

Strategic Planning for Your Church



Note: There are many ways for leaders to develop a master plan. This is one method. Feel free to blend and bend this process to fit the needs of your church culture and size. Some activities can be compressed, others expanded.

Purpose

Strategic Planning usually has two purposes:

- *The activity of seeking God's Will for a ministry or church*
- *The decision to act in faith on what has been discerned*

For this exercise we define strategic planning as a comprehensive review of all activities, programs, and ministries of the church.

The actual process of Strategic Planning may take months or years but usually results in an opportunity to improve, expand, reform, or rebuild a program, building, church, ministry, or mission initiative.

This process is most effective with a group of people who are open and willing to listen to the call of the Holy Spirit through its various means—worship, prayer, scripture, devotional activity, meetings and reflecting together. As we participate in a series of activities, we believe that God empowers thoughtful and prayerful reflection.

“But when He; the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; He will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come.” —John 16:13

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him—but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit.” —I Corinthians 2: 9-10a

Process

Begin with prayer and reflections on scripture, to open our hearts and minds to God's will. Listen with openness to the Holy Spirit and to each other.

"I sought the Lord, and He answered me." —Psalm 34:4a

"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him." —Psalm 37:7a NIV

Move from prayer and scripture and invite those assembled to reflect openly about mutual ministries and programs.

Three central questions:

1. Where are we as a church?
2. Where do we want to go?
3. How do we get there?

Strategic Planning

"I sought the Lord and He answered me." —Psalm 34:4a

1. WHERE ARE WE AS A CHURCH?

- A. Do we have a mission statement? If not, define the central ministries of your church by creating a mission statement.*
- B. What is our history, i.e., what has been our historical mission(s)?*
- C. What are current trends?*
- D. What are our strengths and weaknesses?*
- E. What are our threats (concerns) and opportunities?*
- F. Prioritize and categorize each list.*

2. WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

Goals or items to study.

3. HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Discerning how best to proceed.

Can we conclude from this planning what is God calling our church to accomplish?

1. WHERE ARE WE AS A CHURCH?

A. Do you have a mission statement?

What follows are suggestions on how to prepare a mission statement. This should be a concise statement, usually of forty-five words or less.

- *Appoint a facilitator/recorder.*
- *Begin by requesting words or phrases that reflect first thoughts.*
- *Post or record phrases on newspaper print or some large visual.*
- *Begin to prioritize and merge phrases.*
- *Example: Give everyone three colored stickers and allow time to get up and post stickers by most desired phrases.*
- *Merge core phrases.*
- *Craft a draft paragraph.*
- *Take a break! It is a challenge to do this in one session. Allow time for prayer and reflection. Perhaps, do the above in an evening session.*
- *Hold a second session to review the mission statement (perhaps the next morning). Consider all external and internal factors in your church, community, and the world.*
- *Your mission statement sets the tone for strategic planning. Everything relates back to the mission statement.*
- *You are collecting and expressing the individual ministry passions of your current membership.*
- *You should review your mission statement every few years to make sure it remains applicable to changing conditions and persons.*

B. What is our history?

- *List key dates from your founding to the present.*
- *Why was the church founded?*
- *Whom has it traditionally served?*
- *What are historical distinctions that form the culture of the church today?*
- *Do past programs provide guidance for future ministry or have conditions changed?*

C. What are current trends?

- *Make a list of trends in our church and community. For example:*
 - Attendance
 - Annual Stewardship
 - Demographics
 - Conditions of facilities
 - Changes in community
 - Economy
 - Other

- *Consider both internal and external conditions, now and in the near future.*

D. What are our strengths and weaknesses?

- *Make a list of current strengths and weaknesses (both internal and external). Reviewing the list of current trends is helpful.*

Note: Some churches categorize strengths and weaknesses by systematically examining the basic programs of a church, using as a common acronym, SWEEPS:

Service
Worship
Evangelism
Education
Pastoral Care
Stewardship

You may, of course, do free association. Consider how building and grounds affect programming and ministries.

E. What are our threats (concerns) and opportunities?

- *Make a list of threats (concerns) and opportunities.*

F. Prioritize and categorize each list.

Now prioritize and categorize each list of strengths and weaknesses and concerns and opportunities. For example, each person might identify three priorities on each list. Pull out the



most identified items and record and make a fresh, condensed and new prioritized list.

For example:

- What strengths (feeding program for homeless) require continued or additional energies or investment?
- What weaknesses (i.e., lack of adequate nursery for growing number of young families)?
- What concerns demand attention? (i.e., urban sprawl threatens rural patterns of life)
- What opportunities? (i.e., new housing in area brings younger families to parish life).
- Where do we want to go?

2. WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

Goals or Items to Study

Prepare statements about present and future programs and processes necessary to address the issues you have identified. Write these issues as goals. (i.e., enlarge the nursery to better serve younger families)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

3. HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Present these goals to the vestry and congregation. Then invite others to add to these goals (as appropriate). Appoint/recruit volunteers and committees to address each goal or groups of goals.

Enter into a Discernment path for each goal, to examine carefully what is required to address each proposed project or program.

Remember church programs and ministries are generally funded by three traditional methods:

- Annual Giving (ordinary giving)
- Capital Campaigns (extraordinary giving)
- Planned Giving/Endowments (ultimate giving)

As you examine how to accomplish goals, consider how they would be funded.

Conclusion

Can we conclude what God is calling our church to do?

Through prayer, scripture, reflection, and process, we arrive humbly with an understanding of God's purpose.