

How to Write a Vision, Mission and Values Statement

This formal document provides direction and a target for the church. It is a tool to help the organization fulfill what God has called it to do. It is the bullseye! The value of a church vision statement is that it gives church leadership, employees, and members a shared goal.

Every organization needs to understand where it is going before it can develop a strategic plan and map out steps for how to get there. A church vision statement is typically two to three sentences that describe what the church hopes to become or achieve. Some organizations write paragraphs describing their vision, but some would say that the shorter the statement, the more likely employees, volunteers, and members will be able to absorb it, memorize it, and explain it to others.

The congregation needs to understand what the church is trying to accomplish so that everyone can buy into and support the vision.

Vision Statement

1. Gather church leadership.

Writing the church's vision, mission, and values statement should be an exercise that is done by the church board and some senior church members or staff. Ideally, this would be done in a retreat setting, such as a private room in a restaurant, a hotel conference room, or someone's home. It simply needs to be a place without interruptions and distractions.

2. Solicit help from an objective facilitator.

The beauty of the church is that God blesses churches with members who have a wide variety of gifts, and a church may have professionals available who are gifted at facilitation and may be interested in facilitating a vision, mission, and values session. If no one on the board or in the congregation has this skill set, it may be worth investing a couple of hours with a professional who can help. Regardless, the facilitator should drive the process and not the vision. An experienced facilitator will know how to do this.

*“Commit your works to the Lord,
and your thoughts will be established.” Proverbs 16:3*

3. Dream aloud.

A visioning session is the “writing-on-tablet” process, so take the time to pray before the session begins. The goal is to articulate God's will for the church. Once the session begins, I like working with whiteboards or flip charts because I think a visual helps spark thoughts and ideas.

*“Write the vision and make it plain on tablets,
That he may run who reads it.” Habakkuk 2:2*

Depending on the number of people in the session, have the group break down into teams of 3-4 people, provide each group with a flip chart, and have them discuss and answer the following questions:

- Who are we?
- What does God want to use us to do?
- What do we want this church to look like?

- Where do we want to be 1, 5, or 10 years from now?

As a group, create a newspaper headline about something the church has done/accomplished at some future point. This helps the group visualize the future.

4. Combine ideas, and at the end of this session:

Have all of the teams come back together and tell the group the thoughts and ideas they produced. Use the entire group to pick the best and most consistent thoughts and ideas from each smaller group and write the common words on a flipchart.

Go around the room and allow all the participants to begin to add/subtract and formalize the sentence structure of the statement. Have a laptop available to use a thesaurus, dictionary, and encyclopedia/search engine as references.

5. Test the Statement.

Read the statement and confirm that it reflects what the team is trying to communicate.

Here are some examples:

Caterpillar: Be the global leader in customer value.

DuPont: The vision of DuPont is to be the world's most dynamic science company, creating sustainable solutions essential to a better, safer, and healthier life for people everywhere.

Heinz: Our Vision, quite simply is to be the world's premier food company, offering nutritious, superior-tasting foods to people everywhere.

Sears: To be the preferred and most trusted resource for the products and services that enhance home and family life.

Avon: To be the company that best understands and satisfies the product, service, and self-fulfillment needs of women globally.

The Mission Statement

Once the vision statement is written, do a similar exercise to produce a mission statement.

Remember, a mission statement briefly describes *why* the organization exists. Vision and mission statements are the cornerstones of decision-making. I used to work for a pediatric hospital, and the mission was, "*We will do what is right for kids.*" It is simply stated, but it is very powerful in the boardroom. When challenged with tough questions, senior leadership would ask: Is this decision in the best interest of the kids we serve? This tool helps keep the organization focused on its priorities.

- While in the same teams, spend 20-30 minutes writing down descriptive words for why the church exists.
- After all the teams have written their ideas on the flip chart, each team presents its ideas to the whole group.
- Using one flip chart, combine ideas and begin *wordsmithing* the ideas until the group creates a short phrase that reflects all ideas.
- Have all the teams read the final statements and come to an agreement that the phrase truly reflects the mission of the church and why it exists.

The Values Statement

Once there is a vision and mission statement, break the group into teams again and allow them 20 minutes or so to list values (value = a principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desirable) of the organization. Remember, these will become shared values or principles that the organization operates by.

- Once each team has its list, have them present it to the entire group. Combine ideas and refine them into one list. There are usually a lot of ideas that overlap (which is a good thing).
- Ideally, a list of values should be 5-10 words. The goal is for people who align themselves with the organization to be able to simply memorize the vision, mission, and values. The more concise, the better.

Once the vision, mission, and values statement is finalized. Discuss a communication plan with members, volunteers, and employees. Invest in some frames and display the statement in visible areas of the building, on the church website, and on other printed materials.

That wasn't so difficult, was it? Many churches and nonprofit organizations fail to develop a vision, mission, and values statement because the process scares them, but with the right people in the room, it can be done in a few hours.

Once a Vision, Mission, and Values statement is written, the strategic planning process can begin!