

A vintage-style map of the Potomac River region, showing various towns like Washington City, Alexandria, and Anandale. A telescope with a black leather grip and brass accents is positioned horizontally across the middle of the map. The title 'Strategic Planning for Effective Church Leadership' is overlaid on the map in a large, black, serif font.

# Strategic Planning

## for Effective Church Leadership



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**Strategic Plan  
For Your Church**

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## INITIAL PREPARATION

**Why do a Strategic Plan?** The process helps the church to objectively assess its strengths and weakness in order to compile a God-given mission and vision statement for the church. The result will be a product that outlines specific goals and strategies to accomplish the vision God will give the leadership of your church and provides an excellent recruitment tool to attract other quality leaders for your ministry team. It is important that the plan be evaluated and edited in a group setting, probably going through a number of editions before its workable. Remember, the plan (like a budget) is only a tool in process, and needs to be open to critique on an annual basis in order to assess what's been accomplished and what needs re-assessment.

Before you begin to write the strategic plan you'll want to consider some essential preparatory actions:

A. **Identify** and **recruit** the key leaders in the church that you will need to help you write the plan so that it is "owned" by the main core of leadership in the church. This would include all *explicit* leaders (board members, ministry team, and other department leaders), and *implicit* leaders- those who silently lead the church behind the scenes.

B. **Read** and **work through** at least the first six chapters of Kennon L. Callahan's *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*, (HarperSan Francisco, 1983), with your key leaders in preparation to actually writing your plan.

C. **Identify, claim** and **begin to expand** your strengths while adding new strengths.

D. **Assess** major weaknesses and obstacles that exist in the church.

E. **Plan** a series of discussion meetings around the formulation of the strategic plan so that it will become a shared project.

F. **Rewrite** a sample strategic plan for your church to be distributed to all the leaders so they have clear idea where your headed in the process and what needs to be accomplished (the following plan can serve as a proto-type of what you might do). This should be in a rough draft form making it clear that it is only a sample and not the finished product -that way your leadership team will feel free to make suggestions to change it.

G. **Research** and **compile** the pertinent demographic data for your community (see Bibliography for information on Percept, a professional company that will prepare a "Ministry Area Profile" for your community).

## 1. Mission Statement for Your Church.

Here you place a broad statement of the purpose that the Lord has given you for your church. I.e.: Your Church is an open and supportive community of accountable believers seeking to glorify God in a lifestyle of worship and holiness, to follow Christ in faithful servanthood, and to be empowered to produce the fruit and to encourage the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:42-27)

Here you will elaborate on an expression, in outline form, of what you hope the church will look like once the Strategic Plan is successfully implemented. What follows is an example developed by Trinity Assembly of God of Pasadena:

As a family of believers we will:

1. **Express the presence of Christ** by proclaiming the Gospel to the lost within the cultures we embrace both within and outside our sphere of influence. (Matt. 28:19, Acts 1:8, Rom. 1:16) This point embodies the urgent sense of evangelism we as a church want to encourage.

2. **Experience the presence of God** in Spirit-led celebration resulting in empowerment, renewal, and transformation. (Ps. 22:3, I Pet. 2:5, 9, Jn. 4:23; Eph. 5:19) This point addressed the area of worship and its importance to the health of the church.

3. **Encourage obedience** to the truths revealed through the instruction, study, and application of God's Word. (Jas. 1:22, I Tim. 2:15, Psalms 119:2) Here, Christian Ed. is pinpointed in the mission.

4. **Establish a nurturing environment** of grace and mercy where believers can develop solid relationships, brokenness can be healed, and the true love of God can be expressed within this community of faith. (Matt. 22:37-40, Rom. 12:10, Eph. 4:32; I John 3:16, I John 1:7) Our focus here is on developing a genuine, wholesome, and spiritual community.

## **II. Church History**

The history of Your Church may be unclear. Perhaps you have some "self-appointed" church historians who could help you with this aspect of the plan. This is only a paragraph or so, starting at the church origins from its inception (either original charter, from a split, or whatever). This will likely raise some contention and attempts to "re-write" the history in a much more favorable light than is realistic. Nevertheless, remain focused on the process, for it is in the process of writing the plan that change can begin to take place. This is meant to be a general overview of the church, highlighting those issues from the past that are still affecting the church in the present. Many churches normally keep annual report statistics which might be of some assistance as far as growth trends, kinds of outreach programs in the past, etc. This historical information will be helpful to people who are considering becoming a part of your church as well as challenging to the existing members to take an objective look at the past. This could lessen attempts to "use the past as a stick with which to beat the present" as people realize that the "good ole days" maybe weren't as good as they are often remembered.

## **III. Environmental Analysis**

### **A. Physical**

#### **1. External**

This is a description of your surrounding community. If you haven't had a demographic study done (Precept will do it for a reasonable fee (\$200-300) and supply relevant religious profiles of the people in your community as well- see Bibliography), a lot of data is available through census research, local libraries, city plans, and business people (MacDonalds, etc, ) who have completed these studies. A general population breakdown by ethnicity, age, education, income, marital status, etc. would be helpful here.

This also includes an assessment of the visibility and accessibility issues concerning your church (cf. Callahan pg. 72-85). You might address the strengths and weaknesses of your church in this respect. Such issues as your location, city amenities that help/hinder the church, major landmarks, shopping centers, traffic arteries, etc. should be elaborated on here.

#### **2. Internal**

Describe the main sanctuary structure, seating capacity, age of structure, describe the style, and a brief but complete description of the kinds of space available (i.e. how many offices, bathrooms, kitchen facilities, Sunday school classrooms, conference and other meeting rooms). What about the condition of the structure(s)? Are they new, in need of renovation, or refurbishing? Discuss those relevant aspects that might impact the effectiveness of your church to reach the community.

## **B. SPIRITUAL**

### **1. EXTERNAL**

This is a synopsis of the community outside your church including the "churched" and the "unchurched". A good demographic study, if its tailored for the church, will provide comprehensive profiles of these people. Areas such as Faith Involvement, Religious Preference, Leadership Preferences, Primary Concerns, Key Values, and Household Contributions are all helpful in giving an indication of what your community is like and its receptivity to your message. What are the spiritual attributes of these people? Describe their hunger, or lack of it, for spiritual knowledge, as well as the relevant social issues that concern the community. In addition to whatever analytical data you can accumulate, at least one paragraph with your own subjective appraisal of their receptivity, or resistance, is also pertinent.

### **2. INTERNAL**

This paragraph(s) deals with your assessment of the spiritual state of the church as it now exists. Is it a healthy community of believers growing in their faith in God? Or have they grown static in their walk with the Lord? Contented with the status quo? Not wanting any real drastic changes to rock their comfortable boat?

Is there a core of committed believers that you could rely on to help lead and implement the Lord's vision for the church? Is there a deep sense of openness and accountability in the church and a firm foundation of doctrinal stability? What other observations might you make concerning the spiritual maturity of the church? Are there various groups with varying degrees of spirituality and how would you categorize them?

## **IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

### **A. STRENGTHS**

The more honest you can be about the following categories the more effective your implementation of the plan. There might be a strong tendency to want to assess the church based on the past and not its present state, especially by those who have been a part of the church for many years. While confronting these myths and misconceptions might be painful, it will be worth the effort to work through the process. Some people will see some things as strengths that others consider a weakness. This is a matter of individual perspective. Don't let it become a divisive procedure - choose your battles wisely in order to keep casualties to a minimum. Some people may start out rather obstinate about these categories in the discussion, but will change their stance in the process. That's why its important that the plan be evaluated and edited in a group setting, perhaps going through a number of changes before its in a workable form. Remember, the plan needs to be open to critique on an annual basis to assess what's been accomplished and what still needs work.

Here is a list of questions you may want to answer to determine if they are either Strengths or Weaknesses. Reformulate your answer in a prepositional statement that reflects the state of your church. You will likely have many that are not addressed by these questions. Then list them under their respective category.

1. Is a **genuine love and compassion for people** a distinction of Your Church?
2. Is it racially **inclusive and open** to others of various ethnicity, economic and educational background, etc.?
3. Are your **church grounds and facilities** seen as assets or liabilities to this congregation? What's the potential for growth?
4. Does the church have the **financial ability** to fulfill its long term and short term obligations?
5. What about the **location of the church property** ? Is it convenient or difficult for people to find and access?
6. Does the **history** of Your Church in your city add or detract from its credibility and Christian witness?
7. Is there a **key group of leaders** who have committed to establishing the church as a viable healthy community of believers focusing on outreach, openness, support and transformation?
8. Has your Church had a **history of missionary support** or is this an area of needed improvement in the church?
9. Does the **size** of your church **help or hinder** your ability to establish programs that will help reach your community?
10. Is there a **need to recruit, train or strengthen leadership** within the fellowship?
11. Does the **existing building(s)** require considerable amount of cosmetic and functional refurbishing?
12. Is the **corporate worship experience** at Your church contemporary and provocative within your culture or does it need to be updated to reach the "unchurched"?
13. Are the **fundamental doctrines** of the church sound? What impact does this have on the Christian Ed. programs of the church? Postive or negative?
14. Is there a high or low **level of openness, support and hospitality** which might help or hinder the church from becoming a healthy family of accountable and approachable believers.
15. Do you have prompt and **systematic follow-up** of newcomers, visitors and absentees?
16. What **other obvious strengths or weaknesses** have not been addressed by any of these questions?

## **V. ASSUMPTIONS**

WHAT WE CAN ASSUME WITH SOME DEGREE OF CERTAINTY:

A. LIST HERE THOSE ASSUMPTIONS YOU ARE MAKING THAT ARE IMPERATIVE FOR THE PLAN TO SUCCEED. In addition to those listed below you might include such things as: assuming the finances will be made available to enact the plan. no substantial opposition will surface within the church membership or board, the church will experience a certain amount of spiritual and numerical growth.

B. THE CHURCH WILL ADOPT THE MISSION STATEMENT. Since the strategic plan is built on the foundation of the Mission statement it is imperative that the church as a whole will heartily embrace the tenants expressed in the statement.

C. THE CHURCH BOARD INVOLVED WILL APPROVE OF THE PLAN. There are many aspects to implementing these ideas. Therefore changes and alterations to certain facets of the rough copy of this strategic plan are welcome and expected.

## **VI. OBJECTIVES**

**A. PHYSICAL** (List those specific objectives you want to accomplish) some examples:

1. Develop a complete Policy manual for the church office and administration.
2. Write and institute a comprehensive Ministry Policy Manual including job descriptions for directors and co-leaders.
3. Re-write the existing church By-laws and constitution.
4. Establish a written discipline policy for the Christian Ed. program.

**B. SPIRITUAL**

1. Begin to initiate the small group concept within the structure of the church to insure future leadership, growth, and the twin essentials of intimacy and accountability.
2. Establish an ongoing leadership training curriculum for the purpose of training existing and future leaders within the church body using this strategic plan as a platform for such discussion.
3. Implement an ongoing evangelism outreach and training strategy to reach out to the lost, disciple new or inexperienced believers, and assure sufficient visitation and follow-up of visitors.
4. Establish a weekly prayer meeting with leaders in the church to insure adequate prayer support.
5. Support or Care groups should be established throughout the week to minister to specific needs either at the church or in homes, or wherever convenient for the attendees (i.e. Bible study, singles meetings. Alcoholics Victorious).
6. Institute ongoing community outreach events that minister to our target mission field.



## **VII. STRATEGIES**

**A. PLANNING** - In order to implement your plan you made want to develop the following documents:

### **1. OFFICE POLICY MANUAL**

- a. Strategies
  - 1) Personnel Requirements
  - 2) Specific objectives and strategy statement
  - 3) Goals and Schedules
- b. Compilation of job descriptions for office personnel and volunteers.

### **2. MINISTRY POLICY MANUAL**

- a. Departmental Strategies
  - 1 ) Personnel Requirements
  - 2) Specific objectives and strategy statement
  - 3) Goals and Schedules
- b. Compilation of ministry descriptions for department heads and volunteers.

### **3. TIMETABLE FOR INITIATION AND COMPLETION**

- a. Initial draft of strategy and objective statements due by a specified date?
- b. Completion of all manuals by another specified date?

## **B. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE -**

- 1. Comprised of the pastor's wife, and other key people from the board or leadership team, this committee helps to recruit the leaders and volunteers for various ministries with the following benefits to leadership:
  - a. Eliminates continuous pulpit recruitment of positions which:
    - 1. demeans the position by constant appeals -resulting in guilty response rather than genuine burden and gifting.
    - 2. results in unqualified volunteers that must then be turned down for the position.
    - 3. does not assure any one will be recruited.
  - b. Assures that each person will receive a personal letter, prayer, and verbal contact of encouragement to become a part of the ministry team.
  - c. Each person is supplied with a ministry description that helps overcome the fear of burnout and allows for proper scheduling of the volunteer's time.
  - d. Stops over-recruitment of the same individuals by various leaders in the church.

e. Responsibility for unpopular replacements or appointments is shared by a committee and not just the pastor. This is especially helpful when replacing individuals with more qualified ones (it is harder to contend with a group decision rather than an individual one).

f. Establishes a uniformity in the ministry descriptions throughout the church organization.

2. It should be noted that all decisions by the Personnel Committee are made in consultation with the group leaders they are recruiting for and is always subject to the church board's or pastor's final approval.

**C. MINISTRY DESCRIPTIONS-** each department should have ministry descriptions (see sample in appendix) for each of the following:

1. All members of the leadership team including associate pastors, board members, etc.

2. Anyone formally recruited for ministry- who then completes an application for ministry for the church files (this is essential in this day and age of spurious litigation especially against churches).

#### **D. MANAGEMENT THROUGH SELF-EVALUATION**

1. Each ministry description (MD) is re-written by the ministry leader to tailor fit the description to that ministry.

2. This MD includes specific 6 month, 1 year, 3 year, and 5 year goals established by the person involved in the ministry. These goals are then reviewed on a regular basis and become the means of self-evaluation. All that needs to be asked is a few questions:

- a. "Were we able to accomplish the goals you established in your ministry descriptions? Why or why not?"
- b. "How can the church help you to accomplish your new goals for the future, etc.?"

#### **VIII. SPECIFIC GOALS**

These need to be attainable, but stretch your faith to accomplish them (with the help of God), as well as quantifiable and specific - so its clear once they've been reached.

##### **A. SIX MONTH (here's some examples to think about)**

###### **1. Physical Goals**

- a. To have trained leaders and assistant leaders in every major area of the church.

- b. To have "x" number of weekly adherents.
- c. To have at least "x" number of care groups, and "x" number of ministry groups meeting regularly.
- d. To hold a staff/board member retreat.
- e. To establish regular leadership training meetings.
- f. To recruit at least "x" number of new members.
- g. To complete and establish the enactment of a new Constitution and Bylaws.
- h. To establish a church budget with percentages set forth for future salaries, debt reduction, maintenance, and purchases.
- i. What other specific goals can you think of that need to be accomplished?

## 2. Spiritual Goals

- a. To bring about a theological understanding of the importance of lay people as ministers.
- b. To bring about a thorough understanding of the foundational role of small group ministry.
- c. To bring about an in depth understanding of our role as a church in the area of missions.
- d. To establish a prayer chain in the church.
- e. To establish regular prayer meetings.

**B. LIST GOALS, BOTH PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL, FOR ONE, THREE AND FIVE YEAR INTERVALS AS WELL. (as mentioned above, while the plan addresses some general goals for the church, this should eventually be done for each department or ministry).**

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## **APPENDIX**

(SAMPLE MINISTRY DESCRIPTION) MINISTRY DESCRIPTION FOR "NAME YOUR MINISTRY HERE" FIND A SCRIPTURE VERSE (S) THAT EMBODY THE SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION FOR YOUR MINISTRY AND LIST IT HERE.

**I. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND.** Describe the specific purpose of that ministry and any history of that ministry in the church. Why is this ministry important and what function does it have in the body of Christ?

### **II. PRINCIPLES INVOLVED.**

A. What basic scriptural or theological principles are the foundation of the way you do this ministry?

B. This will take considerable reflection as you work through the remainder of the description.

C. What are the principles underlying the key responsibilities of the participants?

### **III. RESPONSIBILITIES**

A. This is basically a list of the duties and functions of your ministry described in a more practical way.

B. These responsibilities entail:

1. What time commitments are expected? Daily, weekly, monthly?

2. How long is the commitment to full this position? 6 months; 1 year, 3 years?

3. Who are the participants responsible to within the administrative flow chart?

C. One of the first things the participant should do is rewrite the ministry description within one month or so of taking the position with his/her own goals, etc..

D. Additional responsibilities.

### **IV. GOALS**

A.. What specific things should be accomplished within the next 6 months; 1 year, 3 years, 5 years?

B. Goals should be quantifiable, and obtainable, yet cause you to stretch for their completion. If you can accomplish them without the help of the Holy Spirit is it really a spiritual work of faith?

### **V. STRATEGIES.**

A. Delineate a specific strategy or means to accomplish the above stated goals.