

Visioning Retreat

Assumptions

The Visioning Retreat is designed for the core leaders and staff of the church to experience a process to clarify core values, bedrock beliefs, motivating vision, and key strategic mission for the church. Approximately 12 to 45 people will be involved.

The weekend retreat is only the beginning. Leaders must share and reality test their insights with focus groups among regular participants, interview teams among marginal members, and listening triads among the general public. The retreat may also be followed by a complete *Congregational Mission Statement* from Thriving Church Consulting.

The best location for the retreat is *outside* of the church building, but *within* the community or primary mission field of the congregation. There is great advantage in using a hotel and asking participants to stay both Friday and Saturday nights. The retreat assumes the group *will worship* in their own church on Sunday. Sunday afternoon and evening gatherings may be held at the church.

The timeline begins with fellowship dinner on Friday evening. Friday evening focuses on discerning the congregational experience of Jesus Christ; understanding the definitions and expectations of the retreat, and covenanting together to listen for God's guidance. Homework includes Bible study of Acts 10-18 and meditation about core values and beliefs. Saturday morning is dedicated to clarifying core values and bedrock beliefs and the afternoon is spend discerning the mission mix and core message of the congregation. Participants deploy themselves in triads on Saturday evening to observe the publics of the primary mission field. Sunday morning is spent in worship and reflecting on the values, beliefs, vision, and mission intentionally or unintentionally revealed in the service. Sunday afternoon is dedicated to listening for God's vision and discerning strategic mission. A fellowship dinner and worship experience concludes the retreat on Sunday evening.

You are encouraged to customize the process for your church. The resources and agenda provided here are intended as guidelines rather than blueprints. Supplement these resources with the "Visioning Toolbox" at www.ThrivingChurch.com.

Agenda

Friday Night through Sunday

Friday:

6:00 pm

Fellowship Dinner

Provide every participant with a copy of the “Covenant of Openness” for discussion.

7:00

Exercise: *Our Experience of Christ*

Discussion

Introduce the Visioning Process

Definitions of Core Values, Bedrock Beliefs, Motivating Vision, Key Mission

Consensus Building Methods (Retreat, Focus Groups, Survey Teams, Listening Teams)

Goals for Retreat: Preliminary list of values and beliefs; picture of future hope; core message

9:00

Homework

Read Acts 10 – 18 (refer to the Bible Study Exercise)

Review the definitions provided on the exercise (page 8). Participants complete the worksheet individually.

Saturday:

Morning:

Our Core Values and Beliefs

Refer to the “homework” from last night

Sit in table groups. Each table group develops a “Top 5” list of core values based on the homework from the previous night. Share these in a plenary session and negotiate a “top ten” list of core values.

Evaluate your list in reference to the comparative insights of Romans 12. Revise your core values as needed.

Sit in table groups. Each table group develops a “Top 5” list of bedrock beliefs based on the homework from the previous night. Share these in a plenary session and negotiate a “top ten” list of bedrock beliefs.

Evaluate your list in reference to the comparative insights of . Revise your bedrock beliefs as needed.

Afternoon

Our Mission Mix and Core Message

Mission Mix Exercise

Evaluate and compare self perceptions, staff perceptions, public perceptions

Discern the desired mix for 2020

Wall Mural Exercise

Core Message Exercise

Sunday:

Morning: Worship *sitting together* in your congregational service, taking notes that identify the values, beliefs, vision, and mission (positive or negative) that is intentionally or unintentionally revealed in the worship service and sanctuary decorations.

During the coffee hour, participants should seek out conversations to share insights about core values and beliefs from the previous day with other members of the church.

Fellowship lunch should encourage conversation about the values, beliefs, vision, and mission (positive or negative) revealed from the worship and coffee time conversation.

Afternoon: Devotion: Focus on Isaiah 41:1-20

Sit in triads ... with only a central table in the center of the room. Share the motivating vision and key mission that each person recorded from the homework of Friday night.

Follow the exercises provided on pages and begin to synthesize and summarize the emerging vision and mission. (See page 16).

(Option: See page 19) Use the 'Embedding DNA' exercise to discuss how well the church is aligned with the vision, and begin to identify potential sidetracks, burnouts, and irrelevances.

Evening: Fellowship Dinner

Table discussion: How would you reshape worship to fully align with the emerging core values, bedrock beliefs, motivating vision, and key strategic mission of the church?

Final worship: Sing songs and hymns that seem most relevant to the emerging vision of the church.

Next Steps:

Collate the learning from the weekend and share it widely within the congregation. Delegate a team to develop a graphic image (logo) and theme song for the congregation.

Dedicate the next official board or council meeting to a full discussion of the retreat results.

Develop a plan to reality test and share the emerging consensus with focus groups of regular participants; visitation teams to selected marginal members; and listening teams with groups beyond the church.