

Strategies for Effective Pastoral Ministry

Mission and Money Go Together!

I miss teaching confirmation! One particular Wednesday evening I was drawing a connection between the 10 Commandments (which focus primarily on what we should not do) and the 2 Great Commandments (which focus infinitely on what we should do). I wondered aloud which set of commandments was harder to keep. Naturally, the class concluded ten “laws” are a lot more to remember than two “loves.” But one insightful kid stood up and said, *“Wait a minute! There is no end to the expectation of loving God, neighbor and self. That’s way harder than following ten rules! Wow, Jesus took this mission really seriously!”*

Indeed Jesus understood his mission very clearly, and so should we. We who lead congregations are called to continually ask, “What is our purpose?” Every four or five years, it is healthy and necessary to steer our leadership bodies back to the foundational question, “What is our mission?” My reading of the Gospel tells me that Jesus’ mission was rooted in the Great Commandments, and his vision was very clear – tell the story and care for all God’s people. He articulated these two goals through the Great Commission in Matthew 28 (go forth making disciples) and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (just as you do to the least of these you do unto me).

Think of the **Mission** as a congregation’s overall calling, and the **Vision** as the specific goals that you plan to work toward over the next few years. Our new Wisconsin Conference Mission and Vision statement also includes some **Value** statements, which reflect *how* we will BE THE CHURCH. In one sense, everything we do ought to reflect the mission of the organization and the pursuit of our vision. Sometimes it’s helpful to reflect on this by asking these two questions, “What should we stop doing?” and “What should we start doing?”

Some congregations face significant challenge and conflict because their mission and money are managed by two different committees. For example, a Church Council might establish a wonderful mission for the church with very specific vision plans, only to discover the Trustees (who hold the purse) aren’t willing to fund it because they have other priorities. Fixing this problem often requires changes to our church constitutions, but it’s worth considering. If the leadership body has no fiduciary freedom, its hands are tied. Mission and money go together!

These days many congregations feel increasingly trapped by the costs of maintaining buildings and budgets. Our counter intuitive Gospel calling is to prioritize our mission in this world, and to give it sufficient energy, passion and funding. Developing a Mission statement can help crystalize our calling. Engaging in a strategic planning process can serve as a catalyst for shifting a congregation’s primary focus from maintenance to mission.

Please share your thoughts on my [blog](#).

Blessings,

Franz