: “If you don’t know where you are going, any course will take you there.” Many congregations work on the presumption that the way they did things in the past will always serve them in the future. But a growing number of congregations are discovering that this is no longer the case. The following analogy illustrates this. It is as if congregations have a toolbox filled with solutions, perspectives, traditions, and ways of behaving. These are the tools they use to manage church life. These tools are in our toolboxes because they have proven useful in the past to address and fix the issues and problems congregations face. However, the situations which face our congregations have been slowly changing over the past couple of decades: congregations are aging, finances can be tight, new and chronic conflicts can arise, volunteers can be harder to come by, neighbourhoods are changing, and so on. The old tools are taken out of our toolboxes and used, but more and more churches are finding that they no longer work as well as they used to. When this happens, congregations are challenged to develop new ways of being and behaving as a church. They have to find new tools.

They find them, in part, by developing new goals, or a new mission, or a new vision for the congregation. It takes imagining and envisioning the congregation’s future. As Christians we are well guided by scripture’s callings to the church. We think of the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all people (Matthew 28: 19, 20). We think of Jesus’ call to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit the imprisoned (Matthew 25: 31-46). We think of Paul’s hope that peo-

ple would grow deeper in their relationship with God (Ephesians 3:14-21) or for the church to become more fully the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-16). We use these callings as lenses to see, appreciate and evaluate our current congregational life as it is, helping us understand how things can be improved.

These and the other great callings to the church can also become the inspiration for us to discern what our own congregations might aspire to become in brand new ways. They can help us ask questions like, “How can our church, given its unique make-up, giftedness and interests of our people, fulfill the Great Commission?” Envisioning a future helps a church find focus and energy for its congregational life. This is not the solitary work of one leader. Rather, leaders help the congregation discern its future. As a general rule, the more diverse and pluralistic the people in your congregation are, the more determined leaders must be to make discerning the future a corporate adventure with clarity.

Finally, with the starting point and destination clear in view, leaders can help their church see the path from one point to another. This path is called planning. With a desire to move towards a new vision for one’s church, with an acceptance that it will be helpful to move away from the congregation’s current reality, with an appropriate and realistic plan to make the journey, people will feel a greater sense of conviction and confidence to face changes in their church life.

Leaders help their congregations evolve into new ways of being a church by helping people see this journey of change as clearly as they can. Leaders don’t necessarily provide all that needs to be envisioned – assessments of the current reality, proposals for a future goal, the planned path between them – but leaders do have to ensure that the people come to see them.

2. Character

Personal character has always been important in the Christian life. Who we are as brothers and sisters of Christ are to make a difference in how we live, whether it is the simple living out of the Golden Rule, or the shape the Holy Spirit gives the Christian life, called ‘the Fruit of the Spirit’ (Galatians 5:22-26), to the lists of character qualities we are to strive for (such as Colossians 3:12-17). This truth is even more pertinent for Christian leaders. Paul pointed this out to Timothy in Paul’s first letter to his young apprentice church leader. In talking about the character qualities desired in elders and leaders, Paul wrote that they “must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money... must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace... set for believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 3:2,3,7; 4:12).

Paul holds these qualities up because they lead to integrity, respect, care and trust. These character qualities are the currency of leadership. Christian leaders such as Billy Graham, Henri Nouwen, Charles Colson and Mother Theresa are admired because of their integrity – they “walk the talk”. The consequence of this is that their voices have been listened to throughout our generation.

Next, if leaders have the respect of people, it means that the leaders’ perceptions of the current reality, their sense of an envisioned future, their understanding of the path from here to there, will be given consideration by those who listen. When people respect leaders, those leaders have influence. But this respect only comes by earning it through what leaders say and do. Trust is important because change always breeds feelings of insecurity. Leaders are called to help shoulder the insecurity of those who are led: to help people feel less anxious about the new directions and more confident about their journey to the future. Finally, care is vital. In the end, people have to believe that their leaders are looking out for their interests and needs.

Many adjectives have been used to define how leadership can be expressed. We have heard of “dictatorial” leaders, “transformational” leaders and “charismatic” leaders. Each adjective describes something fundamental about how a person can express leadership. Within the church there are two qualifying adjectives that we tend to use more than any other: “servant” leadership and leaders as “stewards”. These two words describe the character of the Christian leader.

Servant leaders do indeed lead, but they lead from a unique starting point. As “servants,” they are called to serve God, the congregation and the wider community. They appreciate and seek to fulfill God’s callings to

the Church. They commit to and help their church fulfill the congregation's goals and visions. They understand the needs of the surrounding community and desire to help there. Servant leaders help their churches hear the callings of God, formulate visions for the future and appreciate the needs of the community. Servant leaders then assume these agendas as their own agenda, guiding and encouraging the people of the church to realize these goals. Servant leaders appreciate that talk of change creates insecurities, and so they offer support as the people together go somewhere they have never been before.

The image of the steward is the most important for church leaders today. The story of Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 40 & 41) provides a good example of leadership as a steward. He helped Pharaoh understand the current reality of Egypt with the coming famine. He sensed what God wanted the people to do. He envisioned a solution and provided a plan to fulfill it. He was then entrusted with something which was not his — the leadership and administration of the land. He invested his life into something that mattered — the saving of a nation. He was entrusted with the future of the people for whom he was responsible.

Church leaders are stewards of the future of their congregation. A goal of leadership is to see that our congregations become stronger and more secure as a consequence of the leaders' efforts. It is interesting how we appreciate this and forget this all at the same time. Many of our congregations love to honour their past. When we celebrate those high moments in our church histories... when we remember those events and actions which made a difference in the life of our church... we are really expressing appreciation for those leaders in the past who imagined a future for their church and helped the congregation commit to that future and achieve it. From today's perspective we can now look back and be appreciative for what these people did which strengthened our congregation for the sake of its future. Knowing how important this has been in our past can spark our awareness of how important it is still today. Today our congregations have been entrusted into the hands of its leaders. Today church leaders are stewards of the future of their congregations. In 2020, will the people of your congregation — as they celebrate their history — say “thank you” to you for what you did here and now which provided your church with that better future in 2020? Steward leaders work so this will be the case.

3. Faithfulness

Faithfulness is the final dimension of leadership. And it is faithfulness to several things.

First and foremost, leaders need to be faithful to Jesus Christ. Within the church, leaders are *Christian* leaders. This means they should be embarked on their own journeys of growth in faith. Paul calls everyone to “be transformed by the ongoing renewal of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12.2). When people see their leaders maturing in the Christian life, they can be led in turn by this example to grow in discipleship as well. This alone is an important form of leadership.

Leaders need to be faithful to the congregation's vision of the future, to see its fulfillment. More than 80 per cent of organizations fail to realize the goals, plans and visions they conceive because they fail in the implementation stage. Implementing change is the tough work of the leader. Nothing is more demoralizing for a church than to see the newly forged excitement about the future dissolve in the difficulties of trying to make it a reality. Leaders need to assume the responsibility for seeing the work through, be willing to be accountable for how the plans are unfolding, and have the determination to deal with the unexpected surprises and difficulties that will inevitably arise. Change is never painless; leaders often make the mistake believing the opposite.

Leaders need to be faithful in trusting others to share in the work of change. One person cannot do it all. As Paul affirms, “there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but the same God who activates all of them in everyone” (1 Corinthians 12: 4-6). Leadership shares the task of change, enabling and supporting those with the gifts and abilities to fulfill elements of the work. People not only have to trust their leaders, but leaders need to trust the people. The more the work is shared the greater the sense of shared reward as the future is realized.

Finally, leaders need to respect the congregation's history and sense of local culture. This may strike you as

being out of place since leaders are “about helping change to happen effectively.” You may ask, “Isn’t the whole idea to move away from what congregations did in the past?” Well, not quite. Change is always built on the foundation of the past. Every congregation has its own culture. Every church has its own set of unique beliefs, values, priorities, goals, and ways of behaving which have developed over time. You could say that a congregation’s character is produced by the church’s past success. Building up the church, then, more often than not means finding the stories of history and the strengths of today to be the footings for the structure of the future. By tying the new vision into what the church has valued in the past, people can find the strength to move forward. It helps a congregation feel that what it is striving for is a continuation of who they’ve always been, rather than a new goal standing as a criticism of their past.

Awareness Tool

Being part of the Church of Jesus Christ and doing ministry in the 21st century will require changes to happen. Leaders help change to happen most faithfully when they seek first to discern the will of God and are willing to be led by the Holy Spirit. Motivation for change must result from a vision of what God in Christ can do for the church and not from financial motives. Therefore, leaders must be prayerful when implementing change in a congregation. It is in this spirit that these suggestions are offered.

Eight Stages for Effective Change

Despite all the rhetoric, the books, effort, and money thrown into change, and the efforts of organizations today, most change attempts fail. Mega-consulting firms Arthur D. Little and McKinsey & Co. have studied hundreds of companies that entered Total Quality Management programs. Two thirds of them “grind to a halt because of their failure to produce the hoped-for results.” Efforts at re-engineering fared worse, with a 70 per cent failure rate.

If this is the end result in the world of business where change can make the difference between surviving and thriving, it makes you wonder about the success rate in churches which tend not to be so dominated by the bottom line. This seems a bleak appraisal for any organization, but especially for a church. Yet, it is important to face the necessity for change—and the sooner the better.

John Kotter, who teaches Leadership at Harvard Business School, has made it his business to study both success and failure. “The most general lesson to be learned from the more successful cases is that the change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time.” “Skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces satisfactory results” and “making critical mistakes in any of the phases can have a devastating impact, slowing momentum and negating hard-won gains.”

What is Your Leadership Focus?

The easy trap for congregations today is to focus on maintenance: to perpetuate the life of the congregation just as it has been over time by concentrating solely on the needs and comfort of its members. When a congregation does this it loses its sense of mission. Mission is a big part of what a church is to be about. A maintenance focus can also stunt the development of congregational ministry to build up disciples of Christ and strengthen the care and fellowship within the church. Churches need to begin by challenging people’s perceptions of the church and why it exists. They need to imagine that they can become more than they are today. They need to see that change is possible, as well as important. For all this to happen, the church needs leaders. This is the great challenge and opportunity that Christian leaders will face in the future.

Kotter summarizes the eight phases as follows.

1. Establish a Sense of Urgency*

Talk of change typically begins with some people noticing vulnerability in the organization. The threat of losing ground in some way sparks these people into action, and they in turn try to communicate that sense of urgency to others.

Sadly, people are more motivated to move away from something bad that is currently happening. They are less motivated to move towards a better future. In congregations, membership loss, financial struggles or turnover in key volunteers and leaders are the areas that make people change. Kotter notes that more than one half the companies he has observed were never able to create enough urgency to prompt action.

A sense of urgency to act is the best motivator. Kotter: “Executives underestimate how hard it can be to drive people out of their comfort zones.” In the more successful cases, the leadership group facilitates a frank discussion of potentially unpleasant facts: about the new competition, flat earnings, decreasing market share, or other relevant indicators.

It is helpful to use outsiders (in our case perhaps to bring in consultants, the unchurched, people from other denominations, and regional or national staff people) who can share the big picture from a different perspective and help broaden the awareness of our members. Kotter suggests that the urgency is level high enough when 75 per cent of your leadership is honestly convinced that business as usual is no longer an acceptable plan.

**Note: There is a significant difference between a sense of urgency and a sense of anxiety.*

2. Form a Powerful Guiding Coalition

Change efforts often start with just one or two people, and should grow continually to include more and more who believe that the changes are necessary. In this phase, a large initial core of believers is needed.

This initial group must have authority in terms of the roles they hold in the church, the reputations they have, the skills they bring and their relationships. Regardless of the size of your organization, the guiding coalition for change needs 3-5 people to lead the effort. This group, in turn, helps bring others on board with the new ideas.

Building this coalition — their sense of urgency, their sense of what’s happening and what’s needed — is crucial. Involving respected leaders from key areas of your church in this coalition will pay great dividends later.

3. Create a Vision

Successful transformation rests on a vision of a desired future that is relatively easy to communicate and appeals to the people who will live it out.

“A vision helps clarify the direction in which an organization needs to move.”

The vision functions in many different ways:

- it helps spark motivation
- it helps keep all the projects and changes aligned
- it provides a filter to evaluate how the organization is doing
- it provides a rationale for the changes the organization will have to weather.

“A useful rule of thumb: if you can’t communicate the vision to someone in five minutes or less and get a reaction that signifies both understanding and interest, you are not yet done with this phase of the transformation process.”

4. Communicate that Vision

Kotter suggests the leadership should estimate how much communication of the vision is needed, *and then multiply that effort tenfold*. Do not limit it to one congregational meeting, a sermon by the minister, or a

couple of mail-outs to members. Leaders must lead by example if people are going to perceive the effort as important. Deeds, along with words, are powerful communicators of the new ways.

The bottom line is that a transformation effort will fail unless most of the members understand, appreciate, commit and try to make the effort happen. The guiding principle is simple: use all existing communication channels and opportunities.

5. Empower Others to Act on the Vision

This entails several different actions.

- Allow people in the church to start living out the new ways and to make changes in their areas of involvement.
- Allocate budget money to the new initiative.
- Carve out time on the session agenda to talk about it.
- Change the way your church is organized to put people where the effort needs to be. Free up key people from existing responsibilities so they can concentrate on the new effort.
- In short, remove any obstacles there may be to getting on with the change. Nothing is more frustrating than believing in the change but then not having the time, money, help, or support needed to affect it. You can't get rid of all the obstacles, but the biggest ones need to be dealt with.

6. Plan and Create Short-Term Wins

Since genuine transformation takes time, the loss of momentum and the onset of disappointment are real factors. Most people won't go on a long march for change unless they begin to see compelling evidence that their efforts are bearing fruit.

In successful transformation, leaders actively plan and achieve some short term gains which people will be able to see and celebrate. This provides proof to the church that their efforts are working, and adds to the motivation to keep the effort going.

“When it becomes clear to people that major change will take a long time, urgency levels can drop. Commitments to produce short-term wins help keep the urgency level up and force detailed analytical thinking that can clarify or revise visions.”

7. Consolidate Improvements and Keep the Momentum for Change Moving

As Kotter warns, “Do not declare victory too soon.” Until changes sink deeply into a church's culture — a process that can take five to ten years — new approaches are fragile and subject to regression.

Again, a premature declaration of victory kills momentum, allowing the powerful forces of tradition to regain ground. Leaders of successful efforts use the feeling of victory as the motivation to delve more deeply into their organization: to explore changes in the basic culture, to expose the systems relationships of the organization which need tuning, to move people committed to the new ways into key roles.

Leaders of change must go into the process believing that their efforts will take years.

8. Institutionalize the New Approaches

In the final analysis, change sticks when it becomes ‘the way we do things around here’, when it seeps into the bloodstream of the corporate body or congregation's culture.

“Until new behaviours are rooted in social norms and shared values, they are subject to degradations as soon as the pressure for change is removed.”

Two factors are particularly important for doing this:

First, a conscious attempt to show people how the new approaches, behaviours, and attitudes have helped improve the life of the church. You must help people make the connection between the effort and the outcome.

Second, ensure that the next generation of congregational leaders believe in and embody the new ways.

Kotter writes, "There are still more mistakes that people make, but these eight are the big ones. In reality, even successful change efforts are messy and full of surprises."

As a group, think of a scenario for change - for example, a change in worship time, a change in worship style, starting a building project or planning a needed change scenario for your own church.

In light of the biblical and leadership principles outlined, relate the eight stages for effective change. What can you learn?

For Further Reading

More information on the nature and practice of leadership can be found on the Presbyterian Leadership website. You can access it two ways:

- 1) Visit the website of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (www.presbyterian.ca), look under the "Resources" links on the left side of the page for "Leadership Resources".
- 2) Go directly to the site at: <http://www.telusplanet.net/public/pdcoutts/leadership/index.htm>
- 3) "Studying Congregations", edited by Nancy Ammerman, Jackson Carroll, Carl Dudley and William McKinney. Chapter 6, "*Leadership and the Study of the Congregation*", Abingdon Press,. A concise article containing several key understandings on the subject.

Bill Easum, *Leadership on the OtherSide*, Abingdon Press 2000

Leith Anderson, *Leadership That Works*, Bethany House, 1999

You can probe Kotter's ideas further by reading one of the following:

The Article: *Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail* by John Kotter. Harvard Business Review, March-April 1995.

The Book: *Leading Change* by John Kotter. Harvard Business School Press, 1996.

Other books on Congregational Change:

James Furr, Mike Bonem, Jim Herrington, *Leading Congregational Change* (workbook also available) Jossey-Bass, 2000

Paul Munday, *Unlocking Church Doors*, Abingdon Press, 1997

Lyle Schaller, *The Change Agent*, Abingdon Press, (out of print)

Having completed this segment in the study you may wish to begin the next part of this series which is entitled "Congregational Mission and Vision."

Welcome to our study on **Congregational Mission/Vision**

Purpose of this Study

1. To help church leaders to become more aware of the issues related to congregational mission/vision in their congregation.
2. To encourage dialogue about the related issues.
3. To provide awareness tools for congregations to
 - a) be more missional and
 - b) create their own vision and mission statements.
4. To reflect on a response to the issues in the context of our faith.

Preface

The mission of the church is clear and simple: to carry on the work of Jesus Christ. This has not changed in 2,000 years. What has changed is how churches are doing this mission, guided by their vision.

Congregational vision comes from God. It is achieved through prayer, participation and pondering. It is the result of the congregation's input and is under the leader's care. Leaders ensure that the vision is clear, understandable, realistic and biblically faithful. Leaders become servants of the vision, encouraging and enabling the congregation to realize it.

In our study of congregations which were able to reverse the cycle of decline, they all had a sense of mission and vision that was focused beyond their people and the four walls of their church.

Several factors contribute to congregational vitality and growth. We studied congregations which were able to reverse the cycle of decline and rediscover congregational health, and found that they had these attitudes in common:

- ministry is a spiritual enterprise
- leadership incorporates a shared congregational vision
- mission, not maintenance is key
- there is an openness to change
- evangelism is a priority
- congregations want to be healthy

On behalf of the Life and Mission Agency, we would like to thank Rev. Dr. Terry Ingram for his contribution to this study.

Biblical Reflection

Vision, Mission and God's People

In advance, invite a layperson to lead this time of reflection.

Suggestions for the lay leader:

1. Ensure that participants have their own copy of this section of the study.
2. This reflection is a participatory exercise. As you work through the reflection, ask volunteers to take turns reading the text and Bible readings. Together choose sections according to the time available and the nature of the group.
3. When you welcome everyone, invite them to
 - share their experiences and beliefs
 - provide opportunities for everyone to speak
 - listen to, respect, and value each other's words and silences.
4. Remember there are no right or wrong answers to the reflection questions.

The group will need: A pillar candle, matches, Bibles, hymn books (The Book of Praise, 1997), a large sheet of dark blue or black poster board, pieces of white paper (about 14 cm x 11 cm) that have been cut into cloud shapes, masking tape, coloured fine markers, slips of paper and pencils, art supplies to make a mural (e.g. paper, felt, fabric pieces, paint, markers, cotton balls), a globe, a dish/flowerpot of earth, and newspaper to cover the area.

1. Opening Reflections

Place a pillar candle in the middle of the group. If possible, dim the lights and darken the room. Light the candle and invite everyone to relax and prepare to dream, closing their eyes or focusing on the candle as they listen to one person read slowly and softly Genesis 28:10-15. Then pray together.

Unison Prayer

Loving God,
 we confess that we forget you
 and then feel alone, separate, in darkness;
 we fill the void with false images,
 noisy confusing sounds, busy meaningless activities.
 Then we struggle to recognize your presence,
 your voice, your work being done in our world.
 God in us and around us,
 we ask that you open our eyes,
 our ears, our minds
 to imagine your vision,
 to embrace boldly your ways, to move faithfully forward.
 May we seek
 your understanding and your direction,
 May we dream your dream,
 and discern your mission for our faith community,
 now and forever more. Amen.

Sing #399 *Spirit of Gentleness*

2. Relating Our Experiences

Invite group members to divide into small groups to do one of the following exercises.

- i) Display the poster board. Hand out the "cloud" pieces of paper. Invite everyone to write down or draw an image of their most wonderful dream or daydream. When ready, tape them onto the poster board. Invite those who wish to share their dreams. In the Bible, dreams are often recounted as people's experiences of God's vision for them and their community. Discuss the role dreams play in your lives using these questions.

Reflection questions

1. Do you ever purposely recall and retell your dreams. If so, when? Why?
2. How do such dreams affect your feelings and actions?
3. What are some of the daydreams that you and another person (e.g. parent, spouse, child, friend) dream together?

- ii) In Luke's gospel, the angel Gabriel visits Mary foretelling the birth of Jesus. The angel concludes saying,

"For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word.'" Luke 1:37-38

Mary's response to an unbelievable possibility changed history. Think about the responses (verbal, non-verbal, actions) that "possibilities" meet in your church and list these (e.g. "yes but," "we've tried that before and it didn't work," "no one has time," "what can I do to make that work?" "it's worth a try" sarcastic sighs, thumbs up, no response, referral to a committee). Then, ask the group to agree to hold back all reactions for the following brainstorming exercise:

Invite everyone to speak freely and to express the possibilities for their church. People may prefer to do this individually in writing or in sharing with a partner and some may wish to pass. Clearly state that afterwards they will be asked to read aloud or report their ideas to the whole group: articulating and sharing our visions can strengthen our faith as God's people.

Gather the whole group together and share the dreams and possibilities without critiquing them in any way. End the activity by offering all spoken and unspoken words to God as your group's prayer.

3. Learning from Jesus

Jesus revealed God's vision. He repeatedly explained, upheld, demonstrated, and proclaimed the kingdom of God—whom it included, when and where it happened, what would take place. If time and group size permits, do the following reflection exercises together. Alternatively, divide into small groups and assign an exercise to each group.

- i) Jesus' vision

Read the passages and discuss them using the reflection questions.

Matthew 18:2-4

Luke 6:20-26

Luke 14:7-14

Luke 15:11-32

John 13:12-16

John 17:20-23

Reflection questions

1. Who is included in Jesus' vision of God's kingdom?
2. What do you feel you learn about God's kingdom from passages like these?
3. How might these readings affect the vision you have for your church?

- ii) Jesus mission for himself and his disciples

Read the passages and discuss them using the reflection questions.

Matthew 28:16-20

Mark 2:15-17

Luke 4:16-21

John 13:34-35

John 21:15-17

Reflection questions

1. What mission did Jesus' see for himself? What mission did he see for his disciples?
2. When and where were their mission activities to begin?
3. What do you learn about God's mission from these passages? How might this affect the mission you want for your church?

Gather as one group and share the discussion from small groups. Identify other teachings and passages from Jesus' ministry that come to mind on this theme. Discuss how they might be relevant. Then in silence, before the lit pillar candle, reflect for a moment on each of these questions:

1. How does our congregation discern its mission as God's people?
2. In what ways does our church proclaim its mission?
3. How do recent church decisions and actions further our church's mission?

4. Responding

Invite group members to choose one of the following and respond either individually, with a partner, or as a group.

- **Creative:** Using the art materials create a mural for your church with images of God's vision. Plan to display these in the church.
- **Pastoral:** Think of someone — a churchgoer or a non-churchgoer, a young person or an adult, a person with influence or someone marginalized — who may welcome an opportunity to share their vision of church. Imagine a situation where you invite them to talk about this. Role play the scenario with a partner. How might you help them connect their vision with the vision others have of your church?
- **Outreach:** Take a walk in the neighbourhood surrounding your church. Describe how it might be different if anything was possible. What could be the role of your church in transforming the neighbourhood? What might be the first step people in your church could take?
- **Organizational:** Suggest a minimum of three steps that could be taken to help your church develop a clear vision and a direction for mission.

5. Closing

Spread out newspaper before the group. In the middle place a globe and a small dish/flowerpot of earth.

Reader #1: And in Jacob's dream the Lord said, "The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land." (Take pinches of earth. Sprinkle it in the 4 directions around the globe.)

Reader #2: And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." (Gently spin the globe.)

Reader #3: Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other. (Form a circle around the globe and hold hands while one person reads the prayer aloud.)

(Readings from Genesis 28:13-15a, Matthew 28:18-20b, and John 13:34-35)

Prayer

God of dreams and visions, we hear many doubts and many questions,

some our own,

some from people outside the church:

What does it mean to be a church?

What is at the heart and soul of our faith community?

Help us dream your dreams,

hear your word and

discern your mission for us. Amen.

Sing #758 *Christ's is the world*

Background

What do we mean by maintenance? Many congregations spend most of their resources, planning and meetings on issues that relate to the congregation and its members' needs. Naturally this is needed in any organi-

zation. However, when it becomes the primary topic for discussion, the congregation has gone into a survival mode. Survival discussions include how do we get enough people into the church to pay the bills or how do we get enough people to do the work? Survival is not mission. Survival's goal is simple existence and perpetuation of the institution and its practices. This is not mission.

Congregations, like all organizations, tend towards a maintenance orientation. Congregations initially organize their lives internally to fulfill goals that they have (ie. Worship, the nurture of faith, the care of people). Once they have established their programs and structures in a way that they see fulfills their goals, congregations, like all organizations, focus on and manage the programs and structures with the assumption that as they care for these things the goals will continue to be fulfilled. In the midst of this normal habit, however, churches like all organizations begin to lose sight of the original goals... and over time maintenance changes in programs and structures causes organizational drift away from the original goals. This is why churches must always be mindful of a primary goal such as mission. Constant focus on the goal of mission helps every church to remain faithful to our calling by Christ and helps congregations limit the consequences of organizational drift.

For the purposes of this study, by mission we mean a congregational focus beyond the needs of its own members. Mission is the strong desire to see those not presently associated with the church come to faith in Christ. It is the passion to reach out to those around in ways that bring healing, reconciliation and spiritual transformation. It becomes the bedrock orientation of the congregation: its DNA, its operating system.

Many congregations see the need for change and would like to do something different, yet they are intimidated by the scope of what faces them. They are uncertain if they have the resources they would need and are worried that they cannot learn new ways of being a church. In essence, they desire to change, but have talked themselves out of the possibility because they are anxious and uncertain. They become stuck in the maintenance mode, which often is the precursor to significant decline.

Two critical questions need to be asked: Does your congregation want to move from a maintenance mode to a mission orientation? And are you prepared to pay the price? If not, then the remainder of this study will not be relevant or helpful to you.

The story is told by a minister who, one Sunday, an hour before worship service, received a call from a neighbour who was not associated with the congregation. She asked him if he would go with her in the ambulance because her husband just had a heart attack. What was he to do? Should he leave the congregation of 28 people to worship without him or not go the hospital? He chose to go to the hospital. As he reflects back on this story he notes that this has never happened again. He also believes that this was a turning point in the life of his congregation. It acted as a catalyst that changed their thinking. In their collective consciousness they realized that the one outside the church was more important than the one inside the church. Since that time, worship attendance has grown significantly and the leadership's orientation is to make disciples and to reach out to the unchurched. This is a congregation with a mission beyond its four walls.

Every congregation has its own local culture, the unique ways in which it defines itself. Shifting thinking from maintenance to mission requires a change in a congregation's understanding of who they are and whose they are as a church of Christ. Leaders implementing this type of change have to challenge maintenance thinking while leading towards mission. It might be informative to stop for a moment and ask the group you are with this question: Does your church exist to reach the world in Christ's name or does it exist to meet the needs of you and your family? What did you discover? Chances are (if you are similar to most North American church goers), a majority wanted the church to meet the needs of their family. There is a strong current to maintenance and this is what needs to be reframed for your congregation.

This is not to say that one's needs and those of one's family go unnoticed or are not important. We are to help one another grow in faith and wholeness. We must support each other in our times of need even as we celebrate significant occasions together. However, the purpose of helping one another within the church is not an end in and of itself but a means for the church to continue to reach out in Christ's name.

To foster this attitude within your congregation will require a subtle but regular sharing of these two truths: the church serves Christ's purpose, not our own; and the church is not just about you but also about those yet to be called into fellowship with you.

Awareness Tools

What follows are tools that will help you determine whether your congregation leans towards maintenance or towards mission. Divide into groups of four to six people. Choose a facilitator/leader. Then turn to the first tool entitled Necessary Congregational Shifts. Rate your progress for each question. Next, share your answers with the group. Take time to reflect as a group on what you have discovered. Would you say that your congregation tends to be maintenance-focused or mission-focused? Identify people who have a passion for these issues and who are spiritually gifted in this area, check with Session and encourage them to take the initiative.

Necessary Congregational Shifts

Mission and maintenance are really a continuum. At times the emphasis needs to be on maintenance. In general, however, congregations need to be more missional in orientation. We are of the opinion that this fulfills the purpose of the Church.

The following is a tool that will help you discern whether you tend to be a mission or maintenance congregation. Determine where your congregation might be in the following areas.

Mission Rather than Maintenance

10=fully engaged in mission

1=focus on maintenance

Ministry With

Trained lay people do ministry
Let's try something new
Grass roots initiatives
Identity by beliefs and values

Ministry To

Clergy controls
We have always done it this way
Top down authority
Identity by heritage

10 9 8 6 5 4 7 3 2 1

Effective Planning

Streamlined decision making
Do it and learn as you go
Flexible Teams
Ministry first, funds follow

Administration and committees

Consensus before action
Emphasize the process
Long standing Committees
Budget dictates ministry

10 9 8 6 5 4 7 3 2 1

Outward focus on Others

Caring for the needs of others
Visitors seen as guests of God
Comfortable with change
Us with Them

Inward focus on self

Caring for my and my family's needs
visitors seen as strangers
status quo
Us vs. Them

10 9 8 6 5 4 7 3 2 1

Spiritual orientation

Identified by mission/vision
Long range plan – growth
Goal – personal transformation

Institutional orientation

identified by heritage
Long term plan – ensure viability
Goal – more members

10 9 8 6 5 4 7 3 2 1

New approaches for new people
 Various musical instrumentations
 Indigenous local style
 Warm, participatory, authentic

10 9 8 6 5 4 7

Worship — what members like
 Organ music only
 Hasn't changed in 40 years
 Formal, audience, rigid

3 2 1

Giving
 The time is now
 Offering to God
 Giving to outside ministries
 Stewardship- God has given much

10 9 8 6 5 4 7

Storing
 Saving for a rainy day
 Taking the Collection
 Supporting our local budget
 Fundraising – we have little

3 2 1

Mission something we do
 Quality and excellence
 Doing something about . . .
 At our doorstep and around the world

10 9 8 6 5 4 7

Something we give to
 It was good enough for me
 Concerned about . . .
 Overseas

3 2 1

Loyal to Congregation's ministry
 A community of Christ's people
 Being a disciple
 Ad hoc groups
 Web like flow charts

10 9 8 6 5 4 7

Loyal to institutional church
 One big happy family
 Being a member, office bearer
 Standing committees
 Hierarchal flow chart

3 2 1

Next, read *Fourteen Characteristics of Missionary Congregations*. Then discuss which two or three of these characteristics most exemplify your congregation. Which two or three characteristics need to be addressed to help your congregation become more missional?

As a group, identify two or three key issues that you have identified throughout this study and believe should be addressed immediately by the leadership of your church. Then develop a plan to help make these needed changes.

Fourteen Characteristics of Missionary Congregations

1. They view themselves as mission outposts of the church, embracing evangelism and the Great Commission as fundamental to their ministry and church growth as a natural and desirable outcome. They make evangelism a congregational priority.
2. They focus on making disciples and on spiritually developing their leaders, rather than on maintaining the status quo. This involves taking risks.
3. They make the Christian faith and the church relevant to everyday life, especially as a source of meaning, challenge, direction and inspiration. They are in touch with the truth and in touch with the times.
4. They communicate the good news in clear language that is devoid of church jargon and is meaningful to seekers and newcomers with little or no Christian memory.
5. They emphasize the power and importance of prayer and provide multiple opportunities for people to pray or to be prayed for through prayer meetings, teams, chains, walks, retreats etc.
6. They create small groups within the congregation through which individuals can experience community, meet personal and spiritual needs and share their faith and fears.

7. They provide diverse educational opportunities for both adults and children to learn more about the faith, spiritual growth, mission and faith sharing. Making disciples of all people is more than making “converts”. It is also about helping people grow deeper in their discipleship.
8. They offer many and varied lay ministries developed to meet the needs of both church members and the unchurched including a vast majority of the congregation in Christian service and discipleship making.
9. They explain the Christian faith as it is expressed through the Reformed Presbyterian tradition.
10. They accept doubt and disbelief as part of faith. They welcome difficult questions about God and the church and are supportive and sensitive to seekers, newcomers and others who are disciples in the making.
11. They encourage open and honest faith sharing among members.
12. They understand the importance of knowing the Bible, and offer multiple opportunities for study.
13. They provide meaningful and enthusiastic worship experiences that feature a spiritual component, offer an encounter with God, and have preaching that is relevant to the struggles and joys of daily life for visitors and members.
14. They enthusiastically welcome visitors and newcomers and attempt to integrate them rapidly and deeply into the life of the congregation.

This list was adapted from the article *Fulfilling the Great Commission*, Claude E. Payne and Hamilton Beazley, *Congregations*, Jan/Feb. 2001, *Congregations*, The Alban Institute

Next Steps

One of the best places to begin moving from maintenance to mission is to have this focus reflected in your mission/vision/purpose statement.

1. Does your congregation have a clear, concise and accurate mission/vision/purpose statement?
2. If yes, in your opinion is it missional or maintenance focused?
3. If you have decided that you do not have an outward focused statement this may be the time to re-evaluate it in the light of what you have learned about being a missional church. A good process to follow is outlined by Bill Easum entitled *Clarifying Our Mission, Vision, and Values* which follows in this study. Or see the list of other resources.
4. If your congregation does not have a mission/vision/purpose statement, please follow the process outlined as in #3 above.
5. Does your congregation use its mission statement to focus its thinking, its actions, and evaluate its life? Mission statements are only as good as the use we make of them.

What follows are two similar approaches to collaborating on mission and vision statements. Read through them and use the process or parts of both which are most applicable to your context.

Clarifying Our Mission, Vision, and Values

By Bill Easum

One of the critical issues before most churches is the clarification of what God can do for them in these changing times. Several religious books focus on the importance of clarifying the mission or purpose. Many secular books focus on the importance of managing by values. I wrote about the importance of mission, vision and values in *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers*. Once before, in *Net Results*, I wrote about the importance of core values and purpose. This year my friend Tom Bandy and I wrote about mission, vision, values, and beliefs in our book *Growing Spiritual Redwoods*.

Why this sudden interest in clarifying the purpose of the church? Because we live in a time of revolutionary and complex change... a time in which everything around the world is moving from one world view to another. In such a time, it is easy for organizations to lose their direction and focus on the survival of the organization instead of extending the mission into a new era.

Stained glass windows are a good example of the need for clarifying our mission once again. Originally, stained glass windows were one of the ways churches told the gospel story to people who could not read. They were the first moving pictures about the Gospel.

In the beginning, stained glass windows were little more than a vehicle for sharing the message of the church. Today, stained glass windows are seen by many long term Christians as essential elements of a church and not as vehicles for the gospel. Churches actually split over whether or not to keep or to add stained glass windows. Churches that have changed location often fight over whether or not to take the stained glass windows with them.

Many churches have confused stained glass windows with the mission, vision, and values of their church. Otherwise they would be using movie clips in worship today to tell the story to visual people who do not thrive on reading. Just like many stained glass windows were often positioned so that light could come through them to better depict the story, so today's churches that are clear about their mission, vision, and values often install backlit screens on which to show the gospel.

Recently, I was sharing with a church the need to be able to share the gospel through the use of a projection system in worship. Their response was "it costs too much," to which I replied "It is not nearly as expensive as re-lathering your pipe organ." There was a long silence before one man spoke up, "But that's different. A church has to have an organ; it doesn't have to have a projection system." Could it be that a projection system today is nothing more than pipe organs or stained glass windows of the past?

Jesus spent most of his life clarifying his mission, vision, and values . . . and he made them clear to his first disciples. In Luke 4:18 he declared his mission:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

He explained in his vision how he would carry out that mission. In Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:19 he said,

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."

"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

He also shared the values that would guide his decisions and measure his success. He shared those values in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-11.

Blessed are... the poor in spirit ...those who mourn...the meek... who hunger and thirst for righteousness...the merciful... the pure in heart... the peacemakers... who are persecuted...

More than once and in a variety of ways, Jesus shared with us his mission, vision, and values. These statements guided his every decision. They were his compass in the good and bad times. He was a clearly defined spiritual leader on a mission. Church leaders today should be the same.

So how does a church go about establishing a mission, vision, and value statement? My experience has taught me that there is no one way to accomplish such clarity of direction, but there are some guidelines that seem to work best most of the time. Consider the following steps to take in developing a mission, vision, and values statement.

Step One: In an existing church, secure the approval of the official body to set up a steering team (no fewer than 5 people if possible) to take the church through a process that will result in the formulation of mission, vision, and value statements. This is the most difficult step because it means that whoever is the boss or bosses (every church has one or two) will have to be willing to give up that control. In a new church plant, the planting team should have developed the mission, vision, and value statements before planting the church. This is an easy step in a new church plant.

Step Two: The minister, the steering team, and each staff person should spend time to write their own statements without any collaboration or comparison between anyone. This step eliminates the question of who should begin the process of drafting a mission statement and levels the playing field.

Step Three: When each person is comfortable with what has been written, everyone comes together to share, explain, and compare their statements. Collaboration is the key here, not compromise.

The tendency at this stage is to want to include everything from everyone which results in a mission statement that is far too long. Such statements never give leadership to an organization. Usually, they are put away never to be referred to again. Keep in mind that everything is not equally important. In this step, you are trying to arrive at only the essentials for this one church.

Include in the statements only those things that the group considers to be of such importance that the church would not be the church if they weren't included. The mission statement should be no more than a sentence. The vision statement can be longer, but no more than a paragraph. The value statement can be a page.

Step Four: Conduct focus groups with a larger circle of the leadership in which the existing draft is shared and feedback is encouraged. The goal is to share, explain, and listen. Stress that the statements are just drafts and now is the time for them to say how they feel about the statements and to give constructive feedback.

Step Five: The steering team synthesizes all of the feedback into the final document. By this time every word in the statements should carry powerful meaning and imagery.

Caution: Do not try to clone someone else's statements. Doing so usually results in statements that really do not reflect the essence of what God wants to do through this church. For that reason, I have intentionally avoided sharing any actual statements in this article.

Step Six: Hold a congregational meeting to communicate the mission, vision, and value statements. The purpose of this meeting is to secure formal approval of the statements (in a permission-giving church this might be one of the few votes the church ever takes). Review the process through which the church has gone. Show the results of the labour then give some examples of how these statements might affect the way the church functions in the future. If it is clear at this point that the statements require some changes, explain these and how and when the changes will be made.

It should become clear to everyone that the intention is for these statements to become the actual leadership of the church instead of the board, or council, or deacon, or session, or whatever. This is a huge shift that must be understood by everyone. Every decision will be measured by what these statements are. "If we do this, will it carry out the essence of these statements?"

The clearer everyone is at this point, the easier the transition is into a permission-giving, values-directed church. The statements decide, and anyone is free to interpret them and act upon them (of course, common sense, laced with faith, must abound). When someone does something that the majority of the people feel violates the spirit of the statements, they are held accountable by whatever group the congregation sets aside to do this.

By now you may be more than a year into the process. Don't let the amount of time deter you. If you take the time now, the time it takes in the future to accomplish ministry will be drastically reduced. Remember that Jesus spent the first thirty years of his ministry developing his mission, vision, and values.

Step Seven: Use the statements to guide the decision-making process. Give everyone in the church a tastefully done copy of the statements and encourage them to display them somewhere in their home and office as reminders of the mission, vision, and values of the church. Also, post them in prominent places throughout the church where everyone will have to pass by them at regular intervals.

Step Eight: You may want to develop simple action guidelines. For example, you may want to say that anyone can start a new ministry without asking permission as long as: (1) the new ministry enhances the mission, vision, and values of the church; (2) they can find two or three other people who want to accomplish the same ministry; (3) there is funding for the ministry or they can find the funding. This allows the mission, vision, and values to become the leaders of the church, not any one person or group.

There is one more thing that needs to be said about this process. Leaders must change before the church will change. Few church leaders, ministers included, are prepared to do ministry in the emerging world. Most of our home churches and our seminaries do not prepare us for what we are facing today. That means that most ministers and church leaders must undergo radical change if they want to see God work through them. Here is where the change begins: Ministers and key leaders must allow God to set your own agenda, not the members of the church.

What would happen in your church if the real leader of the church was your mission, vision, and value statements? Would it cut down the amount of time people spend in meetings? Would more ministry be accomplished? Would more people

blossom in their faith? Think about it. Maybe its time to decide what God wants the people in your church to be and to do.

Reprinted from Net Results, a monthly journal of New Ideas in Church Vitality. For more information or to subscribe, phone 806/762-8094, fax 806/762-8873, email netresults@netresults.org

This article can be found at <http://www.easumbandy.com/netresul/Easum/97-10.htm>

Mission Statements -- How do we develop and share one?

By Bill Easum

Because the complexity and radical discontinuity of our time, it is more important than ever that churches have very clear marching orders. They can be called purpose statements, mission statements, core values, it doesn't matter as long as the instruments are solid enough to guide the church is everything that it does. There is a lot of confusion about mission, vision, and value statements. Here is the way I refer to them.

Mission

Explains what a church does. This is basically the same for every church. Some form of making disciples. Example: "Every person a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ"

Vision

Explains how a church makes disciples. Example: "We are committed to growing every person into a ministry of Jesus Christ by . . . Helping them discover their giftedness . . . Providing the necessary training . . . Giving them permission to carry out the mission within the values of the church"

Values

Sets the boundaries in which people are free to live out their gifts without asking for permission Example: "We value teams, small groups that multiply, inclusiveness, diversity, prayer, and social justice, etc."

The key is to be specific enough to set the direction, distinguish your church from another one, but leave the door as wide as possible for the Holy Spirit to work. The value statement allows churches to eliminate most committees and voting, and to rely on what I call 'bubble up' ministries. It also allows you to measure the progress and to evaluate ministries and staff. In this case, you do not want staff who are doers; you would want equippers.

Building, developing, and communicating a vision statement is the most important step a community of faith will ever take. A clear and workable vision statement is one of the best ways for a church to turn the discontinuity of our time into an opportunity to develop new and innovative ministries. It is not only the anchor in the storm; it is the motivator of ministry. Failure to do so will lead to serious conflicts in the future.

1. Get leadership to commit to monitoring everything by their particular expression of the biblical mission.
2. Minister drafts her/his own vision statement.
3. The vision team — key, committed lay people — develops a vision statement without seeing the minister's vision statement.
4. Minister and leadership team compare visions, compare them with the scriptures, and then agree on one vision statement.
5. The community of faith is then asked for input on the vision statement.
6. The minister and leadership team then synthesize the input from the community of faith. The vision statement may or may not be changed or refined.
7. The community of faith is then asked to form a consensus around the final draft, hopefully without a formal vote. If a vote is necessary, hopefully it will be one of the few votes in the future.

8. There are several obstacles to developing a workable vision statement. The minister is not involved. There are too many people on the vision team. Controls were put on the vision team or exercise too much veto power. The issue of money has so clouded the spiritual eyes of the vision team that they cannot dream. People who do not have any biblical understanding or background. Conflict is too widespread throughout the church, leadership is too fixated on a quick fix that it cannot dream about the future.
9. Communicate the vision through messages, conversations, worship cover, letterheads, congregation rituals, yellow pages and the sign out front.
10. Monitor the vision. I have chosen to refer to monitoring the vision instead of managing the vision because it is difficult to manage change. When people are called by God to carry out the vision, change is inevitable. The last thing we want to do is try to manage the Spirit. The chaotic nature of the Spirit simply cannot be managed without killing it. That is what most churches try to do when people get excited about ministry.

However, it is possible and desirable to monitor the changes brought on by the Spirit to insure authenticity. The last thing a church needs is a form of cut loose mysticism. Ministers tell me that monitoring the vision requires about 80 per cent of their time. This time factor is one reason why churches do not need many committees or meetings.

Monitoring the vision means the following:

- a. A constant commitment to the vision statement by everyone in leadership.
 - b. The alignment of everything and everyone in any form of leadership /responsibility around the vision statement.
 - c. A constant willingness on the part of the minister and/or a steering team made up of seven key leaders to ask what will communicate this vision to the congregation in ways that they will understand and experience it.
 - d. Evaluation by the minister and/or steering team of every experience, ministry, or situation in light of the vision statement.
11. Help the flow of the vision statement through:
 - a. An accountability system to insure the long term success of the vision.
 - b. An information system to care and feed the people who carry out the vision:
 - People data
 - teaching systems
 - financial needs
 - spiritual gifts
 - small groups
 - leadership development
 12. A feedback system is crucial to the ongoing improvement of the ministries that carry out the vision.

Ownership comes from helping to carry out the vision, not making decisions about administrative matters. Ongoing spiritual growth of individuals requires some form of feedback loop with their mentors as well as other teams or small groups throughout the community of faith.
 13. A recognition system is crucial to the ongoing development of self-esteem which helps people be more open to God's call to effective ministry. The more people who carry out the vision are praised, the more people there will be who will carry out the vision.
 14. The vision is working if . . .
 - Pre-Christian people are having a transforming experience with Jesus Christ. The community of faith is growing in its understanding of grace.
 - Leaders have a growing commitment to and understanding of those outside the church.

- More people are involved in ministry to others.
- Most people in the church, including the staff, find their service fulfilling.
- Members and visitors are transformed into raving fans of Jesus Christ and the church.
- Laity quietly and relationally take their Christianity into their workplace.

http://www.easumbandy.com/FAQS/mission_statements.htm.

Further Reading

- Website for Bill Easum and Tom Bandy at www.easum/bandy.com
- Website for The Peter Drucker Foundation at www.drucker.org
- Roy Oswald and Robert Friedrich, *Discerning your Congregation's Future* (The Alban Institute, 1996)
- Steven Goodwin, *Catching the Next Wave* (Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, 1999)
- Nancy Vogel, *Catching the Next Wave Work Book* (Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, 1999)
- Ezra Earl Jones, *Quest for Quality in the Church* (Discipleship Resources, Nashville, 1993)
- Laurie Beth Jones, *The Path* (Hyperion, New York, 1996)

Five good books for creating a Mission Statement:

1. *The Path*, by Laurie Beth Jones, New York, NY, Hyperion, 1996
2. *Managing By Values*, by Ken Blanchard and Michael O'Connor, San Francisco, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1997
3. *Building A Shared Vision*, C. Patrick Lewis, Portland, OR, Productivity Press, 1997
4. *Built to Last*, James Collins, and Jerry Porras, Harper Business, 1997
5. *Clarifying our Mission, Vision, and Value*—an article in *Net Results* by Bill Easum

For examples of mission statements go to the Easum Bandy & Associates website
http://www.easumbandy.com/FAQS/mission_statements.htm

The Best Mission Statement I've Seen

by Bill Easum

New Hope Christian Fellowship in Honolulu
 Wayne Curdier is the minister.
 The church has around 7,000 in worship and the average age is around 30.

Their purpose is . . . “To present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that it turns non-Christians into converts, converts into disciples, and disciples into mature, fruitful leaders who will in turn go into the world and reach others for Christ.”

Having completed this segment in the study you may wish to begin the next part of this series which is entitled “Planning for Evangelism.”

Welcome to our study on

Planning for Evangelism

Purpose of this Study

1. To help church leaders become more aware of the issues related to planning for evangelism in their congregation.
2. To encourage dialogue about the related issues.
3. To provide awareness tools to assist church leaders in planning for evangelism.
4. To reflect on a response to the issues in the context of our faith.

Preface

Your church needs to have an evangelism plan, and committing to it must be a high priority. The saying “fail to plan, plan to fail” applies to churches that are not intentional with their ministries of evangelism.

This fourth and final study focuses on planning evangelism in your congregation. Your evangelism plan augments, but does not take the place of your church’s strategic plan. This study will concentrate on asking questions and we trust that the Holy Spirit will lead you and your congregation to the right answers for your particular set of gifts.

Several factors contribute to congregational vitality and growth. We studied congregations which were able to reverse the cycle of decline and rediscover congregational health. We found that they had these attitudes in common:

- ministry is a spiritual enterprise
- leadership incorporates a shared congregational vision
- mission, not maintenance is key
- there is an openness to change
- evangelism is a priority
- congregations want to be healthy

Biblical Reflection

Evangelism and God’s People

In advance, invite a layperson to lead this time of reflection.

Suggestions for the lay leader:

1. Ensure that participants have their own copy of this section of the study.
2. This reflection is a participatory exercise. As you work through the reflection, ask volunteers to take turns reading the text and Bible readings. Together choose sections according to the time available and the nature of the group.
3. When you welcome everyone, invite them to:
 - share their experiences and beliefs
 - provide opportunities for everyone to speak
 - listen to, respect, and value each other’s words and silences.

4. Remember there are no right or wrong answers to the Reflection Questions.

The group will need: Bibles (including a variety of translations if possible) hymn books (*The Book of Praise*, 1997) heavy white paper cut for bookmarks and lettering and art supplies for decorating them (e.g. stickers, fine coloured markers.)

1. Opening Reflections

Set out a stack of four Bibles. Invite four different group members to open a Bible to the first page of one of the gospels and then place the open Bibles on the worship centre. The four gospels represent four people's attempt to share publicly their experiences of God through Jesus so that others might become followers of Jesus.

READER #1 (*holding the Bible open to Matthew*):

From the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" (Matthew 7:5)

READER #2 (*holding the Bible open to Mark*):

Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe the good news." Mark 1:14-15)

READER #3 (*holding the Bible open to Luke*):

And Jesus read, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim the release of the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19)

READER #4 (*holding the Bible open to John*):

Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:1-3)

Unison Prayer

Loving God,
on many occasions,
we have read and heard
the words of the four evangelists—
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.
Like them, may we be filled with your Spirit
and compelled to tell others the Good News. Amen.

Sing #764 *There's a spirit in the air*

2. Relating Our Experiences

Invite group members to divide into small groups, each doing one of these exercises:

1. Imagine or recall a situation where you are talking about your faith with someone:
 - Where is this?
 - Who are you with?
 - What are you and the other person saying to one another?
2. Think about Bible stories or verses that have special meaning to you, giving you a feeling of closeness with God or Jesus. Look them up and share their significance with each other. Brainstorm phrases to complete these sentences "God is like . . ." and "I feel God's presence when . . ."
3. Discuss the definitions of Evangelism provided in the box.
 - What does evangelism mean to you?
 - How do you feel about people who are evangelical?

- What does it mean to be an evangelistic church?

Gather together and share your small group experiences.

3. Learning from Jesus and the apostles

The four gospels give us many examples of how Jesus talked about his faith and his relationship with God. Using parables and language that they could understand, he brought people of all ages and backgrounds into the presence of God.

If time and group size permits, do the following reflection exercises together. Alternatively, divide into small groups and assign an exercise to each group.

Jesus shares his faith

Read the following passages. Compare the language used in different translations.

Discuss using the reflection questions:

- Matthew 18:10-14
- Matthew 4:12-17
- Mark 2:23-28
- Luke 6:20-26
- Luke 15:1-7
- Luke 19:45-48
- Luke 24:25-32

The apostles share their faith

Read the following passages. Compare the language used in different translations.

Discuss using the reflection questions:

- Acts 2:37-42
- Acts 8:26-40
- Acts 10:34-43
- Acts 17:16-20
- Acts 18:5-11

Reflection questions

- What are the circumstances for these conversations? (e.g. at work, travelling, visiting)
- Who are the speakers addressing?
- How did they help listeners experience God?

Gather as one group and share reflections. Identify other passages from Jesus' ministry that come to mind on the theme of sharing one's faith. How do you feel these stories help you share your faith?

4. Responding

Invite group members to choose one of the following and respond either individually, with a partner, or as a group.

- **Creative:** Create an image, write a Bible verse, or compose poetry or prose on a bookmark to represent your experience of God. Think about other places you could display these (e.g. on notepaper, screen savers, telephone answering machines, or the front window of your house.)
- **Pastoral:** Think of someone on your church roll who is currently in the midst of an emotionally laden life situation. Outline a plan to get together. Role-play with a partner what you might say about God's love and presence in their life and how Jesus reveals this to us.
- **Organizational:** Suggest a minimum of three steps that could be taken by people in your faith community to make your church more evangelical, helping people find the opportunity and the language to share experiences of God with each other and with non-church goers.

Definitions:

- Evangelism is communicating about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and our response to it.
- Evangelism is the verbal proclamation of the gospel.
- Evangelism is the act of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with anyone who does not know Him as their personal Saviour.
- Evangelism brings people to a moment of realization and acceptance of Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.
- Evangelism is a continuing process of helping other people encounter God through Jesus Christ.
- Evangelism achieves justice and transforms cultures.
- Evangelism is sharing Christian hope and hospitality.

5. Closing

Unison Prayer

God of all Creation,
you are in us and around us,
but so often we are reluctant to speak of you,
and sometimes we try to withdraw from you.
May we learn to talk about these times with one another—
the times when we know you intimately
and the times when we turn away or don't recognize you.
May we learn to talk about Jesus' in light of our life challenges,
so that his message may strengthen our relationship with you..
And may we learn to talk about you with others
who may also long to experience your power within them. Amen.

Pass the peace with one another, saying the following.

“Peace be with you, (person's name.) May others hear of God's love from you.”

Sing #761 *Who's goin' tell the story*

Background

First and foremost, ministry is a spiritual process. Church recovery and growth are a gift of God given to us in Jesus Christ, who is the head of the church. God is the architect. Paul states that he planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase (1 Cor. 3:6.) This report introduces and highlights some effective planting and watering strategies and models for ministry that may be blessed by God and used for the increase of Christ's church.

Simply, the church grows when people grow in their faith in Jesus Christ. Newcomers should be helped to develop their faith as disciples through some kind of spiritual growth experience. Bible studies, programming and small groups can assist them. In the past, many churches tried to assimilate new people by asking them to serve on committees. Congregations that offer only administrative meetings or social groups as mid-week activities will have to rethink their congregational life. Begin first with prayer, asking for a heart and mind open to what God really wants to do through your congregation. Move on to asking others what drew them to the congregation, what keeps them there, and what they value most about what the congregation offers them. Then think prayerfully through the ways in which their stories describe their growth in the faith.

Changed lives change churches. We need to do a better job of enabling and training people to share their faith with others. People tend to be uncomfortable with sharing their faith. If the church is to grow, this needs to change on the congregational level.

The importance of prayer cannot be overestimated in the process of turning congregations around. Prayer is the powerful starting and sustaining point, and missional churches pray for the unchurched and for the community.

Given the spiritual nature of ministry, planning is difficult. What needs to be stressed in our plans is how important it is to be deliberate about doing evangelism. It must be a priority for members of the congregation. Set realistic goals and to evaluate how well the church is reaching them.

Growth begins with a change in attitude that has a spiritual dimension. In order to do evangelism, congregations must first dedicate themselves to prayer, Bible study and personal faith development. Maintaining growth as a priority helps a congregation focus and prevents it from getting off track. Diversional activities can make everyone feel busy while enabling them to avoid more pressing issues. A spiritual focus keeps God first and institutional church concerns second.

Churches that have the corporate will to change, and make evangelism, mission and outreach a priority are more likely to experience turnaround. They ask themselves if what has worked in the past is still effective. If

not, they will change what they are doing. The style of worship or theology, whether liberal, conservative, moderate, contemporary, traditional, high church or blended, is not as important as being missional or evangelical in the classic sense of the term.

Effective evangelism and church growth has everything to do with leadership. A congregation must have the corporate will to change and to reach out and be welcoming. The church's leaders must be capable of facilitating positive changes.

Given that this process is guided by the Holy Spirit, the church should be open to its leading. Evangelism was a fundamental priority of the New Testament Church. Churches experience growth when it is made a high priority, the focus at the top of every agenda. Before deciding on any action at church meetings, ask if the activity in question contributes to church growth.

Churches which grow are structured to do so. This structure includes attitudes, programs, and adequate staff. Growth begins in the congregation with the outlook, receptivity and theology of the members. If congregations are welcoming, warm and receptive to the change new people will bring, the church will likely grow. If members find new people disruptive to the status quo, if the development of new programs and the acceptance of new leadership upsets them, then the church will likely stay the same or decline.

Although many congregations express the desire for growth, some contradict this by their actions. This is done both consciously and unconsciously. A congregation should be open to changes in worship and to sharing leadership with newcomers. Members who claim to be friendly and welcoming, yet ask new people to move when they happen to sit in their pew are communicating a different message. People contradict what they say when they argue that the church must grow, but vote against an increase in the budget to allow for additional programs and staff.

The issue is not just to empower and encourage lay leaders, but to train people to carry out the work. Jesus trained his followers for the work of ministry, and the church should do the same. It is not necessary or desirable for ministers to provide all the training themselves. Resource people from other churches and denominations should be utilized. Attending conferences and seminars with teams of lay people can often achieve this goal.

Commitment to growth is fundamental, and the will to overcome attitudinal, financial, and ministerial challenges is crucial.

With insights gained from the previous studies, ask your church leaders in small groups the following questions. It is important to meet as a whole to help formulate answers.

A good place to start the planning process is meeting with your present core leaders and determining their spiritual gifts. We suggest doing a spiritual gifts inventory to help determine leader's styles, strengths and weaknesses. What are the strengths of your present core of leadership? What areas need developing?

For an online spiritual gifts inventory go to: www.elca.org/eteam/

Awareness Tools

Evangelism Action Plan

Step 1 – Getting our house in order

- Where is the presence of God in our midst?
- What are the strengths of your congregation?
- Do we have a clear vision of where we want to go?
- Do we have healthy congregational self-esteem?
- Are we experiencing divisive congregational conflict?
- Is our evangelism hampered by a lack of resources?
- Do we need to overcome apathy and involve more people in leadership
- Is there a pressing issue that must be dealt with before we can proceed?

Refer to previous studies and see the Acts and Proceedings of the 128th General Assembly 2002. pages 311-312

Step 2 – Current reality for Evangelism

- What do people value the most from their church experience?
- What community do we serve?
- List three neighbourhood/community needs
- Are members inviting others to church? Why or why not?
- What will new people find when they visit our church?
- Has your congregation followed up with visitors who have not put down roots and become involved with your congregation? What can you learn from those people that will make you more effective in outreach?
- What other information do you need to know?
- What issues need to be addressed?

Step 3 – Our Goals, dreams and objectives

- Who are we trying to reach with the Gospel?
- State your vision/dreams for your congregation with regard to evangelism
- List three to five goals and objectives for our mission and vision.
- How are we doing this?

Step 4 – Our Action Plan

Identify your top one or two challenges and develop a strategy to overcome them. You may want to see the previous studies for information.

List two or more intentional evangelism programs or projects will undertake in the next 6 – 12 month period. (See the *Ten Ideas Your Church Can Use To Evangelize*)

Important questions to ask:

- Is our plan measurable and specific? Do you have a timeline for implementation?
- Who will review and evaluate your plan — the session, a congregational meeting, or a committee?
- Who is going to do what?
- Is your church committed to implementing the plan — financially, emotionally, physically and spiritually?

Ten Ideas Your Church Can Use To Evangelize

Here are some practical program resources to help your congregation develop a strategy to do evangelism.

1. **Pray first**
Ministry is a spiritual enterprise. See the website at:
<http://www.elca.org/etteam/resources/GrowPrayMin.htm>
2. **The ministry of Welcome**
Do this training program for your church's ushers and greeters.
Go to www.presbyterian.ca/evangelism
3. **Bible Studies and Small Groups**
Start a small group or bible study on the theme of evangelism.
4. **Invite a friend to Church Sunday**
Hold a special Sunday when everyone in your church is encouraged to bring a friend. Go to www.elca.org/etteam/resources/FaithSharing.htm
5. **Alpha**
Run this 10 week video series for your congregation and community. Contact for more information: website: www.alphacanada.org or phone 1-800-743-0899.
6. **Faith Sharing**
Learn to share your faith more effectively and intentionally with a do-it-yourself workshop. Go to www.elca.org/etteam/resources/FaithSharing.htm
7. **Attend an evangelism conference, watch a video or read an evangelism book**
Visit a church that is currently doing evangelism in an area that is of interest to you.
Go to www.presbyterian.ca/evangelism or call the Book Room at 1-800-619-7301 X234 to borrow a video.

8. **Hold an Evangelism Sunday**
Dedicate a Sunday service to this theme.
9. **Increase your Congregational Awareness**
Read the report of the Study Group To Research Causes Of Denominational Decline And Proposals For Recovery Of Congregational Health (A.&P. 2000 pp.307-312, A.&P 2001 pp. 347-356) or download at www.presbyterian.ca/evangelism/declinerport.html. Work through the congregational awareness tools. The four units are: Church Health; Church Leadership; Congregational Mission & Vision; and Planning for Evangelism.
10. **Natural Church Development**
Evaluate your church's ministries with this survey. More information will be available from your regional staff or presbytery representative or go to: www.ncdcanada.com or phone 1-800-804-0777.

And . . . be creative! Use your God-given spiritual gifts and religious imaginations to think of a special event. See Something Extra, which identifies special projects for congregations and groups, for ideas your Church can do to encourage missional thinking in your community and abroad.

An Evangelism Assessment Survey

This survey will help you assess your church's evangelism program. Take a few minutes to complete it.

Use the following scale to identify areas of ministry that need to be addressed.

5 = Always 4 = Usually 3 = Frequently 2 = Seldom 1 = Never

This is designed to offer you many potential options. Not all of them would work in your congregation nor will you be able to do them all.

Equipping for Evangelism:

- Adults and children are verbally encouraged to invite others to worship/church activities.
- We schedule 'Friendship Sundays' or other such events a few time each year.
- We provide members with opportunities to learn faith sharing skills through adult forums, classes, Bible studies, youth groups and children's programs.
- Our minister and other leaders have recently attended an evangelism training opportunity to enrich this ministry in our congregation.
- Evangelism and outreach are central to our mission.

Opening the Congregation's Doors:

- Our Session has affirmed the importance of evangelism for our congregation.
- We have a plan in place with regards to this ministry.
- We are able and willing to fund this ministry.
- We have learned about the demographics of our area and are planning accordingly.
- An active prayer ministry under-girds our outreach.
- Our building is welcoming in all possible ways.
- We are open to fresh ways of ministering to new people — such as new worship styles or developing different groups for new people.
- We have a way of identifying newcomers and making them feel welcome.

While we are on the way:

- We have developed specialized ministries to help meet needs (homeless, day care needs, elder care.)
- We run small group ministries which offer a Christian perspective on contemporary life issues (grief groups, single parent groups, and so on.)
- We cooperate ecumenically in response to human need (e.g. Food banks, homeless shelters.)
- Our members share their faith in their community and work places.
- We have encouraged our Presbytery to start new church developments.

Further Reading

To assist leaders in the area of evangelism and strategic planning for evangelism, the following resources can be of help.

The Church Growth Handbook, Bill Easum
Abingdon Press, 1996

There is no single pill that will cure every church growth problem. There are, however, some principles that apply to many common situations. In this book, respected church strategist Bill Easum offers and enlarges up the following 20 principles for church growth

1. Growth is not concerned with numbers, but with meeting the needs of the people.
2. Growth occurs when people are given a wide variety of choices.
3. Growth occurs when people are matched with their skills.
4. Growth does not dictate that more people will become inactive.
5. Growth provides a wider outreach to people in need.
6. Growth need not be hampered by participation in the public arena.
7. Growth will occur when worship is intentionally emphasized.
8. Growth usually occurs with the addition of each new morning worship service.
9. Growth is directly related to the leadership strength of the pastor.
10. Growth is directly related to the attitude of the paid staff.
11. Growth is directly related to the unpaid staff's perception, rather than the reality of the congregation's size and ability.
12. When 80 per cent of any space is in use, it is time to start making plans for more space.
13. Growth is encouraged when parking is adequate.
14. Growth can occur even though a church cannot afford to build.
15. Growth can occur without merely transferring members from one church to another.
16. Growth almost always occurs when a church is friendly towards visitors.
17. Honestly asking for money encourages growth.
18. Long term growth needs a solid foundation.
19. Regular strategic planning is necessary for healthy growth.
20. It takes more effort to implant change than to maintain the status quo or exercise veto power.

The Ministry Audit/Review found at the back of the book makes the 20 principles in this book accessible and effective. This tool provides the framework to do congregational strategic planning which includes discerning congregational mission and vision. It also helps to identify problem areas and points out opportunities for solutions.

Lessons Learned from Lay Leaders

These are the main things that congregations which experienced growth in spite of the prevailing denominational decline, have learned. Review their suggestions and see which principles apply to your congregation. Which ones are you actively engaged in?

- Trust God in all things, emphasize Biblically based teaching — take faithful risks
- Use the strengths of your congregation to overcome its weaknesses
- Employ the giftedness of church members, nurture their faith development
- Be patient. Change doesn't happen overnight. Don't try to do everything at once.
- Focus on quality and excellence in all aspects of church life
- Expect the leadership to make decisions and to communicate
- Expect everyone to take responsibility for their behaviour
- Delegate authority and empower others to lead. Train them first
- Be relevant and in touch with the truth and the times in worship
- Address the needs and questions of those in and out of the church
- Listen to everyone and value all people highly
- Discouraging whining. Some people may find it easier to leave than to stop
- Make sure the mission of the church comes first

Remember, the church exists for the sake of the world, not for itself.

This exercise can provide your church with the data and critical assessment skills needed for planning ministry which may result in church growth.

This book is suitable for congregations serious about evaluating and improving their ministries.

The Complete Ministry Audit: How to Measure 20 Principals for Growth

William M. Easum, Abingdon Press, 1996

This book is best used in conjunction with Easum's Church Growth Handbook (reviewed above.) "It is designed to help you make assessments and improvements in your congregation's ministries . . . the process is more a diagnosis than an evaluation." The objective is not to make a value judgment about a congregation, but to make a diagnosis of problems experienced by congregations, and to prescribe models of ministry in response.

Study guides and questionnaires for staff and church members are included. There are questions and evaluations which focus on Easum's 20 principles. The process ends with strategic recommendations that can help move the congregation towards growth and health.

This book is suitable for congregations during pulpit vacancies and congregations interested in renewal through self-analysis. Best used in conjunction with *The Church Growth Handbook*.

Twelve Keys to an Effective Church

Kennon Callahan, Jossey – Bass Publishing

Callahan's approach is regarded as one of the most useful and comprehensive long-range planning processes available. His program for church renewal outlines twelve essential characteristics of growing and healthy churches. They are: specific concrete missional objectives; pastoral and lay visitation; corporate, dynamic worship; significant relational groups; strong leadership resources; streamlined structure and solid, participatory decision-making; several competent programs and activities; open accessibility; high visibility; adequate parking, land and landscaping; adequate space and facilities and solid financial resources.

The strength of Callahan's model is its missional focus. He challenges churches to look beyond themselves to their communities and to create mission opportunities. The key to achieving congregational renewal is using congregational strengths to overcome its weaknesses and to work smarter not harder. While these 12 characteristics contribute to successful churches, generally speaking, if a church does any nine of them, it will grow.

The workbook offers practical instruction to work through the four stages of strategic planning:

- Stage 1 Develop a realistic assessment of your church's present standing and stature
- Stage 2 Choose the primary direction for your future
- Stage 3 Assess your strengths in light of the 12 central characteristics
- Stage 4 Select the central characteristics, the key objectives and timelines that will advance your church's future.

This book is suitable for churches that are interested in discovering their mission and vision from a systemic perspective. This approach recognizes the interconnectedness of individual parts; in this case, the twelve keys to successful ministry and mission.

Studying Congregations: A New Handbook

Editors Nancy Ammerman, Jackson Carroll, Carl Dudley, and William McKinney Abingdon (1998)

This is not a simple "how to" book but a comprehensive and systemic approach to congregational development that provides a framework and analytical tools to understand the nature of congregations. It is theologically and sociologically rooted and has an academic approach to comprehending congregational life. The emphasis of this workbook is assisting church leaders in the self-understanding of their congregations. A significant effort is made to assist churches discover their identity, and methods are suggested from which strategic plans can be made. The strength of this workbook is the chapter on leadership, one of the most pointed and informative chapters on the subject found anywhere. This chapter includes a process for creating congregational vision.



A standard demographic parish profile inventory is included as an appendix. This resource provides all kinds of theological and sociological insights into congregational life but is not oriented to providing practical suggestions for the implementation of ministry.

This book is suitable for any Christian interested in studying the dynamics of congregational life. This is an excellent resource for any church leader to read prior to beginning a new pastorate.

