

## Key Elements of a Strategic Plan for a Church Community

Strategic planning without a process of seeking God for wisdom, vision and direction is fairly shallow and often engages the head without the heart. However 'visioning' without planning almost always leads to failure to act on what we believe God is asking us to do. It engages the heart without the head. Expressing the vision and direction sought from God in a clear strategic plan is an act of faith and a step of obedience.

No one formula of a strategic plan fits all churches and the elements here are often re-ordered or sometimes found in other documents.

### 1. **Our Context - church and community profiles**

This answers the question “who are we” and provides a specific local context in which the “mission and vision” statements to come will be expressed. Much of this is usually available if there has recently been a pastoral search process. These statements of include:

#### a) **Our community**

A brief but accurate summary of the demographic, historic, social, cultural and economic profiles of the community.

#### b) **Our church community**

Who makes up the congregation, demographics, history, social and cultural profile of the church community.

#### c) **The kingdom of God, churches, organisations in the community**

This is the opportunity for a spiritual history and description of the current situation of churches, religious groups, and spiritual networks in the community. It seeks to answer the question “What has God been doing and is he currently doing in the community”.

#### d) **Our resources and facilities**

What are the assets and resources we have been entrusted with as a church for the sake of God's kingdom.

### 2. **Our core values**

Most churches find it valuable to do an exercise to draw out their unique set of core values. This statement answers the question: “What is important to us as a church?” “How do we go about doing things as a church?” This can often be uncovered through a storytelling exercise if no work on this has occurred.

### 3. **Our mission**

Mission statements are usually fairly sharp. They try to distil “What the church does?” down to a fairly short statement. This is the action question. “What do we do?, What are we essentially about?”. This statement is usually only one or two sentences.

#### 4. **Our vision**

Vision statements are usually longer and are descriptive. They answer the question; “What do we see our church being like in the context of this community in 3-5 years time?”. Vision statements paint a picture of the future which the church believes God is inviting them to work under his empowering towards.

#### 5. **Our strategic directions for the next five years**

This breaks the vision down to key strategic priorities which the church will focus on in order to be obedient to God in being committed to making the vision a reality. These sometimes come out of the elements which have been discerned in uncovering the vision.

- a) The Strategic directions are usually specific, inspiring, achievable, time-framed, able to be assessed.
- b) Some plans differentiate between strategic directions and objectives, priorities and goals.
- c) Some plans now identify key enablers (resources, or ways of doing things which are not goals in themselves but enable the other strategic objectives to be completed (e.g. spiritual renewal, use of technology, partnership and networking, organisational structure)

#### 6. **Documentation**

- a) **A Strategic Plan** is usually published as a public document (often first in draft form for discussion and adoption). It usually has a life of 3-5 years. The best ones are fine tuned and adjusted as they are implemented. They should be living documents. These are usually governance level documents.
- b) Often in larger churches a Strategic Plan produces a **Developmental Plan**. This simply breaks the Strategic Document down into year by year goals and projects. This is not normally a public document and is internal often to leadership and management.