



HOW TO PRESENT A VISIONING SERVICE

The Old Testament cautions us that “where there is no vision, the people perish.” This, of course, is true for any organization such as a business, church, or even family. If we do not know where we are going, then how will we know when we get there or even if we get there?

Churches have a bad tendency to just drift. It takes a dedicated leadership to keep a church moving forward...to keep establishing visionary goals to challenge the church to enter new areas of service and ministry.

One way to stir the pot is to present an annual visioning service. I really like this idea and have had good success with it.

Let’s break down this idea in the following format:

Why?

- Well, the warning is indeed true. “Where there is no vision, the people do indeed perish.” We are supposed to worship “I AM” rather than “I WAS.” Some churches have done nothing new (except building improvements) in the last thirty years. Indeed, *nothing* is improved including the picture in the baptistery. As a general rule, 20% of your people need to be challenged with something new. The other 80% includes many who will follow in the new opportunities as well as a significant minority who will just sit, watch and ho-hum everything. *It is important to stir that 20%, because they thrive on opportunity.* They, also, are your best recruiters for ministry. By stirring them, I find my own job becomes much easier! And the church becomes much healthier when others assume ownership of the work. Less important but yet important is the fact that people give more financially to vision than to need. Vision challenges people to give!
- It is my experience in talking with pastor search committees that every church has serious communication problems. (In visiting mom last evening, I picked up a church bulletin which did not even include the church’s name, address, telephone number or pastor’s name. How in the world did that happen?) So take a service and

communicate! Let EVERYONE know what is coming and how they can be involved!

- Teach your staff how to vision and how to think. We normally install people in positions without training them. One church's motto was, "if the body's warm, then he's qualified." This visioning thing (as President George H. W. Bush called it) builds confidence in your people as they see their own goals accomplished!

When? Two Sunday services!

1. Pastor's service: I recommend taking a Sunday morning service (the goal is to challenge the largest number of people and those people conveniently show up for the Sunday morning service) to present the pastor's vision for the coming church year. That vision should include a review of what happened in the prior year in order to establish successes/failures (including accountability) and help educate the membership in many areas.
2. Administrator's service: Do you have a Sunday evening service? Give this service to the administrators to present a vision for their own area of service. In the long run, their success will likely determine the pastor's success as well as the church's success. Allocate five minutes for each presentation. This will create a sense of accountability for each administrator. It will also provide you with good discussion material during your monthly staff meetings. For example, "how well are you proceeding on implementing..." Such questions help keep the administrator focused...and encourage everyone else to continually think in terms of process improvement.

How?

- If this is a totally new concept to you, I suggest beginning with your existing church staff. Organize a monthly meeting of all directors. Give them opportunity to discuss their ministry. Encourage them in their own personal growth. Then ask them to establish several goals for the next twelve months (be sure to limit the time in order to establish a deadline). Most denominations provide resources for these department heads to aid them in thinking through their processes. See christianbookdistributors.com for additional resources.
- Decide on an annual day to unveil the latest, greatest vision to the people.

- Assign someone (i.e. church secretary) to obtain any statistics for the presentation. Create charts for distribution.
- Promote the vision service as the “one service you cannot afford to miss.” Build it!
- Build the entire service around the vision. Use songs that emphasize vision. Use scriptures that emphasize vision! Use your sermon time to present the vision!
- Provide a handout with many fill-in-the-blanks associated with the presentation(s). This handout should include a section to be cut off and turned back in. The cut off section includes boxes to be checked if the person wishes to be involved in that area (for example, beginning a new class).
- Create a PowerPoint presentation. PowerPoint takes time, but it is critical that people recognize the importance you place on this service. Do it right and do it well!
- Be candid in discussing the prior year’s successes/failures. Accountability begins with the pastor!
- Present the goals for the coming year in user-friendly fashion.
- Above all, be sure that your goals are realistic. (Do you remember the story about the world being destroyed by a nuclear war? Three people survived. One was a pastor. His first words were, “Our goal for next Sunday’s attendance is five.”) Be realistic!
- Recognize that visioning is a multi-year process. You get to do this process again next year! Everything doesn’t have to be done this year. So bite off what you can chew in the next twelve months.
- As a general rule, it always takes longer to get something accomplished in a church than one expects. And I’m known for pushing, pushing, and pushing! Therefore, expect some slippage from your volunteer staff.
- Be sure to tie the vision to the vision/mission/purpose statement.