

**PRESBYTERY OF GENESEE VALLEY
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**

Some Clarification of Definitions and Process

VISION

A vision helps unite people towards a purpose. Creating and living a vision is the role of leaders in organizations. They have to espouse it and help others to believe it. Visions are aesthetic and moral, they come from within as well as outside. A successful vision accomplishes six goals:

- Gives a sense of the future.
- Guides decision making and strategy
- Creates a shared purpose
- Provides guidelines that determine behavior
- Inspires emotion
- Connects to values

MISSION

A mission statement is a unifying statement of what an organization is in business to do. It is a key reference point in planning and implementation of change. A mission statement is a description of the organization's key purposes.

VALUES

Values are the beliefs of an organization, the expression of what it stands for and how it will conduct itself. Values are the core of an organization's being. They underpin policies, objectives, procedures and strategies because they provide an anchor and a reference point for all things that happen in that organization.

AND SO WHAT ABOUT YOUR CHURCH

Indeed. Just the same applies to your congregation. A congregation should not set out on a journey without a compass. Or a map. Or a destination! Does your congregation have a vision of its future, a mission in life? Has it explicitly identified its personal values. Congregational Ministries and Committee on Ministry have been working with Sessions and churches for many years and always we seek to identify and help clarify vision, mission, and values – and then integrate them between individuals and the organization. A personal mission statement is developed that gives the congregation power forward.

THE POWER OF VISION!

“The ability to see beyond our present reality, to create, to invent what does not yet exist, to become what we not yet are. It gives us the capacity to live out of our imagination instead of our memory.”

Steve Covey (1994, p.103) *First Things First*

WHY CREATE A VISION

Choices and decisions we make create consequences, without the direction of a clear vision to guide us, we fail to acquire the quality-of-life results we expect. Partial visions lead to imbalance in life. Visions based on reflections by others, and not on the inner personal-self are not rewarding and empowering to an individual or a congregation. A shared vision empowers and impacts quality-of-life. A well-defined vision leads to satisfaction and a sense of meaning and purpose in life. The lack of a clear vision leads to settling for whatever happens, creating and staying true to a vision makes things happen.

“If we keep doing what we're doing, we're going to keep getting what we're getting.”

Steven Covey

“When one door closes, another one opens. But we often look so regretfully upon the closed door that we don’t see the one that has opened for us.”

Alexander Graham Bell

“The most damaging phrase in language is: ‘It’s always been done that way’.”

Rear Admiral Grace Hopper

CREATING A VISION: Begin by Dreaming!

Consider who would like to participate in helping to build a vision. Brainstorm, dream and imagine. Focus on things that will give your vision a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Do not limit your dreams to what is, where things currently exist, or what has typically occurred in the life of the congregation. Dreams are not based on or limited by your present needs, the needs will be determined by the dream.

“You can’t have a better tomorrow if you’re thinking about yesterday all the time.”

Charles Kettering

“The best way to predict your future is to create it.”

Anonymous

“A ship in harbor is safe – but that is not what ships are for.”

John A. Shedd

“You see things and ask ‘Why?’ But I dream things that never were and say ‘Why not.’”

George Bernard Shaw

CLARIFYING AND REFINING THE VISION

Creating a vision is a process of nurturing and cultivating ideas and imagination. Differentiate between the future that would become real and the future of your vision. The vision must be about changing that which is likely to occur, rather than changing that “what is.” The vision must distinguish between what must change and what must not change. It must be clear and well-defined to be a real vision.

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.”

Albert Einstein

“It is better to aim high and miss than to never aim at all.”

Unknown

“Only those who attempt the absurd....will achieve the impossible.”

Anonymous

“I always wanted to be somebody, but I see now I should have been more specific.”

Lily Tomlin

TAKING ACTION AND SUPPORTING THE VISION

Share the vision and help others recognize their importance in the realization of the vision. Lock onto the vision, make it a way of life, a part of every decision. Make each day a step toward making the vision a

dream come true. Become aware of and utilize the natural forces that move toward achievement of the vision. Become aware of and avoid, reduce, or neutralize those things that lead away from the vision. Anticipate resistance in the accomplishment of the vision. Envision the implications of successfully achieving the vision.

“Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.”
Japanese Proverb

“Action may not always bring happiness; but there is no happiness without action.”
Henry Van Dyke

“Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of plan in which we must frequently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other road to success.”
Steven Brennan

“Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off your goals.”
Unknown

LIVING THE VISION

“Most people who feel empowered by their mission statement find that there seems to be some point at which their statement ‘lives.’ They own it. It’s theirs. The vital connection is made between the mission and the moment in life. Then, with nurturing and continuing cultivation, the mission becomes the primary factor that influences every moment of choice.” (Covey, *First Things First*, p. 116)

CREATING A VISION

When you begin the process of strategic planning, visioning comes first. When visioning the change, ask yourself, “What is our preferred future?” and be sure to:

1. Draw on beliefs, mission, and environment of the organization.
2. Describe what you want to see in the future.
3. Be specific to each organization.
4. Be positive and inspiring.
5. Do not assume that the system will have the same framework as it does today.
6. Be open to dramatic modifications to current organization, methodology, teaching techniques, facilities, etc.

KEY COMPONENTS FOR YOUR VISION

Incorporate your beliefs! Your vision must be encompassed by your beliefs.

1. Your beliefs must see your organizational goals as well as community goals.
2. Your beliefs are a statement of your values.
3. Your beliefs are a public/visible declaration of your expected outcomes.
4. Your beliefs must be precise and practical.
5. Your beliefs will guide the actions of all involved.
6. Your beliefs reflect the knowledge, philosophy, and actions of all.
7. Your beliefs are a key component of strategic planning.

Create a Mission Statement! Once you have clarified your beliefs, build on them to define your mission statement, which is a statement of purpose and function.

1. Your mission statement draws on your belief statements.

2. Your mission statement must be future oriented and portray your organization as it will be, as if it already exists.
3. Your mission statement must be specific to the organization, not generic.
4. Your mission statement must be a short statement, not more than one or two sentences.

Here is an example mission statement: “By providing quality education, we empower individuals to become caring, competent, responsible citizens who value education as a lifelong process.”

Benefits of Visioning! The process and outcomes may seem vague and superfluous. The long-term benefits are substantial, however. Visioning:

1. Breaks you out of boundary thinking.
2. Provides continuity and avoids the stutter effect of planning fits and starts.
3. Identifies direction and purpose.
4. Alerts stakeholders to needed change.
5. Promotes interest and commitment.
6. Encourages laser-like focus.
7. Encourages and builds confidence.
8. Results in efficiency and productivity.

Vision Killers! As you engage in the visioning process, be alert to the following vision killers:

1. Tradition.
2. Fear of ridicule.
3. Stereotypes of people, conditions, roles and governing bodies.
4. Complacency of some stakeholders.
5. Fatigued leaders.
6. Short-term thinking.
7. Naysayers.

Exercise in Creating a Vision! Take the time to assimilate this information, use the following example to exercise your planning techniques:

“It is five years from today’s date and you have, marvelously enough, created your most desirable church. Now it is your job, as a team, to describe it – as if you were able to see it, realistically around you.”

Respond to the following questions:

1. What are the core values of this church?
2. How has the church’s environs changed?
3. What have we done to prepare our congregation for success in this world?
4. What do we as board or congregational members spend most of our time doing?
5. How has structure of the church changed?