

STRATEGIC MINISTRY PLANNING

SO YOUR CHURCH WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

“HOW TO BE A GOOD FARMER—EVEN IN A CITY: CREATING A COMMUNITY-BASED MINISTRY” APPEARED IN THE JANUARY – MARCH 2011 *ELDER’S DIGEST*. THAT ARTICLE PROPOSED “TEN FARMING COMMANDMENTS” WHICH SYSTEMATIZED JESUS’ MINISTRY METHOD INTO 10 INTENTIONAL ACTION STEPS FOR OUR TIME¹ AND SERVED AS AN INTRODUCTION TO A SERIES OF *ELDER’S DIGEST* ARTICLES IN THE COMING MONTHS THAT WOULD UNPACK THESE 10 COMMANDMENTS IN MORE DETAIL.² BELOW IS THE SEVENTH IN THE SERIES. THIS ARTICLE WILL FOCUS ON THE NINTH “FARMING COMMANDMENT.”

They all must go to the mountain, not just Moses.

A prominent theory about church leadership is that pastors go up the mountain, meet God, and receive a vision about the future plans of their church. Then they come down from the mountain and share this vision with their congregation—what we could call “the Moses model.” Is this the way to develop the vision and ministry plan for your congregation?

No.

It’s important that a church’s mission and plans not rest solely on the pastor. Pastors come and go. Of course, the pastor should have a vision and some ideas to share with his/her church about where God is leading them. But the church members and leaders, not just the pastor, must give input into the vision for the church’s ministry, worship, and impact on its community. They all must go to the mountain, not just Moses.

Such was the experience of church leaders in the Church of the Advent Hope in New York City. Pastor Todd Stout, pastor of Advent Hope, literally took his church leaders to a mountain for a leadership retreat. There on the mountain they all dreamed and planned for their church’s future and their church’s strategic plan. The church didn’t just send “Moses” (the pastor or presiding elder) there. Pastor Stout said, “When you learn that God is impressing your leaders and your members with the same ideas He’s laying on your heart, you come to trust that His plans are bigger than any one person or one pastor.”³

In contrast, a leader from another church in another conference asked their new pastor, who hadn’t settled in yet, “Pastor, what is *your* plan for our church?”

In which church would you prefer to be an elder?

Pastor Stout and his church members demonstrated Farming Commandment #9: “*Thou shalt develop a church strategic plan for church community involvement based on the felt community needs thou has discovered and the resources and dreams of thy church.*” If you have fulfilled Commandments one through eight,⁴ you are ready for this ninth commandment—an important next step. Why? “Assessment without action is hypocrisy!”⁵

A strategic plan is your church’s big picture. It’s like a map. Even God has a strategic plan (e.g. Matt. 25:34; 1 Pet. 1:19, 20, etc.). A recipe for a church strategic plan is as follows: (1) Input from biblical principles; (2) Input from the community; (3) Input from the congregation.⁶

Previous *Elder’s Digest* articles have explained the first two items in the recipe. The third item—input from your congregation—will happen if they “go to the mountain” with



“Moses” and dream/vision together what your church will be like five years in the future. Dream big—so big that you wouldn’t be able to accomplish it without Him.

Here is a process sequence compiled from other churches that have gathered strategic plan ideas from their congregations:

1. To discover the vision that is already there, and to insure that all church members have opportunity to give input, survey your church members, either in person, or with a mailed written survey, by asking them the following three questions from a process known as “Appreciative Inquiry.”⁷

- Think back at the most energizing and life-giving experiences that you have ever had in relation to the Adventist Church. What was going on in your life and in the church?
- What do you appreciate most about (your church’s name) and how does it contribute to your spiritual walk?
- What improvements would I like to see? (No negatives). What will that improvement look like?

2. Commission your **Social Action Leadership Team (SALT)** to create a document, which integrates data/ideas from your congregation’s Appreciative Inquiry Survey with data from your Community Assessment. Insert the comments word for word under each question in the Appreciative Inquiry Survey and the Community Assessment interviews.

3. Call a business meeting with no other agenda but brainstorming for the 5-year strategic plan (1-1/2 hour limit). Result: Additional raw ideas for the strategic plan. (Interaction with the whole group is important—stimulating responses beyond filling out a written survey).

4. Here is a suggested devotional for the beginning of your business meeting. Read Acts 2:41-47 and find the following core values of church mission from the early church:

- Worship (vs. 42, 43, 46, 47)
- Fellowship (vs. 42, 44-46)
- Community Services (v. 45)
- Reaping (vs. 41, 47)
- Discipleship (v. 42)

5. Invite the group to share additional ideas to fit those core values. Write down ideas for all to see, as well as having someone take notes.

6. Because we live in an imperfect world—expect the unexpected. Therefore, do a SWOT analysis to list **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats in your local situation that will help or hinder your dreams for the next five years.

7. Add the business meeting ideas to the document the **SALT** started compiling.

8. Categorize all the data under the core values of the early church listed in suggestion #4 and share the ideas with various departments of the local church, e.g. Personal Ministries, Sabbath School, Elders, Youth, etc.

9. The Church Board should prioritize the final ideas after the church departments have evaluated what relates to

them, and the **SALT** should then create a draft of the actual strategic plan document. Note: In addition to organizing the ideas by the five core values, an effective way to organize *implementation* of your strategic plan is use the Logic Model.⁸ Suggestion: Use the “Church Strategic Planning Process—Worksheet” at the end of this article to help with writing out your plan.

10. Create a budget to finance the plan.

11. Bring the resulting strategic plan document to the church in business session and vote approval.

12. The Church Board should track the plan at least quarterly.

13. On the first anniversary of the voting of the strategic plan, re-access its relevancy. Be continually aware of societal changes in your community and be willing to adjust accordingly. Call a general business meeting to review what has been accomplished in Year 1 of the strategic plan. Plans for Year 2 should be confirmed or modified depending on progress of Year 1. Brainstorming should then take place for a new Year 5 (Year 6). Vote adjustments as needed, and add to strategic plan document.

14. Bring the results of the business meeting to the board for approval and budgeting.

15. Allow for and seek after divine intervention in the plan. It is not to be rigid. This is God’s plan, and its users should cooperate with His leading.

16. Continue the annual review cycle of the strategic plan until the Lord comes.⁹

Has your church gone to the mountain with “Moses” yet?

CHURCH STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS WORK-SHEET

Planning Elements/Preparation:

1. Pray and study Jesus’ method.
2. Study Community – *Needs Assessment*: (a) Map work—determine territory; (b) Walking/Windshield Survey; (c) Demographics; (d) Interview Community Leaders.
3. Study Congregation – *Appreciative Inquiry*: (a) Remember spiritual high points; (b) What do I appreciate most about my church?; (c) What improvements? (No negatives).
4. Organize ideas by *Acts 2:41-47 Core Values* ([1st column] Worship + Discipleship + Fellowship + Community Services + Reaping = Church Mission/Evangelism).
5. To implement plan ideas, follow Logic Model (rows): *Input* (money, staff, volunteer time, etc.); *Activities* (goals-programs, services); *Output* (objectives-how many activities/programs, how often - quantitative); *Outcomes* (the results of the services for individuals); *Impact* (immediate organizational change & long-term community results of services - qualitative).

WORSHIP				
Impact <i>Sample Entry: Local church center of dynamic worship /spiritual growth...</i>	Outcome <i>Sample Entry: Each member experiences closeness with God, with no distractions...</i>	Activities <i>Sample Entry: Spirit-filled, Christ-centered preaching Small groups...</i>	Output <i>Sample Entry: 10 small groups that meet for weekly worship/Bible study...</i>	Input <i>Sample Entry: Finances for new hymnals... Small group leaders...</i>
DISCIPLESHIP				
Impact <i>Sample Entry: A church with a high member retention rate...</i>	Outcome <i>Sample Entry: Each member growing spiritually & following Jesus in the real world...</i>	Activities <i>Sample Entry: Visit missing members Spiritual gifts found and applied...</i>	Output <i>Sample Entry: All elders visit one member/week Two spiritual gifts classes/year...</i>	Input <i>Sample Entry: Educational/ equipping materials for discipling Financial support...</i>
FELLOWSHIP				
Impact <i>Sample Entry: A warm, friendly church that lowers apostasy and attracts new people...</i>	Outcome <i>Sample Entry: Individual members have no desire to drop out, and feel supported...</i>	Activities <i>Sample Entry: Church socials Church member assigned to befriend each new member...</i>	Output <i>Sample Entry: Six socials/year Fellowship dinner each Sabbath...</i>	Input <i>Sample Entry: Social committee Food for meals Scheduled time in church calendar...</i>
COMMUNITY SERVICES				
Impact <i>Sample Entry: Unemployment decreased...</i>	Outcome <i>Sample Entry: People get and sustain a job; self-image/worth improves...</i>	Activities <i>Sample Entry: Hold job-skills classes...</i>	Output <i>Sample Entry: Two classes with 10 students each/ week...</i>	Input <i>Sample Entry: Financial Resources Teachers for classes...</i>
REAPING				
Impact <i>Sample Entry: Community experience abundant life in Jesus—improved environment, relationships improve, less crime, etc. ...</i>	Outcome <i>Sample Entry: Individuals experience improved spiritual, physical and mental health...</i>	Activities <i>Sample Entry: Hold Bible-based evangelistic meetings in context of holistic, cyclical evangelism. Church members give Bible studies...</i>	Output <i>Sample Entry: Two reaping meetings/year Two classes/year for equipping church members to give Bible studies...</i>	Input <i>Sample Entry: Supplies for reaping meetings Interest coordinator to maintain data base of interests...</i>

¹ The 10 Farming Commandments are: (1) Thou shalt study Jesus' ministry method and pray for...; (2) Thou shalt assess the resources in thy church; (3) Thou shalt establish a Social Action Leadership Team (SALT); (4) Thou shalt choose and narrow down thy territory; (5) Thou shalt do a demographic analysis on the chosen territory; (6) Thou shalt drive or walk around the chosen territory and note the homes, businesses, churches, people, etc.; (7) Thou shalt talk to community leaders and business people to discover community needs as they see them; (8) Thou shalt earn "Social Capital;" (9) Thou shalt develop a church strategic plan for church community involvement based on the felt community needs thou has discovered and the resources and dreams of thy church; (10) Thou shalt look for ways that God is already working in thy community. Celebrate, acknowledge, cooperate.... AND an 11th Commandment: Thou shalt not ignore commandments 1-10, and thou shalt remember to Reap where thou hast farmed and keep what thou doest reap (disciple—preserve the harvest)!

² So far, these follow-up articles have appeared in *Elder's Digest*: (1) "Once a Month Jesus Comes and Holds My Hand..." (Oct.-Dec. 2011); (2) "Our Community Does Not Know Us..." (Jan.-March 2012); (3) "Help, Lord! I've Been Asked to Plant a Church!" (July-Sept. 2012); (4) "As I Walked Around and Looked Carefully. . ." (Jan.-March 2013); "You're the First Church That Ever Asked..." (July-Sept. 2013); and "We Can't Afford Not to Have Someone Like This in Our Community..." (Oct.-Dec. 2013). To access these articles online, go to www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org. Click on Adventist Community Services, and "Articles & Media." To access a comprehensive curriculum about community outreach, click on "Resources" and "ICM Community Services & Urban Ministry Certification Program Curriculum." For a direct link, go to www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acs_iicm.

³ See Mark A. Kellner, "Hope in Manhattan: Leaning Toward the Future" *Adventist Review*, November 25, 2010. To access this article go to: <http://www.adventistreview.org/article/3947/archives/issue-2010-1538/hope-in-manhattan/leaning-toward-the-future>.

⁴ See footnote 1.

⁵ Quote by Minnie McNeil.

⁶ Graphic is from www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acs_iicm - CS 04 Ministry Development and Strategic Planning.

⁷ For more information, Google "Appreciative Inquiry." (Appreciative Inquiry focuses on building on strengths instead of merely focusing on solving problems. That's the reason for the first two questions).

⁸ For info on the logic model, Google "Logic Model" or "Kellogg Logic Model." When using this model, it's best to consider Impact and Outcome first, and then the Activities, Output, and Input to make it all happen.

⁹ For more on church strategic planning go to www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/acs_iicm and consult CS 03 Performance Measurement for Effective Ministry, and CS 04 Ministry Development and Strategic Planning.

The next article in the series will discuss the tenth "Farming Commandment."

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