

Building Trust, Discerning Vision

Leadership Retreat Resources

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Covenant of Openness to Visions

**We promise to be open to the visions God would reveal to us.
Come, Holy Spirit, and show us the way!**

- 1) **Stake everything.** Visioning is a process in which churches cannot hold anything back. Heritage, structure, staff deployment, worship patterns, ongoing programs, and financial reserves must all be “on the table” so that God can shape and reshape the church in any way that serves God’s purpose.
- 2) **Get spiritually fit.** Visioning is spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and even physically demanding. Participants will need to work hard and expect much, exercising the “Body of Christ” to be ready for anything God throws at them. This is not an additional program for very busy church. It is the focus of all spiritual energy.
- 3) **Stretch your imagination.** This is a time to dream dreams and consider impossibilities. Set aside relatively trivial preoccupations about the age or size of membership, debt burden, volunteer shortages, and any other real or imagined barrier that is often thrown up to stop creativity. Go beyond institutional boundaries just as the Israelites left Egypt behind. Be nothing less than fearless and faithful.
- 4) **Follow the leader.** Spiritual leaders step up in the visioning process. The need to articulate their hopes and dreams, and people rally around these images and metaphors with prayer and conversation. The more clearly they model core values and beliefs, the more likely they will discern the purposes of God for the Body of Christ.
- 5) **Listen to the margins.** Leaders and members do well to listen to the least of Christ’s brothers and sisters. Often those on the margins of society, or at the edges of official church leadership, are chosen by the Spirit to reveal God’s purpose. They bring the prophetic voice to the visioning process.
- 6) **Be Fools for Christ.** Leaders and members must sacrifice their pride and risk looking foolish to the outside world. They need to be able to laugh at themselves and at each other knowing that the joy of the Lord is their strength. Stress always rises in the visioning process, because God calls us to do unexpected and risky things, but a sense of humor helps people cope with their own frailties and fears.

“God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength ... God is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. *Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*” 1 Corinthians 1:30,31

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Looking Toward 2020

Personal Meditation and Small Group Discussion Resource

(For further reading: *Road Runner* by Tom Bandy)

1) What will our community be like in ten years (that's the year 2020)?

Consider factors like age, marriage and family relationships, language and culture, mobility for commuting and average length of residence, incomes, occupations, and religious affiliation.

2) What should our church be like in ten years (that's the year 2020)?

Consider the same factors as above.

3) What are the top three things church members should believe with all their heart?

4) What are the three things church members should never, ever do?

5) What group of people is generally absent from our church today, who we really want to include in our church in the future?

6) What is your congregation's powerful, unforgettable, and essential core message (in 15 words or less) that you want every person in the surrounding community to hear and understand?

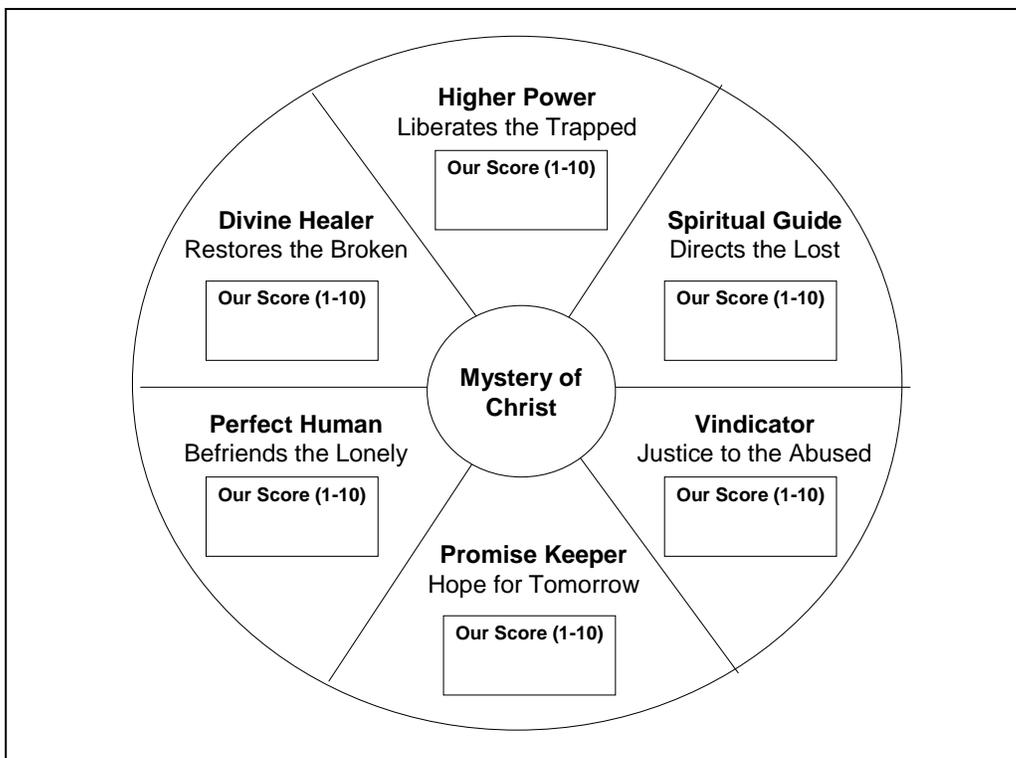
Our Experience of Christ

The basic question that shapes congregational vision and outreach is: *What is our experience with Jesus Christ that this community cannot live without?* The following exercises help congregational leaders begin to answer this question.

Divide the retreat participants into 3-5 distinct groups to complete the exercise. Collate and compare their perceptions. Higher numbers and common patterns reveal the truth about your primary experience of Christ that focuses vision and guides outreach.

Exercise #1: Our Perception

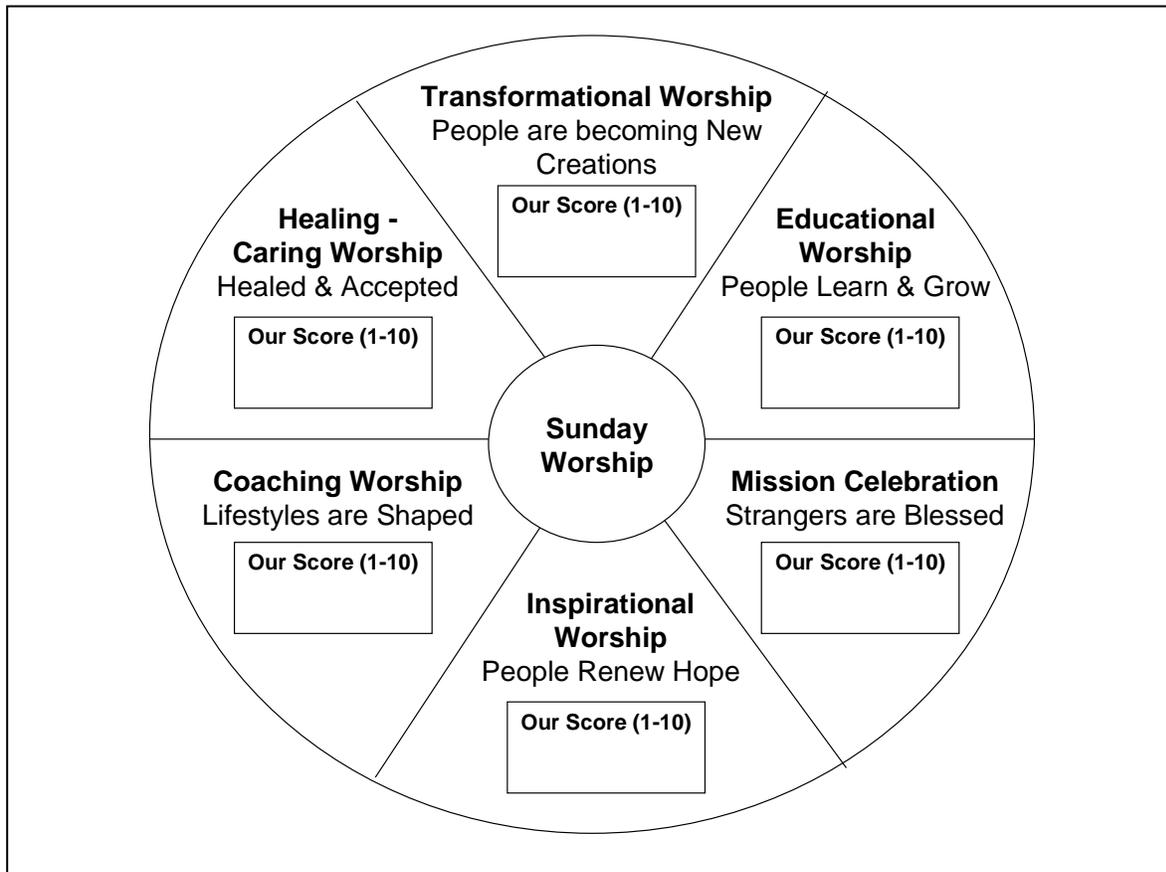
Rate how powerfully our congregation experiences God’s real presence in each of these six ways. Use a scale of 1 (“Not at All”) to 10 (“Perfectly”). Tip: High scores mean that a particular experience of Christ is *frequently* mentioned by church members in conversation, *frequently* shared in education and outreach programs, and *frequently* mentioned in internal church communications.



| Scores | Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Average Total |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|
| 1) Higher Power | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2) Spiritual Guide | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3) Vindicator | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4) Promise Keeper | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5) Perfect Human | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6) Healer | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Exercise #2: Our Worship Emphasis

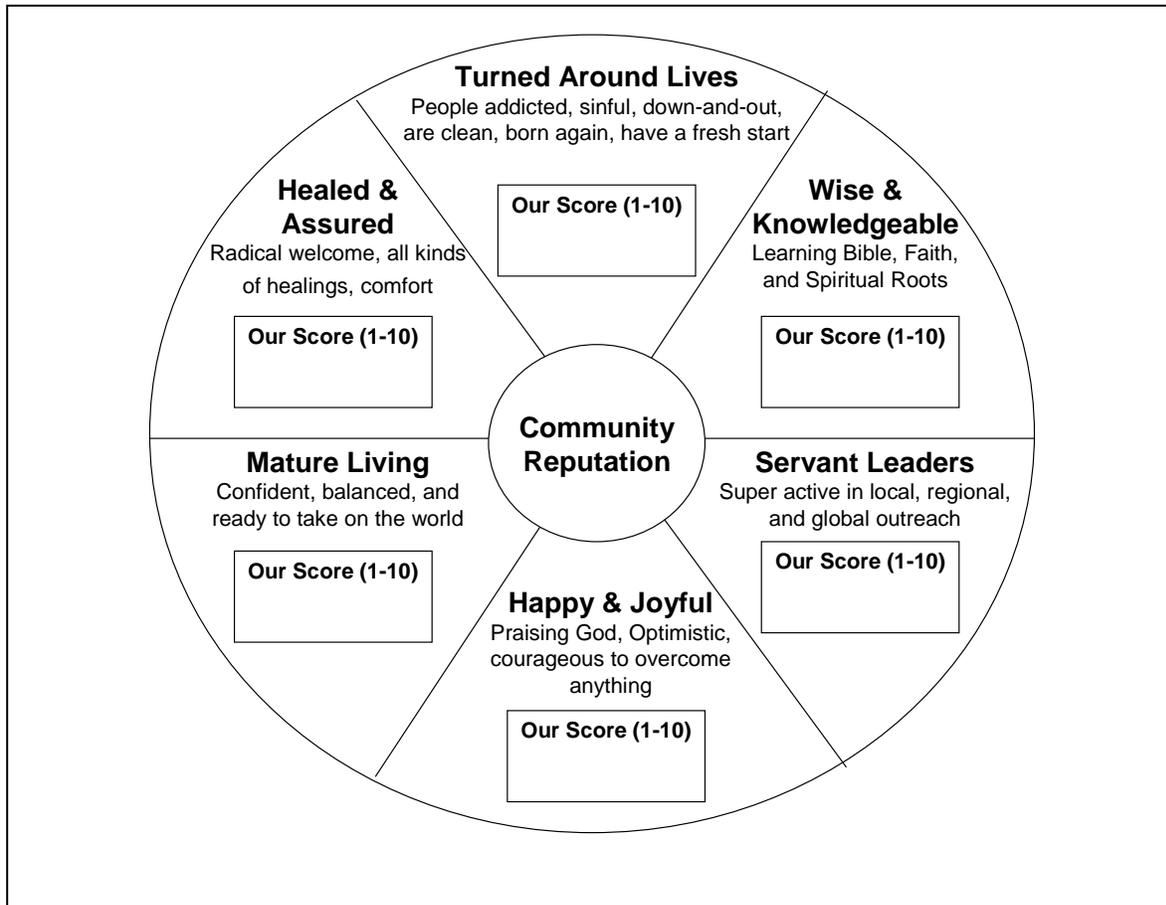
Rate how clearly our congregational worship emphasizes these characteristics. Use a scale of 1 (“Not at All”) to 10 (“Perfectly”). Tip: High scores mean that members *always* refer to worship in one or more of these ways; and that leaders *routinely* design worship to emphasize one or more of these characteristics; and that worshippers *frequently* compliment the pastor and worship leaders for these results.



| Scores | Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Average Total |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|
| 1) Transformational Worship | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2) Educational Worship | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3) Mission Celebration Worship | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4) Inspirational Worship | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5) Coaching Worship | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6) Healing-Caring Worship | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Exercise #3: Our Community Reputation

Rate how clearly our reputation in the community depends on these characteristics. Use a scale of 1 (“Not at All”) to 10 (“Perfectly”). Tip: High scores mean that the surrounding community *consistently refers* to us in this way; and that other churches *consistently compare* themselves to us in this way; and that group who rent our building *consistently speak* of us in this way.



| Scores | Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Average Total |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|
| 1) Turned around Lives | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2) Wise and Knowledgeable | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3) Servant Leaders | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4) Happy & Joyful | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5) Mature Living | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6) Healed and Assured | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Evaluation

Transfer the “Average Total” from each of the six lines, in each of the three exercises, to the following chart.

| Line | Exercise 1 Average Total | Exercise 2 Average Total | Exercise 3 Average Total | Total |
|------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|
| 1 | | | | |
| 2 | | | | |
| 3 | | | | |
| 4 | | | | |
| 5 | | | | |
| 6 | | | | |

The highest score gives you a clue to the experience of Christ that is central to your church experience.

Our Primary Experience of Christ Is:

Our Worship Is Primarily about:

The Outside Community Perceives Us Like This:

The higher the score, the more powerful your experience of Christ in the hearts of members, the celebration of Sunday worship, and the attractiveness to the community

Highest score between 1 – 10:

Your church will be relevant primarily to members and their growing children, but few visitors will come

Highest score between 11 – 20:

Your church will be relevant to member families; and attract church shoppers who may transfer membership; and visitors on holidays who are unlikely to return

Highest score between 21 – 30:

Your church will be relevant to member families, church shoppers, and seekers looking for God. Newcomers will appear regularly, and return at least twice. The higher the score, the more frequently they will return.

Retreat Goal and Summary Sheet

The goal of our retreat is to define or refine the foundation of trust and clarity of purpose for our congregation. The consensus of the retreat is summarized below. This summary can be shared with the congregation and community to gain additional insight. A subsequent meeting of board and staff can make a final revision based on this feedback. This will then be used for membership training, leadership training, strategic planning, and budget development.

Our Core Values:

A Core Value is a positive preference or choice congregational members can be expected to make, spontaneously or daringly, in daily living.

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

Our Bedrock Beliefs:

A Bedrock Belief is a principle, symbol, or article of faith to which congregational participants can be expected to turn for strength in times of confusion or stress.

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

Our Motivating Vision:

A Motivating Vision is the image, metaphor, or song in the heart the mere recollection of which elicits joy and courage from congregational participants, and demands to be shared with strangers.

Our Mission Focus:

A Key Mission is the audacious, practical goal that demands the single-minded commitment of congregational participants, captures the imagination of the public, and can be printed on a bus or park bench.

Our Core Message:

A core message is the essential blessing that we urgently want every person in the mission field to hear or receive in order to have hope for tomorrow.

Bible Study: Acts 10 -18

(Adapted from *Roadrunner* and *Fragile Hope* by Tom Bandy, Abingdon Press)

You can use this Bible Study for personal reflection or as a group process.

Please read Acts 10 aloud ... to yourself or in your small group. In a group, take turns reading the story. Pause every few minutes in silence to allow participants to absorb the details and listen to God speak. The Bible Study will also refer to later stories in the life of Peter, and the group leader may wish to be prepared share key verses with the group. The group leader can use the following process as a guide to your group discernment.

The stressful story of Peter's spiritual journey is being repeated today among leaders of the institutional church. Peter was an ordinary, unimaginative laborer chosen by Jesus to multiply disciples and grow the Christian movement across all the many cultures on earth. His first strategy was to remain stationary in Jerusalem, and invite all cultures to come in to join a fellowship and celebrate common worship. Feeling uneasy about the effectiveness and efficiency of this strategy, he prayed for guidance on the rooftop and had a vision of a tablecloth coming down from heaven. It contained the full diversity of the creatures of earth. He heard the voice of God saying "What God has made clean, you must not call profane" (Acts 10:15 NRSV).

This vision paved the way for a dramatic shift in the way the earliest church organized itself and deployed its leaders. Peter's subsequent mission would take him even among his worst enemies. The old strategy to wait for the public to come to Jerusalem was replaced by a new strategy to travel constantly "becoming all things, to all people, so that by all means, some might be saved" (I Cor. 9:22).

Prayer Question:

Lord, am I "waiting" ... or "walking"?

Waiting for opportunities to come to me? Or walking with Jesus to make opportunities happen?

The Holy Spirit guided Peter into a five step process of discernment that would transform the church from just another religious institution, into a mission movement that would change local communities and the world.

Step 1: Refining the vision:

In Acts 10, Peter accompanies the Roman soldiers to the home of Centurion Cornelius in Caesarea. His sermon interprets the vision to mean acceptance of all "God Fearers" through the person and work of Jesus Christ. His core convictions included the healing power and forgiveness of God, confirmed by water and spirit. He broadens, focuses, and applies the vision to his context. What more do you see in Peter's interpretation of the vision?

- What are the positive behaviors (core values) Peter feels he must model in his daily living?
- What are the faith convictions (bedrock beliefs) to which Peter turns for strength and guidance?
- What is the joyous hope (motivational vision) the fulfillment of which Peter devotes his life?
- What is the central message or action (strategic mission) that Peter urgently wants to communicate and accomplish?

Step 2: Embedding the vision:

In Acts 11:1-18, the Jerusalem Christians criticize Peter. Peter communicates the refined vision to them. Peter explains what happened and his interpretation, calling attention to the clear movement of the Holy Spirit. Together, they take the vision to heart and exclaim “Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18). How do you “take to heart” the essence of the Gospel?

Prayer Question:

*Who are the “gentiles” now, in our time and locality,
to whom we are called to share the message of repentance that leads to life?*

Step 3: Aligning the vision:

The mission to the Gentiles leads the church to remarkable change and stressful innovation. In Acts 15, Paul and Silas become embroiled in a controversy with the “head office” in Jerusalem. Peter intervenes, helping the entire Christian community focus on what really matters ... not tactics and traditions, but “salvation through the grace of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 15:11). The disciples are aligned behind this single principle, and leaders are freed for innovative outreach within specific boundaries of conviction and action. What are the boundaries beyond which you and your group should not go?

Step 4: Team-building around the vision:

The wisdom of the early church was never to send people alone. In Acts 15:22 the church chooses Paul, Barnabas and Silas to carry the newly aligned vision to all Christian communities. Later in Acts 16, we see how John Mark, Timothy, and Lydia will embed the vision in their hearts and align themselves with the mission. Still later the mission team of Priscilla and Aquila mentor Apollos in the original vision of Peter (Acts 18-24). Who is your team, and how do you mentor one another?

Prayer Question:

*Does my work and lifestyle, and that of my mission companions,
reveal and communicate our shared vision to all the diverse people around us?*

Step 5: Target the vision:

The Christian movement led by Peter grows the church “one micro-culture at a time”. It goes from Philippi, to Thessalonica, and to Berea, Athens, Corinth, Rome, and Alabama. Each time the Gospel is adapted and customized to help people experience Christ. A new companionship emerges ... founded on mission and not location. Peter wrote to his friends: “You are a chosen race ... God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

At the end of Peter’s life, the story is told that as he departed Rome on the Appian Way for a new mission target, he saw Jesus going in the opposite direction. He shouted to Jesus “Quo Vadis, Domine?” (which is Latin for “Where are you going, Lord?”) Jesus replied that he was going to Rome to be crucified yet again for the sake of others. Peter immediately did a “U-Turn”, followed him back to Rome, where he himself was martyred for the mission.

Prayer Question:

*Lord, help me to recognize my own “Quo Vadis” moment!
Help my team make whatever “U-Turn” is necessary to follow Jesus!*

*And help us share the moment,
creating a “Quo Vadis” momentum
across cities, counties, regions, cultures, and communities
walking with Christ.*

Ancient Values and Beliefs Exercise

(See Also *Moving Off the Map* by Thomas G. Bandy, Abingdon Press, 1998)

Consider how ancient Christians defined their core values and bedrock beliefs. Translate these into everyday words that would be immediately and clearly understandable to real people in your community.

| Core Values | | |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|
| A Core Value is a positive, predictable behavior pattern. It is the preference or choice congregational members can be expected to make, spontaneously or daringly, in daily living. | | |
| Romans 12 | Galatians 5 | Our Church |
| Love one another | Love | |
| Hold fast to the good | Joy | |
| Outdo the world in honor | Peace | |
| Ardent in Spirit | Patience | |
| Rejoice in hope | Kindness | |
| Patient in suffering | Gentleness | |
| Persevere in prayer | Generosity | |
| Hospitality to strangers | Faithfulness | |
| | Self-Control | |

| Bedrock Beliefs | | |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------|
| A Bedrock Belief is a deep faith conviction that gives you hope. It is an absolute certainty to which congregational participants can be expected to turn for strength in times of confusion or stress. | | |
| Apostles Creed | Seven Sacraments | Our Church |
| God Almighty, maker of all things | New Creation | |
| Jesus, Son of God, fully human and divine | Holy Communion | |
| Christ died, risen, coming again | Covenant of Discipleship | |
| Holy Spirit unites, comforts, and guides | Repentance & Forgiveness | |
| Forgiveness of sins | Fidelity in Intimacy | |
| Promise of resurrection | Calling to God's Mission | |
| Everlasting abundant life | Final Acceptance | |

Core Values Exercise

Focus Groups

Tips and Tactics

A “**Core Value**” is a positive, predictable behavior pattern that can reasonably be expected of church members in their spontaneous and daring living. It is not a mere ideal or wishful thinking, but a demonstrable habit.

Reality Test core values by insisting that every value have a paradigm story that happened within your church, within the last year ... and make sure that kind of story is repeated constantly every week.

The most common mistakes are that people confuse ideology, public policy, or strategic preferences with true core values. Core values are not strategic priorities, but behavioral habits. Many churches discover hidden, negative core values (corporate addictions) that need to be identified and confronted.

Step 1:

A Focus Group usually meets in a private home or outside the church building. There is a designated leader who facilitates discussion and records a summary of feedback. Focus Groups usually are 3-12 people and meet for about 1 ½ -2 hours. Share the individual lists of core values taken from the retreat. Ask each table group to develop a “Top 5” list of core values based on this research. Share these with the pastor and vision team.

Step 2:

Read aloud (slowly) Romans 12:1-21 and ask people to:

- **circle** any word or phrase that they believe describes a behavior that is clearly and constantly visible in congregational life;
- **cross out** any word or phrase that they believe describes a behavior that is **not** clearly and constantly visible in congregational life.

Romans 12:1-21

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³ For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him.

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰ love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; never be conceited. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all.

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ No, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Step 3:

A "core value" is a "positive, habitual behavior pattern". It's not about what you think or how you vote, but about what you do and how you behave on a moment-to-moment and day-to-day basis. How do your friends (and enemies) reasonably expect you to behave? How does your family expect you to behave, so that, if you didn't behave that way, they would be surprised and think you an impostor in disguise?

The "Biography channel" is full of stories of people who stopped behaving one way, and started behaving another way, until it was engrained into their very habits and lifestyles. Along the way, they lost some friends and gained some friends, changed careers and started careers, because their "old" selves were just too different from their "new" selves.

This is what Paul means when he urges you to stop conforming to the world, and become transformed by God's grace. You simply live differently. Here's the contrast:

Christian Behavior

Honest self-assessment
Living spiritual gifts
Genuine love
Familial affection
Honorable action
Enthusiastic service
Liberal hospitality
Persistent optimism
Empathic relationships
Respectful humility
Ready forgiveness
Peaceable living
Desire for goodness

Worldly Behavior

Delusions of grandeur
Pursuing a career
Manipulative emotion
Competitive collegiality
Pragmatic self-advancement
Grumbling duty
Selective welcoming
Persistent cynicism
Self-centeredness
Judgmental arrogance
Ready vengeance
Angry living
Desire for success

Rewrite your top 10-12 positive core values as a congregation after reflection on these exercises. Make a separate list of top negative values that your congregation often models in daily living, which you understand you need to change.

Bedrock Beliefs Exercise

Focus Groups

Tips and Tactics:

A “**Bedrock Belief**” is a profound faith conviction to which leaders are confident members will turn for strength in times of trouble or stress. It is not a mere dogma or doctrine, but an automatic reaction to stressful situations.

Reality Test bedrock beliefs by using real life case studies and actual experiences of Christ that caused lifestyle changes in church members. Use key scriptures and Bible stories, or memorable phrases from classic hymns or contemporary songs, or images and visual art.

The most common mistakes are that people confuse dogmas, doctrines, denominational polities, or traditional practices with bedrock beliefs. A bedrock belief is a conviction to which people turn for hope. Many churches discover that there are no real bedrock convictions among many church members ... and sometimes that these are missing among volunteer or even staff leaders.

Step 1:

A Focus Group usually meets in a private home or outside the church building. There is a designated leader who facilitates discussion and records a summary of feedback. Focus Groups usually are 3-12 people and meet for about 1 ½ -2 hours. Share the individual lists of bedrock beliefs taken from the retreat. Ask each table group to develop a “Top 5” list of core values based on this research. Share these with the pastor and vision team.

Step 2:

Read aloud (slowly) Colossians 1:1-28. This is one of the most ancient Christian creeds.

First, read the scripture and discuss how you would restate the meaning of this ancient creed in your own words, personal stories, songs, or images. A bedrock belief is any faith conviction to which church members spontaneously and frequently turn for strength in times of confusion or stress.

Next, ask participants to:

- **circle** any word or phrase that they believe describes a faith conviction to which church members spontaneously and frequently turn for strength in times of confusion or stress;
- **cross out** any word or phrase that they believe describes a faith conviction to which church members **do not** spontaneously and frequently turn for strength in times of confusion or stress.

Colossians 1:1 - 28

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, ² To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. ³ We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing ... ¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

¹³ He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities -- all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, ²³ provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard ... which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the divine office which was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning every person and teaching every person in all wisdom, that we may present every person mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me.

Step 3:

The Apostles' Creed is another ancient statement of faith that can be used to prompt your thinking about bedrock beliefs. As you read, do the following:

- (a) Circle words or phrases that you strongly affirm;
- (b) Underline words or phrases that are important, but about which you have questions;
- (c) Cross out words or phrases which may be true, but are not important to you.
- (d) List any beliefs that are not included in this summary, but are important to you.

Undoubtedly there are some beliefs that are important to you, or important to your church tradition, which are not included, or which are not stated precisely, in the context of your faith. Be sure to note these, and consider why these stand out as crucial for your life.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died, and was buried;
He descended into Hell.
On the third day he rose again;
He ascended into heaven,
Is seated at the right hand of the Father,
And will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
The holy catholic church,.
The communion of saints,
The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body,
And the life everlasting. Amen.

Values Exercise

Listed below are 20 real life situations. The key question for all values-related situations is: *What would I do?* Please respond with a simple word or phrase. Your first intuition is the best response.

Values:

- 1) You are walking in the park and you see a lone teenager being harassed by larger group of teens. What would you do?
- 2) You are rushing to get to work on time and stop for a take-out coffee. As you go inside, a man waylays you and asks for money for bus fare. What do you do?
- 3) You are talking with friends over cocktails, and one friend in the group repeatedly makes snide jokes about people of another race. What do you do?
- 4) A heckler interrupts the pastor's sermon with loud asides, ridiculous questions, and laughter. What do you do?
- 5) A child gets into the church kitchen and accidentally drops the entire tray of communion bread and wine on the floor. What do you do?
- 6) A church member and neighbor calls you before leaving to commute to work on Monday morning. She says tearfully that her ailing husband died in hospital in the middle of the night. What do you do?
- 7) A newcomer stands in the entrance to the sanctuary who is obviously of a very different educational, economic, or cultural background than anyone else in the sanctuary. What do you do?
- 8) You have a free afternoon with no commitments, unlimited mobility, and extra money to spend. What do you do?
- 9) You have the opportunity to retire early, and contemplate at least 10 years of productive life ahead of you. What do you do?
- 10) You are standing in a long line waiting for attention. Just as you move closer, you observe employees leaving for coffee break. What do you do?
- 11) As you visit in the hospital you notice an elderly man sitting alone in the hallway tugging on his restraints and crying. What do you do?
- 12) You are worshipping as a visitor in a friend's church. At the time of the offering, you realize you only have a \$20.00 bill. What do you do?
- 13) You have just been publicly insulted by a powerful individual whom you despise. What do you do?
- 14) You inadvertently learn that a respected church member and Sunday school teacher was once accused (but not convicted) of child abuse. What do you do?
- 15) The congregation has adopted a public policy that contradicts your personal convictions. What do you do?

Beliefs Exercise

Listed below are 20 real life situations. The key question for all beliefs-related situations is: *What would give me strength?* Please respond with a simple word or phrase. Your first intuition is the best response.

Beliefs:

- 1) You are driving safely one night when suddenly a speeding car comes from opposite direction, swerves, and forces you into the ditch. You are dazed but unharmed. As you restart the car and pull onto the road, what would give you strength?
- 2) After a routine examination, the doctor has just told you she suspects you have cancer. You are driving home, and have yet to tell anyone the bad news. What would give you strength?
- 3) A neighbor down the street has just phoned in a panic to say their college-aged son has attempted suicide. They don't go to church, but know you are a Christian. What would give you (and them) strength?
- 4) Another war in the Middle East has broken out, and CNN is showing images of night fighting (rockets, flames, tracer bullets in the air). There is talk of renewing the military draft and your son is 19. What would give you strength?
- 5) The worship service is cancelled due to severe weather, and there is no opportunity to receive the sacrament or pray with your friends. What would give you strength?
- 6) Your century old heritage church building has just been burned to the ground by a demented arsonist. You are standing amid the smoldering ruins now. What would give you strength?
- 7) The newly born infant of your dearest friend is diagnosed with a heart problem that requires immediate surgery. What would give you strength?
- 8) Your spouse has requested a divorce after 9 years of marriage, and you find yourself planning a settlement with your lawyer. What would give you strength?
- 9) You have been denied entrance into the top three universities and colleges you especially wanted to attend. What would give you strength?
- 10) Your company is downsizing, and your employment has ended after twenty years of service when you are 53 years old. What would give you strength?
- 11) You have never felt so alone or depressed, and you find yourself alone in a hotel room with a bottle of sleeping pills. What would give you strength?
- 12) An intruder broke into your home, and in fear of your life you shot him to death. The courts have judged you innocent, but you feel the weight of taking another person's life. What would give you strength?
- 13) One dark night you hit an animal along a rural road with your car. The next day you learn that an old man was killed at that time, along that stretch of road, by an unknown vehicle that did not stop. What would give you strength?
- 14) You've known for a long time that your daughter and her husband were not getting along, and now you learn that your grandchild has run away from home. What would give you strength?

Prayer Walk

Walk around the neighborhood(s) surrounding your church building, or visit key locations in your postal code where people gather. At each location ...

Observe

Look carefully at people, noting their age, culture, affluence or poverty, conversation and behavior.

Note signs, advertising, architecture, technologies, and other things that reveal the nature and mission of the place in which people move.

Imagine

Observe people again, and imagine whether they are married or single, what occupations they might have, and what life issues and key questions are on their minds.

Speculate why people choose to be here, rather than someplace else.

Pray

Look for signs that the Holy Spirit is here, at this place, and among these people.

Pray for strangers, and name the gift of grace you hope God will give the people in this location.

After the Prayer Walk ... answer the following questions:

What is the agony that I see?

What is the blessing I long to give?

What is the image of hope?

(If their agony and God's blessing intersected, what would that scene look like?)

If I could rename my church to capture the attention of "strangers to grace", what would it be?

Our Mix Exercise

Three basic, biblical motivations for mission

Church Growth is all about the urgency to maintain the institutional church.

This involves:

- Caring and mutual support among church members;
- Welcoming the diversity of the public and expanding membership;
- Preserving a theological, denominational, or local tradition;
- Cultivating a specific taste for the arts and atmosphere of good will;
- Honoring the benefits of membership.

Change of Heart is all about the urgency to transform lives and reshape lifestyles.

This involves:

- Healing broken lives;
- Convincing people about Christian faith;
- Embedding confidence and hope for personal redemption;
- Living a more fruitful or blessed life;
- Discovering a fulfilling, personal destiny.

Social Action is all about the necessities of living and vindicating helpless or oppressed people. This

involves:

- Obtaining the basics of food, clothing, and shelter;
- Living in safety, respect, and peace;
- Nurturing healthy intimacy and family relationships;
- Protecting human rights and intervening to rescue victims;
- Liberating the full potential of every human being.

| | <u>Church Growth</u> | <u>Change of Heart</u> | <u>Social Action</u> | |
|----------------------------------|--|---|---|---------------|
| All About: | Care Giving Inclusiveness Tradition Aesthetic Privilege | Healing Faith Salvation Lifestyle Purpose | Survival Security Family Justice Potential | |
| Key Words: | <i>Access Belonging Identity Good Feelings Membership</i> | <i>Wholeness Christian Faith Hope Good Living Destiny</i> | <i>Necessities of Life Safety-Peace Quality of Family Living Justice – Well Being Personal Growth</i> | |
| Our Urgency Today: | _____ | _____ | _____ | = 100% |
| Our Urgency 5 Years: | _____ | _____ | _____ | = 100% |
| Pastor's Urgency Today: | _____ | _____ | _____ | = 100% |
| Pastor's Urgency 5 Years: | _____ | _____ | _____ | = 100% |

The Blank Wall Exercise

Imagine you are designing a new church building. When people enter the vestibule, or when they enter the worship center, the first thing they see ahead of them is a blank wall. Leaders need to “paint a mural” on that wall.

When visitors or newcomers entered the sanctuary, the first thing they would see would be this mural, and they would instantly know the essence of this church. When they returned home and their spouse asked “So, what was that church like?” they would instantly describe this picture.

When members entered the sanctuary, the first thing they would see would be this mural, and they would smile. If someone at work ever asked them what their church was about, they would instantly describe this picture.

Of course, whether visitor or member, they would never be able to explain it fully. A picture is always worth a thousand words. And this mural would be so rich that every time you looked at it, something new might appear. Yet it would always elicit joy ... and demand to be shared with strangers.

What does the mural look like?

In 10 words or less, what is the core message underneath the mural?

What Is Your Core Message?

Imagine. It is almost 11:00 on Friday night when the phone rings. Your neighbor is calling in a panic. He is not particularly religious, but he knows that you go to church regularly. In a rush of words he tells you that his daughter is being held in conversation by his wife on their cell phone. The daughter is away to college, very depressed, and threatening suicide. Sure, they know that there is counseling available in the morning. They even know there is a hotline for emergencies. But before any of that can be useful, they have to keep her alive for a few hours. This is the problem. Your neighbor doesn't know what to say. He figures you do. You're religious. Surely you have a message that can keep someone from killing themselves in the next 20 minutes? So what do you say?

In ten words or less, what is the core message of hope that you reasonably expect every member of your church to share automatically, spontaneously, and enthusiastically with the public? What is it? Forget theology, therapy, abstractions, and dogmatisms. You only have an instant to rescue a life. What will you say? What can you reasonably expect every member of your church board to say? What can you confidently predict every member of your church will say?

Whatever it is, it will have the following marks:

1) It will be utterly sincere.

The core message is delivered with clear conviction. There is no "maybe" or "possibly" or "eventually". It is not delivered from the mind, but comes from the gut and the soul. It is a truth on which one has staked a life and a lifestyle. It is consistent with what we already suspected.

2) It will be tested by fire.

The core message is a red badge of courage. It reveals the life struggle and spiritual victory of the individual. It has been forged in adversity, which can be named and described, but the scars are enough to prove it. Stories of sacrifice and tribulation surround the message and the messenger.

3) It will be confirmed by the "Pilgrim Band".

The congregation is a band of brothers and sisters who will back the core message with solemn accord. They say the same thing, tell the same story, and affirm the same truth. They are not a cloud of witnesses, but a band of survivors and a remnant of victors. They echo the theme of hope.

4) It will align everything and everybody in the church.

Every sermon, liturgy, program, and budget line will deliver that core message and nothing else. The spontaneous word from every usher and refreshment server, and the daring deed of every mission team and staff person, reveals the message. It is the methodology through which church leaders separate the essential from the trivial.

5) It will outlast the pastor.

This is the final, crucial test. The pastor is unnecessary to the core message, even though the core message is essential for the pastor. It outlives his or her tenure. It thrives beyond his or her sermon. It isn't replaced every time a leader attends a new seminar. It rises above personality.

**In 15 words or less,
this is the message
every person in the postal code
must hear consistently from our congregation.**



Mission Statement Exercise

Bible Meditation: Acts 16: 9

Churches grow one “heart burst” at a time. A “heart burst” is a definable, describable group of people. One way to focus your mission is to ask: Who is your “Macedonian”? Who keeps you awake at night, or moves you to tears, with a call for help? The key question is: “What is it about your experience with Jesus the Christ ... that this community cannot live without?”

The Mission “Field”

Your mission field is defined by the average distance people in your community or neighborhood drive to work and shop. You can find the average commuting time in the US Census report for your zip code. Send teams to drive that exact time, in every direction, and draw a circle on a map around your church. All of the cultures and publics in that circle are collectively the “primary mission field” God has entrusted to you to share the Gospel.

- “Mission Field”: The region of mission God places most directly before any church, defined by the average distance church and local community members are willing to travel to work, shop, or play.
- “Demographic”: One of many overlapping publics within your mission field defined by age, gender, race, culture, relationships, income, occupation, education, mobility, geography, or religion.
- “Lifestyle Segment”: Smaller, overlapping publics in your mission field defined by relational attitudes, political perspectives, aesthetic tastes, predictable patterns of behavior or habits of consumption.
- “Affinity Group”: Even smaller, overlapping publics in your mission field, that may involve people from multiple demographics and lifestyles, but which share a particular enthusiasm, need, ultimate concern, or behavioral priority.

The Mission “Market”

The Mission “Market” is best described in six categories of seekers. Many religions, superstitions, political systems, and corporate marketing schemes are competing for these people.

- | | | |
|----------------|---|---|
| The Broken | - | Physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally; |
| The Lost- | - | Morally, geographically, culturally, spiritually; |
| The Lonely | - | Isolated, friendless, without champions, models, or families; |
| The Anxious | - | Neurotic, fearful, desperate, and worried; |
| The Victimized | - | Abused, manipulated, slandered, and disempowered; |
| The Entrapped | - | Addicted, enslaved, imprisoned, and forgotten; |

Who exactly do you feel called by God to reach in the name of Jesus Christ?

What exactly is the blessing you hope to give them?

Our Congregational Mission is: _____

Sunday Morning Reality Test

How do we know that our core values are really sincere? How do we know that our bedrock beliefs are deeply held? How do we know that our vision truly motivates our every word and deed? And how do we know that our message and mission truly capture the imaginations of seekers and the sacrifice of members? After all, the values, beliefs, vision and mission we worked so hard to define might just be a flight of fantasy.

One way to test reality is for participants from the leadership retreat to come to church Sunday morning with fresh eyes and ears. Put yourselves in the shoes of the seeker. Pretend you are coming for the first time. On this Sunday, enter through a different door. Sit in a different place. Avoid conversation with friends, and observe what is going on around you.

What core values and bedrock beliefs are clearly revealed and immediately communicated ...

- a) Within the first three minutes entering the church building?

- b) In the sanctuary, during the worship service, in everything except the sermon?

- c) Within the thirty minutes following the close of the worship service?

What vision and mission are powerfully communicated on Sunday morning?

- a) What is the most striking, memorable image or symbol that claims your attention?

- b) What is the most exciting, memorable song or verse that lingers in your memory when you leave?

- c) What is the message, insight, or revelation that you take away from worship and share with a neighbor, co-worker, relative, or stranger by lunchtime on Monday?

Listening – Prayer Triad Design

Listening to the public and observing public behavior to discern key issues and needs

- Goal:** The purpose of the triad is to prayerfully listen to the publics in your primary mission field. Observe their habits and behavior. Seek to discern the issues, challenges, convictions, and attitudes of the people. Open yourselves to God’s Spirit calling you to mission.
- Remember:** Your goal is not to speak, witness, or take action. Your goal is simply to listen, observe, and reflect. You need to open yourself to hear the cultures around you ... and also hear the voice of the Spirit whispering into your own heart.
- Strategy:** Organize the large group into small groups of 3 or 4 people. Go to any public place, beginning with dinner. In the midst of your table grace, ask God to guide you in mission.
- Try to visit more than one place where the public gathers. Try to minimize your own internal conversation. Concentrate on overhearing conversation, observing behavior, and so on. Do not invade the privacy of others. Simply “keep your eyes and ears open”. Take notes if you wish. You may stay together as a small group, or split up.
- Listen and observe until about 8:30pm, then regroup and de-brief. What did you see? Who did you see? How were people behaving for good or ill? What habits did you observe? What issues did you overhear?
- Be sure to pray aloud for complete strangers. Share with one another your “heartbursts” ... your ache for particular individuals or groups to share the Gospel somehow. Tactics are unimportant right now. Focus on you sense of calling.
- Reporting:** Write down your thoughts, insights, or heartbursts individually or as a group. Be prepared to share your perceptions on Sunday afternoon as we prepare for the vision and mission discernment phase of the retreat.
- Revisit the homework from Friday night and your perception of the motivating vision and key strategic mission of the congregation.
- Restate the motivating vision and key strategic mission for your church, as you see it now.

Three Sample Visions

Phoenix Rising:

This urban core church has a huge tapestry of a contemporary Phoenix rising from the ashes of the city. The “phoenix”, of course, is an ancient Christian symbol for the resurrection. The bird is depicted soaring above the city, wings embracing the skyline. The points of flame are the skyscrapers, apartment buildings, and slums; and the ashes below are clearly discernible human beings walking, running, catching taxi’s, and even fighting and arguing. The phoenix rises from the ashes toward a glowing sun.

The strategic plan that aligned to the vision included demolition of the heritage Gothic Cathedral building and the erection of an 11 story high rise with housing for newly arrived immigrants. The church initiated counseling, ESL (English as Second Language) teaching, job placement programs, and many other services aimed especially at refugees who had left behind everything, even loved ones, to find a new life. The vision was expressed in a simple, popular mission statement: “We resurrect dead people!” People who are dead in the eyes, dead on their feet, and dead to their past can find new life here.

The tapestry was commissioned from a local artist who lived in the same downtown core. It eventually became an enormous banner suspended from the building outside; and the symbol on every letter or flyer issued from the church.

Angels in Our Midst:

This country church has a large triptych (three panel mural) painted on the wall behind the pulpit. The sanctuary itself is very plain and traditional, but the entire back wall reveals three 10 foot angels. These are not modern cupids or sweetly smiling young men or women. These are Biblical angels ... at once stern, compassionate, and far-seeing. One carries a trumpet, one a sword, and the other raises a hand in blessing. Each stands in the foreground of a rural scene (cornfield, village, and farm). Some newcomers are visibly alarmed when the first enter the church and see these towering figures, but they are soon reassured. They create an atmosphere of confidence and safety.

The strategic plan that aligned to the vision included local organic markets, global outreach to address hunger, employment counseling, seniors housing, personal and business financial planning, prayer circles, annual blessing of the animals, and anything that touched the stressful lives of the declining rural life of America. The mission was clear: “We are an angelic presence.” We will be guardian angels of our communities. We will bring hope, safety, and vindication to people in need.

The triptych was obviously painted by talented amateurs within the congregation. They are good ... but occasionally you see that the perspective is awry or the color is inconsistent. That only adds to the authenticity of the vision. Working people labored on this, and believe in its message.

Multicultural Jesus:

This exurban church has floor to ceiling, wall to wall painting of Jesus in a fishing boat. The surrounding disciples are clearly from every nation or culture on earth. The fishing net flows out of the boat into a turbulent sea, but in the center of the boat are the simple loaves and fishes described in the Gospel. Jesus and all the disciples are young, rough, muscular fisherman; and they are all facing outward with remarkable expressions of welcome, anticipation, and joy.

The strategic plan that aligned to the vision included worship in multiple languages, shared facilities with other Christian churches, small group multiplication, sidewalk Sunday schools, evangelistic rock concerts, mission teams to disaster zones, and other ministries that were all done in a deliberately cross-cultural way. The mission statement was simple: “Get in the boat!” It was an invitation and command all at once. Are you lost? Get in the boat! Are you only nominally Christian? Get in the boat! Fellowship and service are one.

The painting is likely an enlarged print of a more famous work (since the credit is below it), but it is no less the heart and soul of the church. This is actually not in the sanctuary (since for architectural reasons there was no room to prominently display it). Instead it hangs on the wall beside the entrance, dominating the narthex where the refreshments are served and the people gather.

Applications

The core values, bedrock beliefs, motivating vision, and focused mission that is the consensus of the congregation should shape and guide everything you do and say.

Meditation: Matthew 25:34-40

³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Our Primary Mission Field

Your primary mission field is defined by the average distance people in your postal code drive to work and shop. God has entrusted all of the diversity of demographics, lifestyle segments, and affinity groups in that region to you, so that you can bless them with hope for tomorrow. Discuss the diversity of people within your primary mission field.

Our Congregation

The blessings we give to the diverse people in our primary mission field are shaped by our core values, beliefs, vision, and mission. Review this summary and clarify any ambiguity.

Hospitality Does our hospitality reveal our values, beliefs, vision, and mission?

- a) How should we change or improve our tactics for hospitality before, during, and after worship?
- b) How should we upgrade our training for greeters, ushers, servers, and other hospitality leaders?

Worship Does our worship reveal our values, beliefs, vision, and mission?

- c) How should we redesign or improve our methods for worship?
- d) How should we focus or improve the content of preaching, prayer, and liturgy?
- e) How should we upgrade our training for preachers, musicians, liturgists and other leaders?

Education **Does our education reveal our values, beliefs, vision, and mission?**

- f) How should we redesign or improve our methods for Sunday school and mid-week education?
- g) How should we focus or improve the content of our curriculums and resources?
- h) How should we upgrade our training for teachers, nursery leaders, and other educators?

Small Groups **Do our small groups reveal our values, beliefs, vision, and mission?**

- i) How should we redesign or improve our methods for small groups and adult classes?
- j) How should we focus or improve the content of our affinities or resources?
- k) How should we upgrade our training for small group leaders?

Outreach **Do our small groups reveal our values, beliefs, vision, and mission?**

- l) How should we redesign or improve our methods for evangelism and social service?
- m) How should we focus or improve the content of our faith sharing and action?
- n) How should we upgrade our training for outreach leaders?

The same pattern of evaluation can be extended to property and technology development, financial management, internal communication, and external advertising.

Closing Meditation **Isaiah 41: 8-10**

But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
 you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners,
 saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off";
 do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God;
 I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.