

_____ United Methodist Church
 _____, Nebraska
 _____ District

2012 Discipleship Plan

(Use a separate sheet of paper for your answers)

Your Discipleship Plan serves as a guide for your ministry during the year so that you can identify the results of your efforts and move toward the vision which God has for your congregation.

Part 1: Update Background Information

1. A description of your church's Mission Field, including a Mission Insite demographic description, long-term trends, any changes during the past year, and how your church is responding to these trends and changes.
2. As United Methodists, we express Christ's Great Commission to his Disciples as the call to "Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World." But each of us has a unique way of living out that call in our setting, with the gifts God has given us. That is our Vision Statement. A Vision is a picture of what it will look like when we fulfill God's call for us. It is like your name, it identifies who you are. A well-written Vision Statement evokes passion for the church's ministry and its future.

Vision: In one sentence, what will 'church' look like if you live out God's calling for your church? Ex: "New Hearts, New Hope for All"

Mission Goals: 2-4 long-term goals that will enable you to realize your Vision and make disciples for the transformation of the world.

- Ex:
- 1) Deepen the spiritual life of our congregation & community;
 - 2) Learn what 'new hope' is needed in our community;
 - 3) Put our faith in action to be the Hope we proclaim in Christ.

Jesus spent 3 years with the
 Disciples teaching the
CORE VALUES
 of Discipleship.
 †
 His Resurrection
 gave them their
VISION
 †
 The Great Commission
 gave them their
MISSION.

Part II: Frame your Discipleship Plan around three questions:

Where there
is no Vision
the People
Perish
Proverbs
29:18

1. In what ways are you actively living out your vision, and what progress have you made on your mission goals?
2. How have you transformed the lives of individuals within your mission field and in the world? (Include specific stories of transformation)
3. What aspect of your mission will you focus on this next year, and how will you increase your effectiveness as described in the *6 Signs of Discipleship*?

At your Church Conference: Be prepared to share your Plan and to tell your stories of the people whose lives you have transformed through your disciple-making, your mission outreach and your ministry this past year. A printed copy of your plan and stories should be sent to the District Office with your other Church Conference materials.

RESOURCES FOR PREPARING VISION/MISSION STATEMENTS



Strategies change often, but your Values, Vision and Mission are constant over time unless there is a radical change in your congregation.

[*from L3 session V © 2010 Spiritual Leadership, Inc. used by permission]

Core Values

Discovering the core values of a congregation is a process of identifying the unwritten rules that they get lived out without ever being spoken. For example, someone in the congregation becomes seriously ill or dies. Before the day is out, other members start taking food to the family. Why? Because one of the core values of the congregation is that in time of need, they support one another.

Process of Discovery: Organize small discussion groups involving a cross-section of members representing different ages, involvements, and longevity in the church. Give them the questions ahead of time, so they will have time to reflect and be ready for discussion:

1. What are the high and low points in the history of this congregation?
2. If you were displaced and had to start the church all over again, what would be essential to include in your new congregation, and why?
3. How would you describe the core values of this congregation to a visitor from far away?
Give an example of how each value is currently lived out in the church's ministry.
4. What teachings of Jesus does this congregation best exemplify in their ministry?

Gather the information gleaned from these discussions. Identify those values which are repeated frequently. (You may have to discern the values that underlie traditions or actions.) These are core values. Discuss other values which appear once or twice. What do they tell you about who you are or who you think you are?

ENRON had their values chiseled in marble on their lobby floor: "*Integrity, Communication, Respect, Excellence*". What really mattered were the values that guided their decisions & actions. ...The same is true for the church.

Vision

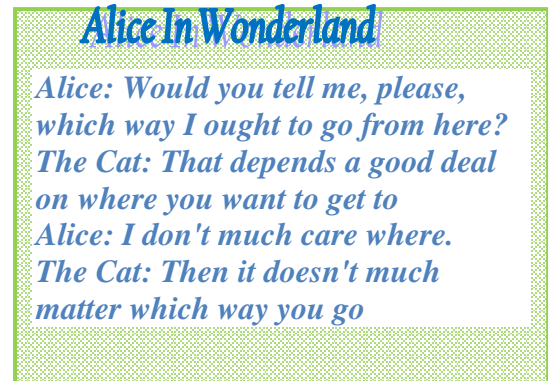
A vision statement is a vivid image of who you want to be in the future, stated in a way that inspires, energizes, and invites commitment to an excellence not yet attained. It affirms our spiritual journey, in John Wesley's words, to always be 'moving on to perfection.'

Refining your vision to one, easily remembered statement, will increase its effectiveness as you repeat it in worship, meetings and other gatherings and display it on banners, bulletins, and stationery as visual reminders to both the congregation and your mission field of who God is calling you to be.

Process of Discovery: Spend time in Bible Study about the purpose of the church and in Prayer to gain clarity on God's Vision for your congregation.

In discussion groups, reflect on these questions:

1. If there was only one thing your church would be known for in your community, what would you want that to be?
2. What is so important to you that you are you willing to sacrifice your life so that it happens through the ministry of your church?



Following these discussions, spend more time in prayerful discernment for God's vision. At the end of that prayer time, ask each person to write their response to the question, "What is God's vision for your church's ministry?"

From these responses, have a small group of writers create your Vision Statement for Council approval

1. Does your Vision reflect your core values?
2. Is it big enough to inspire and challenge, yet still be attainable?
3. Is it succinct and easy to remember?

[Jim Collins, author of Good To Great]

Mission Goals

The United Methodist Mission Statement, *Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World*, comes from Jesus' Great Commission. When you adopt your Vision Statement, you are painting a picture of how God is leading you to fulfill that Commission as United Methodists in your particular setting and mission field. Mission Goals are statements of what you plan to achieve as you put your words into action.

Mission Goals are the outcomes, not the strategies, which will lead you toward fulfilling your Vision. These may take one year or several years. Along the way, they are the road signs that keep you headed in the right direction toward achieving your Vision.

For example: Deepening the spiritual life of neighborhood families is a mission goal. Intergenerational Vacation Bible School or neighborhood family movie nights--when they are designed with that goal in mind--are strategies that might help you reach that goal.



Process of Discovery:

1. Ask your church leaders, "What two or three goals can best guide our ministry as we move toward being the congregation of our Vision?"
2. Have your Council, leadership teams & committees work together to design the year's programs and activities around those common goals. Remember, it is not only what you do, but how you do it that makes the difference.

For example, if your goal is to extend radical hospitality to neighborhood low-income families, you may strategize to include an evening meal with VBS. The whole family is invited and eats with members of the congregation, thus offering a great mission outreach and an opportunity to build relationships.

3. Finally, identify how you will measure, evaluate and celebrate your success. Follow through with these measures throughout the year, and if something isn't working, don't be afraid to change the strategy you are using to reach your goals.