

Theological and Spiritual Premises of the Visioning Process

The process of assisting a church articulate its vision is built on a number of important theological foundations and spiritual practices. These are important for consultants to grapple with, as well as for the church community to reflect upon, as part of the preparation for visioning.

The desire for a fresh vision may be driven by a variety of events and realities in church life (e.g. end of a long ministry, pastoral transitions, decline, changes in community demographics, conflict, new building, amalgamation, end of one strategic plan). For a genuine renewing vision to emerge, the church needs to prepare spiritually.

1. God is actively at work within his world. As Christians we are practising Theists not Deists. God's activity is missional, he is shaping and extending his kingdom through his people. This is not a generic activity but is expressed in specific ways at specific times in local communities through ordinary people. The richness and wonder of God's kingdom cannot be expressed fully in any one time, place or culture. There are many different ways God works, yet they are unified by a "kingdom" set of values.
2. A key premise of the Visioning process is that "God does have a specific agenda for this community of his people, at this time, and in this place".
3. He knows each church community, its unique story, its strengths and challenges, its capacities and the needs of its local community better than the church does itself.
4. Because they are unique communities in which God's grace and love are evident, churches have a significant but not exclusive role in God's missional agenda. They have a vision which is more than the sum total of the individual visions of its members.
5. God is not silent. He is constantly communicating his agenda to his people in many ways. His calling, convicting, challenging and prompting comes personally and collectively. Because it comes through human agents, it needs to be discerned.
6. It is the task of every church, and especially of the leadership of every church, to listen to the Spirit of God, to discern God's voice and respond in obedience to God. Churches seek to gain further insight from God as what is known is obeyed.