

growing ministry together: DIRECTION

How is your church developing a vision that inspires participation?

Bible texts:

'Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it.' Habakkuk 2.2 (NRSV)

'He armed each of them not so much with confidence in shields and spears as with the inspiration of brave words, and he cheered them all by relating a dream, a sort of vision, which was worthy of belief.'
2 Maccabees 15.11(NRSV)

Where there's no vision, the people perish... Proverbs 29:18 (NRSV)

But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6.33 (NRSV)

Comment

Christian communities need to know they are heading in an understandable direction, to discern what God is already doing in their midst and fanning the flames. If they have a shared sense of purpose- what God is wanting them to be and do, it helps them to make sense of their lives- individually and corporately. More than this, if the direction is inspiring and compelling, people will want to contribute more energetically. They are prepared to invest themselves and even take risks. It is not what a vision says that is important; it is what a vision does.

Story

Visiting a small local church I asked someone in the congregation what their mission statement was. They scratched their head and said they forgot, but it was good. Does it help your church to grow I asked. They replied, 'Don't know about that, but it helps to keep the Vicar happy. That's what we are here to do!'

Going deeper

- Does your church's vision or direction inspire people's fuller participation? Do people know what the church stands for? Do you want to be part of what is going on?
- Is your church's direction more:
 - about hope for the future or preservation of the past?
 - about mission or maintenance?
 - about growing or coasting?
 - general or focussed on particular actions?
 - shared widely or known only by a few?
 - about what you don't have or what you do have?
- What would it take to for your vision to enthuse people more?

Prioritising

How important is 'direction' to your church now?

Action planning options

- Have a time of prayer thanking God for his guidance in the past and seeking his vision for your future
- Plan a church vision day using the mission action planning (MAPing) cycle or the 'Angel of the church' healthy church exercise
- Invite the local community to engage with questions about the role of the church in the community
- Think how your Annual Parochial Church Meeting reviews the past year and prioritises for the future
- Find out more about the locality your church serves and explore what ways you might meet their needs more fully

Resources for action planning options (see web link below)

- Planning a church vision event using the mission action planning (MAPing) cycle, to 'review, choose, plan and act' or the 'Angel of the church' healthy church exercise.
- Invite the local community to respond to questions about the role of the church in the community. Contact Caroline Pinchbeck, Communities and Partnership Executive Officer and Rural Life Advisor 01227 459401 cpinchbeck@diocant.org for examples of how this has been done in other communities both rural, suburban and urban.
- Think how your APCM can not only review the past discerning God's hand, but also sets direction for the future. See the sample outline of how it has been done in one church online.
- Find out more about the locality your church serves and explore what ways you might meet their needs more fully eg. through databases and community based organisations which have information about poverty indicators, age profiles, educational needs, social service needs, etc. Contact Caroline Pinchbeck.

For further resources see: www.canterburydiocese.org/growingministrytogether