



Making Mission Possible

FROM VISION TO REALITY

NOVEMBER 2025
CPAS Online Training

DISCOVERING WHERE GOD IS
GOING AND JOINING IN

WELCOME

Great to be with you for this one off session **'From Vision to Reality'**. If there is anything we can do to help the day go better for you please ask.

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GUIDELINES FOR GOOD ENGAGEMENT

- **Learning together** We are all here to learn from God and one another. **Adopt a learning posture.**
- **Presence** It is easy to be physically present but actually absent. We find it helpful to suggest laying aside phones/devices and closing down any other programmes so that we can **be fully present with one another**. Also, let's honour and value one another by not arriving late or skipping off early.
- **Participate** Share your thoughts, insights and questions. Listen carefully to what others say. **Have an enquiring mind.** You'll get the most out of it if you do.
- **Confidentiality** What is said on the call cannot be shared outside the call when attributed to anyone in the call. That makes it a safe place for us to be honest and share more deeply. **Choose honesty and openness.**
- **Reality check** It is always easy to become disconnected from reality in a training session, so please keep us connected with reality by taking us back to how things really are on the ground. **Keep grounded.**
- **Next step** We will cover a lot of ground, but throughout our time together **be attentive** to what might be your next step following this session. We will give you a chance to identify that at the end.



TIMINGS

09.30 Session 1
10.30 Coffee
10.50 Session 2
11.40 Session 3
12.30 End

Timings are for guidance only, apart from the end time.

LEAD ON

Sign up today for a free monthly email with articles, resource recommendations and reviews for anyone interested in improving their leadership. Either scan the QR code below or sign up at www.cpas.org.uk/leadon



CONTACT DETAILS

CPAS
Sovereign Court One (Unit 3),
Sir William Lyons Road, COVENTRY
CV4 7EZ
T. 0300 123 0780
E. mhogg@cpas.org.uk



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LEADERSHIP AND VISION

- Leadership means route, way, path in Anglo-Saxon.



- John 10 'the good shepherd'.



True discernment means not only distinguishing the right from the wrong; it means distinguishing the primary from the secondary, the essential from the indifferent, and the permanent from the transient. And, yes, it means distinguishing between the good and the better, and even between the better and the best.'

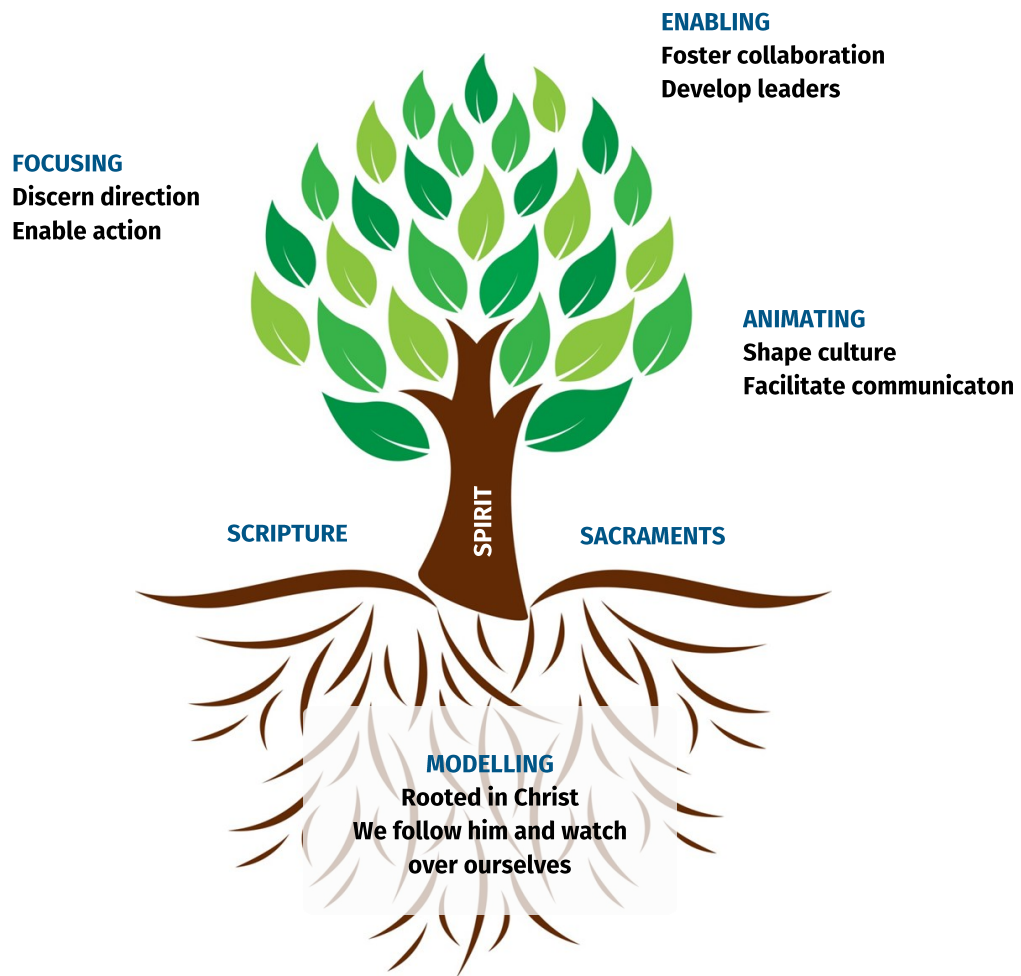
[Sinclair Ferguson](#)



EXERCISE

- Where have you seen leadership that has moved something on?
- What were some of the benefits of such leadership?

Responsibilities of Leadership



‘There is no shortage of vision. The challenge of leadership is to gather all the vision from inside and outside the organisation, extract the best that matches the purpose, and then craft a vision statement that will unite the people in moving forward toward the common goal and a more desirable future.’

Leith Anderson

Introduction

There are certain things that are required of good leadership. This diagram identifies seven main areas, each of which contain a range of things that need to be done. Obviously no one leader will be expert in all these areas, that is why leading with others is so important, but it is the responsibility of those who are in overall leadership to ensure these things happen for effective leadership to occur.

Modelling: Rooted in Christ we Follow Him and Watch Over Ourselves

This is at the heart of our understanding of Christian leadership. In Acts 20:28 Paul says to the elders at Miletus 'Keep watch over yourselves and over all your flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.' Keeping watch over ourselves involves being rooted in Christ, allowing Christ to shape our character and form our priorities. Christian leaders are first and foremost followers. This is worked out in modelling behaviour, clarifying values, and inspiring trust through self-leadership and ongoing transformation into Christ-likeness:

- We grow as a disciple in relation to God, rooting ourselves in him, abiding in him (John 15:1-4), exercising spiritual disciplines. Good leaders are secure in who they are in Christ.
- We grow as a leader in orderliness (diary, desk, computer, time keeping, preparation), decision making, energy management (health, diet, sleep, exercise, stress), embodying values, handling failure and criticism, receiving feedback, growing self-awareness, personal development and accountability (mentor, spiritual director, peer group).

Focusing: Discern Direction

Leadership is about going somewhere, and it is the responsibility of those who lead to help God's people discern God's direction for the future. This may be at the micro-level (Acts 6:1-7 how the ministry is organised for the future growth of the church) or at the macro-level (Acts 11:19-30 how the wider picture of what God was doing determined the future actions of the disciples). Prayer, creative thinking, wise innovation, and taking initiative are important parts of the discerning process. For the leadership of churches today it involves:

- Clarifying the identity (who are we?) and mission (why does the church exist?) of the church. Without clarity at this level it is very difficult to progress to the next level of discerning direction.
- Identifying a process that involves people and leads to ownership of the outcome.
- Overseeing the process through to a conclusion.

Focusing: Enable Action

Vision needs to be implemented through appropriate action. Without this ideas aren't turned into action. The scary statistic is that 60% of visions aren't acted upon. Nehemiah provides a good case study of someone who saw clearly what needed to be done (1:1-11) and then planned carefully how to do something about it (2:1-16). Then he shares the vision with others (2:17-18), oversees the work (3:1-32), and changes his plans according to situations he encounters (4:1-23). It involves leadership in:

Capturing the big picture in practical next steps.

- Constantly communicating the vision so that it is known, owned, shared and acted upon.
- Ensuring action takes place through four key skills: culture creation, problem solving, managing change, and handling conflict.
- Celebrating things that take you in God's direction.
- Changing the direction through evaluation (involving feedback, review, and revision), experimentation and contingency planning.



Enabling: Foster Collaboration

In the New Testament all the references to leadership except two are in the plural. Christian leadership is not meant to be a solo operation, but a collaborative endeavour where the gifts complement and balance one another. Theologically this corporateness reflects the nature of the body of Christ and of God himself as Trinity. Therefore a priority of those in leadership is to lead with others by fostering collaboration. This involves:

- Modelling collaborative leadership at the heart of the church's life.
- Developing teams where they are appropriate.

Enabling: Develop Leaders

In order for the ministry to flourish leaders need to choose today's leaders and develop tomorrow's. Otherwise the work is limited to those already involved in leadership and there is no succession process. Jesus draws around him a variety of different groups whom he invests in (the twelve in Luke 6, a wider group in Luke 8, the seventy in Luke 10). This involves:

- Identifying both emerging and existing leaders through helping people discern God's call and their talents, spiritual gifts, passions, temperament.
- Investing in them through both generic and specific leadership training that develops them in a Christ-centred leadership.
- Entrusting them with leadership responsibility appropriate for their age and stage.
- Resourcing them through line-management, training, mentoring, appraisal.

Animating: Shape Culture

Leaders are 'cultural architects', shaping the environment in which everything happens. For Christian leaders this is a gospel and kingdom culture, where the values of the kingdom are central to how we operate as God's people. Culture change isn't easy, but it is part of leadership. It involves:

- Identifying values that we want to positively influence behaviours.
- Modelling the culture we want to see.
- Affirming (through stories, symbols and celebrations) behaviour that reflects the culture.

Animating: Facilitate Communication

Little happens in leadership without communication, everything from public proclamation of God's word to a congregation through to one-to-one listening to a frustrated individual. In Acts we see instances of great communication (Acts 2:14-41) and examples of where communication went wrong (Acts 15:36-41). Effective leadership is exercised through careful communication which involves:

- Active listening through asking great questions.
- Public speaking through preaching, teaching, training, and leading meetings.
- Written communication.
- Negotiating for oneself and mediating for others.
- Networking for constituency building.

Context: Resources: Focus and Fruit

Four further factors influence leadership responsibility.

1. **Context** Who is responsible for what? For leadership to be effective it needs appropriate and clear structures. In an Anglican context clarity about how the minister relates to the Church Wardens, PCC, (and

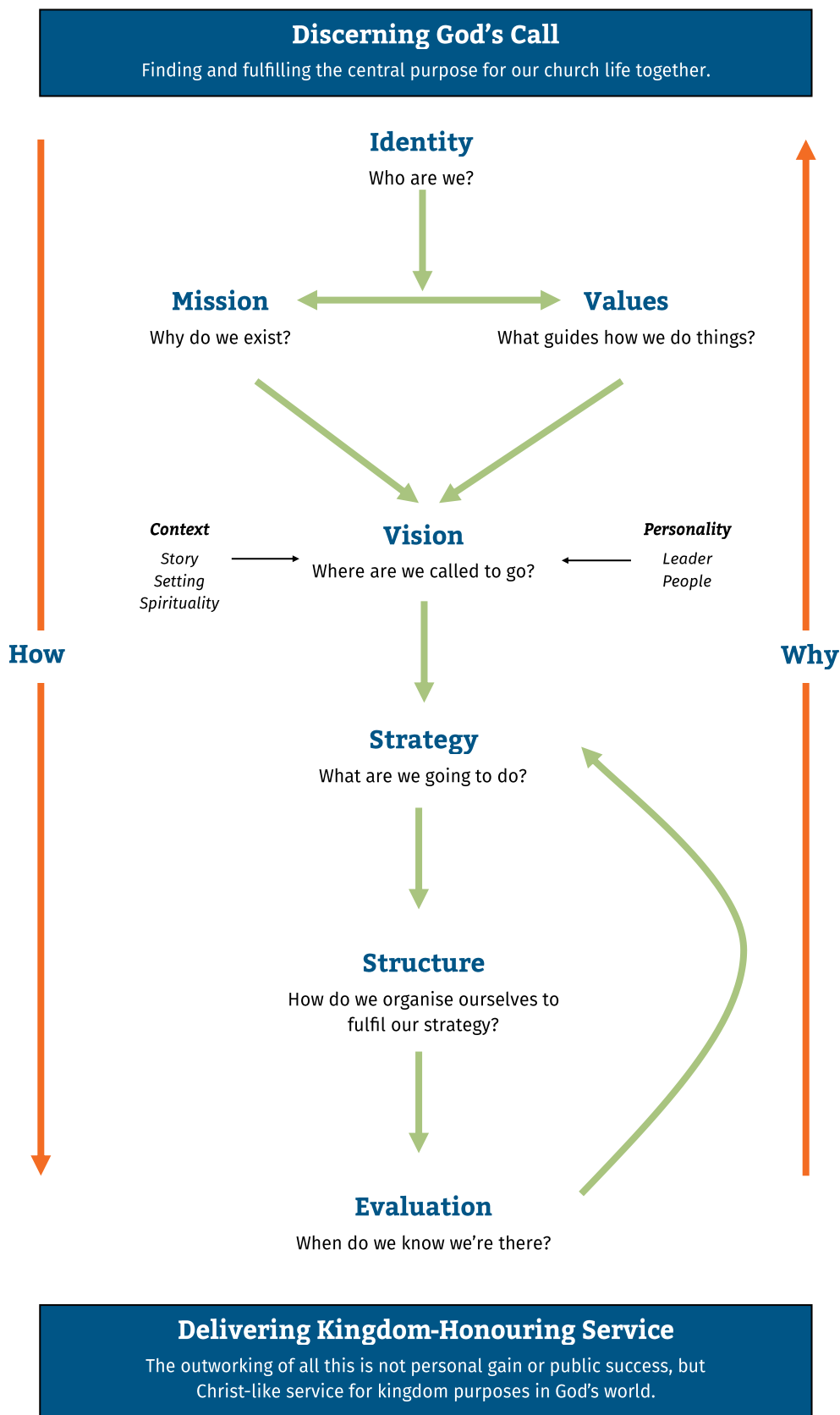
possibly other staff, a leadership team, other types of leaders) is vital in determining the effectiveness of leadership.

2. **Resources** What are the primary resources for those in Christian leadership? Throughout Church history the three primary resources have been **faithful engagement with the Scriptures** as God's word, **prayerful dependence on the Spirit** as God's empowering presence, and **consistent celebration of the sacraments** as God's nurturing provision. Christian leaders do not decide for themselves what they do, the Scriptures inform them of God's purposes for his people. Nor do they depend on themselves for the strength to lead, the Holy Spirit equips and empowers God's people for God's work, commissioned and nurtured by the sacraments.
3. **Focus** Why do Christian leaders do these things? Not because they want to look good as leaders. Leadership is never an end in itself in the Bible, it is a means to a greater end. Leaders are called to be servants, serving the priorities of the King and the purposes of the kingdom. The gift of leadership in Romans 12:8 is given to enable the body to function well, so that the body may be about its master's work – helping people come to know Christ and transforming the world.
4. **Fruit** A healthy leadership tree produces foliage and fruit that is in line with the identity of the tree. The Church is the body of Christ, it exists to continue the mission and ministry of Christ on earth today. So a church will look for fruit in a number of areas:
 - The fruit of the Spirit in the lives of the leaders.
 - The fruit of people being formed as whole life disciples.
 - The fruit of a community of believers living by the 'one anothers' of the New Testament.
 - The fruit of transformed homes, organisations, communities and countries to be a little more kingdom like as we seek to salt and light in every context we find ourselves.



WHAT IS VISION AND WHY IT MATTERS

A Framework to Help Us Understand Vision.



A Summary of Definitions

IDENTITY

- Answers the question, 'who are we?'
- Helps shape belonging and involvement.
- For a church its identity is given by Christ. We're the body of Christ.

MISSION

- Answers the question, 'why do we exist?'
- It is an enduring statement that doesn't change. God decides the mission of a church (great commandment and great commission).
- Likely to be a short statement, and may be captured in a short pithy slogan or strap line.
- Mission needs to have a sense of 'oomph' about it.

VALUES

- Answer the question, 'what guides how we do things?' i.e. we're committed to doing things...
- Helps define distinctives. Values are what drive us on.
- Likely to be several of them, probably around 4-6 in number.
- Values need to have a sense of 'aha' about them.

VISION

- Answers the question, 'where are we called to go?'
- It is always future oriented. It needs to include destination, be clear, compelling and capturing. Vision often uses a refrain or a mental image, or a word picture to capture the imagination.
- It will be longer than the mission statement, and not a slogan.
- It will change as the circumstances of the organisation/church and character of individuals change, and as the vision is realised.
- It needs a time frame, probably 1-3 years, 3-5 years, or 5-10 years. However, after one year the vision will need to be reviewed and refined because of changing circumstances.
- Vision needs to have a sense of 'WOW'. It is likely to be faith stretching.

STRATEGY

- Answers the question, 'what are we going to do?'
- Or 'how do we intend to realise the vision in a way that fulfils our mission and values? What areas of our activity will need to change?'
- It will involve an action plan with some carefully identified goals.

STRUCTURE

- Answers the question, 'how do we organise ourselves to fulfil our mission'.
- Structures need to serve strategies, not maintain the status quo.

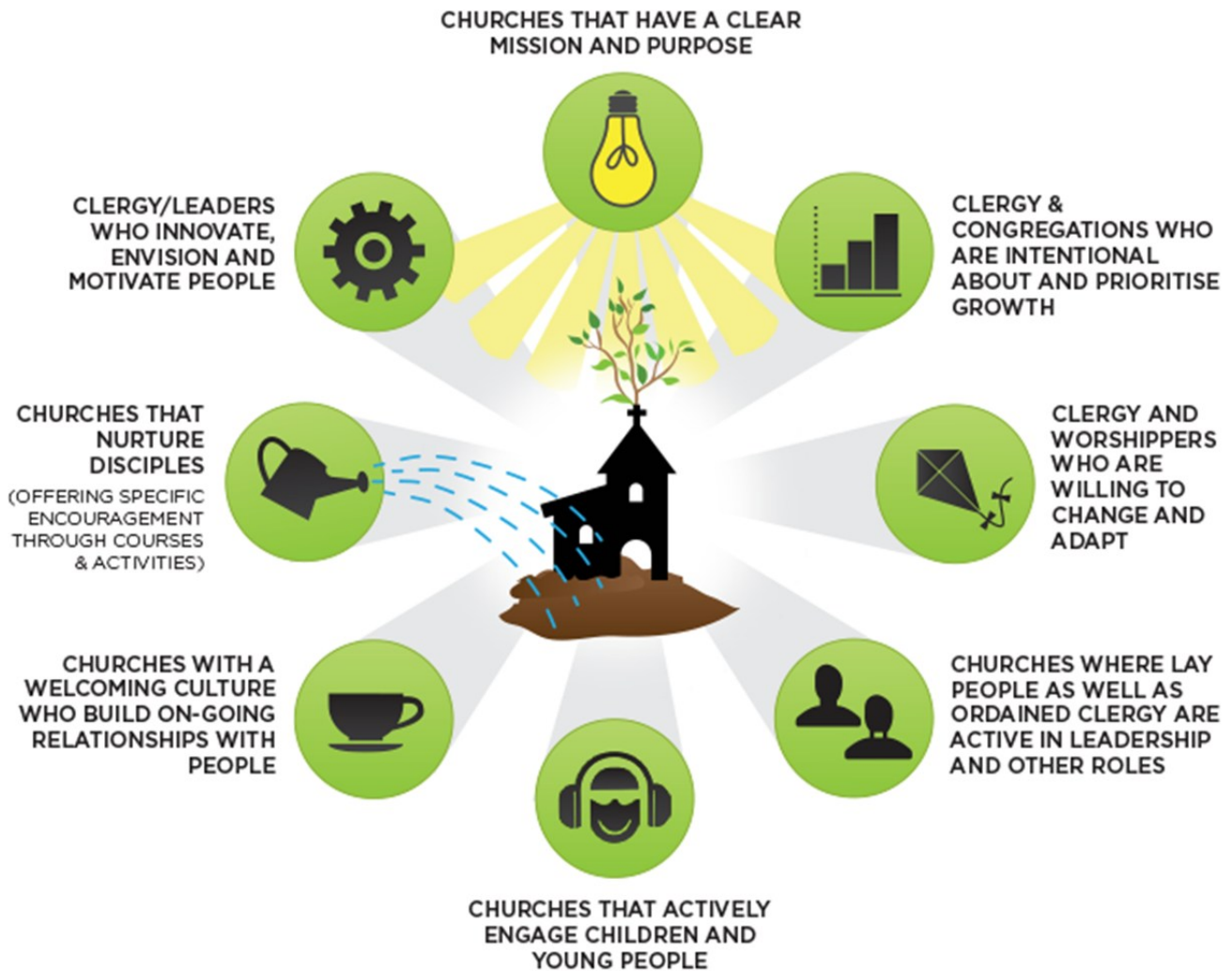
EVALUATION

- Answers the question, 'when do we know we're there?'
- Enables people and organisation to learn, develop, improve, grow.

Why do we need it?

Research shows churches with a clear sense of direction are more likely to grow.
Vision leaks.

GROWING CHURCHES HAVE THESE COMMON FEATURES



From Anecdote to Evidence, Church of England report, 2014.

‘...the process is best seen as very simple. At the heart of any process of defining, refining and communicating vision is this simple dynamic of comparing reality with an emerging ideal.’

Steve Croft

6 THINGS ABOUT VISION

1. Generates momentum.

2. Nurtures hope.

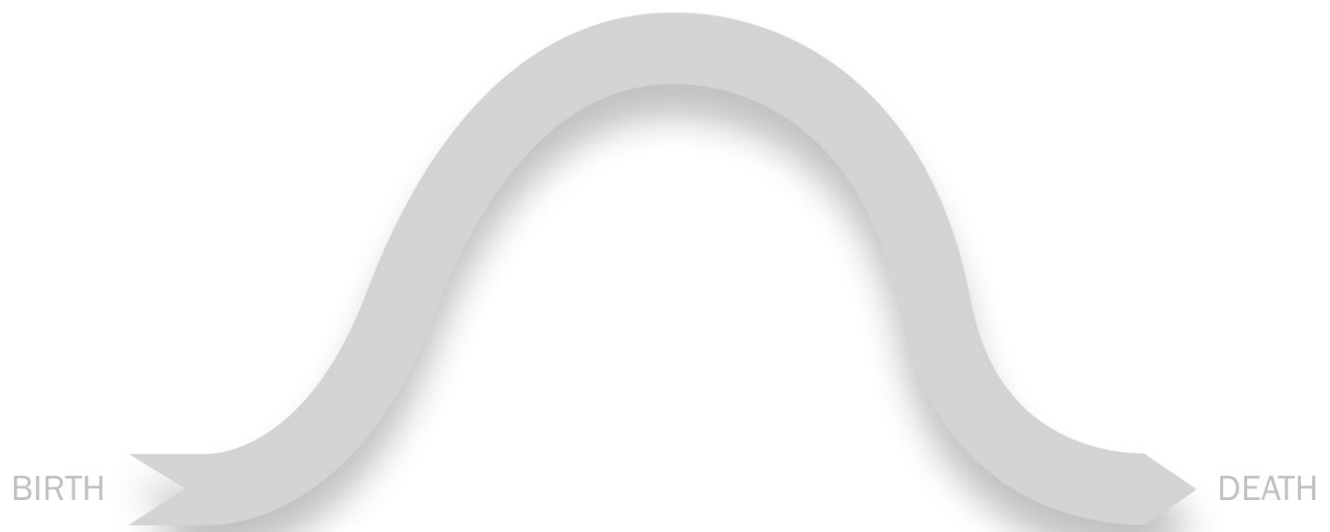
3. Sets protection.

4. Provides clarity.

5. Creates ownership.

6. Provides focus.





EXERCISE

- Where are you on the curve?
- What has taken you to that place?
- What do you need to give attention to at this stage?

DISCERNING DIRECTION

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

When thinking about a discernment season it helps to ask some questions.

- Is this the right step for us?
- What approach are we going to use?
- Who are we going to involve?
- How far ahead are we looking?
- How long will we spend?
- What resources will we use?
- What are we aiming to produce as a result of this process?
- How will we pray?



Differing approaches

APPROACH 1: SIMPLE

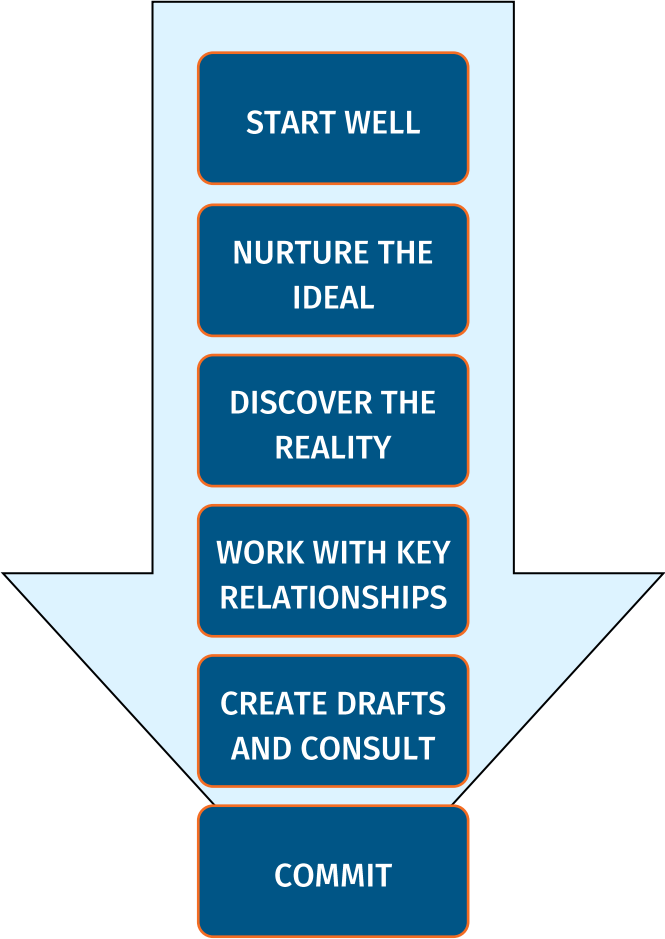
Ask some questions. 'Where do we see God at work?' 'Where might God want us to be in three years time?' 'What could we do to serve our community well?'

- Ask people in casual conversation.
- Ask everyone to pray, think and listen attentively.
- Ask those in leadership with you.



‘...the process is best seen as very simple. At the heart of any process of defining, refining and communicating vision is this simple dynamic of comparing reality with an emerging ideal.’

Steve Croft



‘Historians tend to write about great leaders as if they possessed a transcendent genius, as if they were capable of creating their vision out of some mysterious inner source... it usually turns out that the vision did not originate with the leader personally, but rather from others.’
Warren Bennis

Staged Approach

Step 1: Start Well

- Discern your role as leader.
- Engage others and decide your approach.
- Ask preliminary questions.

Step 2: Nurture the Ideal

THROUGH ENGAGING WITH GOD'S WORD

A variety of ways:

- PCC/leadership group study.
- Teaching series.
- Small group material.
- Children's and youth material.
- Daily verse/thought sent out as text/tweet.
- Blog with comments.
- Lent course.

A number of possible themes:

- Biblical theology.
- Christ's ministry.
- Examples of New Testament churches.
- The commands of Christ.
- Images of the church.

THROUGH IMAGINING A BETTER FUTURE

- Simply ask 'what if...?' What if the vision was fulfilled? What if it really worked? What would it look like tomorrow, next year, a decade from now?
- Gather a group of people and ask them to describe their organisation/church/youth work as a colour, an animal and a simile. Get them to do the same exercise for their best experience of organisation/church/youth work, and for their perception of what the organisation/church should be like.
- Imagine in three years time the local newspaper has heard so much about what is happening it wants to write an article on your organisation/church/youth work. What do you think God would like to read as the headlines? Now write the article.
- Imagine you're delivering a leaflet about your church to every home in the area in three years time. Design the leaflet, draw the photos, and write the content.
- Imagine writing a book of the life of your organisation/church/youth work, and identify the chapter headings so far. What are the next four chapter headings covering the next three years?

Step 3: Discover the Reality

- Become one of your 'shop floor' people for a week.

View everything from their perspective.

- Conduct a questionnaire of three groups of people, leaders within the organisation/church, members/employees of the organisation/church, and the community you serve.
- Invite someone within the community who knows nothing about your church to come along on a Sunday morning and give you honest feedback on the experience.
- As a leadership team select six people from the organisation/congregation who are slightly on the fringes, and ask them to share their views about things – include children and young people!
- Buy copies of the local newspaper and over six weeks identify the common issues raised that are concerns for the community.
- Purchase a church audit resource and systematically work through it. For example Natural Church Development (www.ncd-uk.com and www.ncd-international.org), Healthy Churches Handbook (Robert Warren, published by CHP), Reveal (www.revealnow.com), Purpose Driven Church (www.purposedriven.co.uk).
- Invite a consultant to come in and conduct an audit process (for example John Truscott www.john-truscott.co.uk, Bryn Hughes bryn@church-matters.freesevice.co.uk).
- Ask good questions of everyone. For example send out an email to everyone involved in your church asking them to reply (placing copies at the back of church for those who aren't on email). Or use an internet based survey approach like www.surveymonkey.com. Questions could include:
 - ⇒ What limits our growth?
 - ⇒ What's most important?
 - ⇒ Who are our heroes?
 - ⇒ What would be unthinkable?
 - ⇒ What advice would you give to the leadership at this time?
 - ⇒ What's an unspoken value?
 - ⇒ How would you describe our financial giving?
 - ⇒ How would you describe our facilities?
 - ⇒ How would you describe our spiritual health?
 - ⇒ How would you describe our emotional state?
 - ⇒ How would you describe our relational health?
 - ⇒ What one thing most frustrates you?

Step 4: Work with Key Relationships

A key relationship is anyone who can block, judge or contribute to the fulfilment of the vision.

Step 5: Create Drafts and Consult

CREATE IT

Use people with word skills and then graphic skills. Be as creative and clear as you can.

CHECK

- Is it inspirational?
- Is it foundational?
- Is it directional?
- Is it clear?
 - ⇒ Straightforward enough to be understood.
 - ⇒ Startling enough to be exciting 'Do you really feel a tingle or see tears in the eyes of your colleagues when you discuss your corporate vision?' Jonas Ridderstrale and Kjelle Nordstrom.
 - ⇒ Specific enough to give direction

CONSULT WITH AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE

Help people to understand the process by explaining it to them:

- Reason – it will improve the end result.
- Approach – take on board everything that is said, work through it, and then the discern way forward.
- Outcome – inevitably there will be mutually contradictory things, so leaders responsible for making decisions.

REVIEW AND REVISE

Take time over this to get it as good as you can.

Step 6: Commit to It

'As important as vision is, most people don't get it, and vision without implementation is just words.'

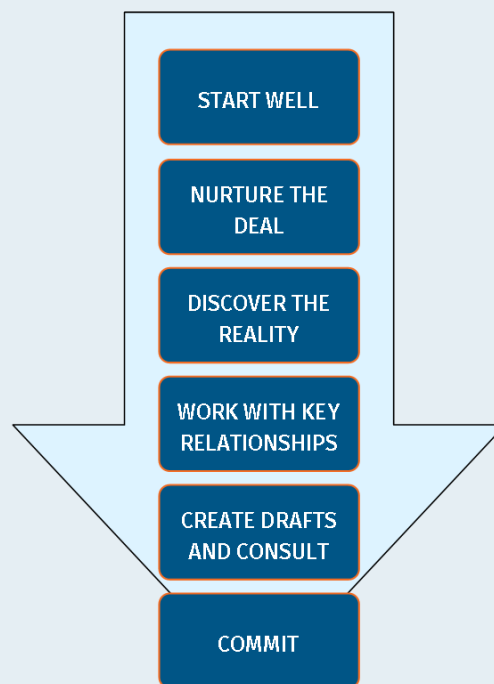
Leith Anderson

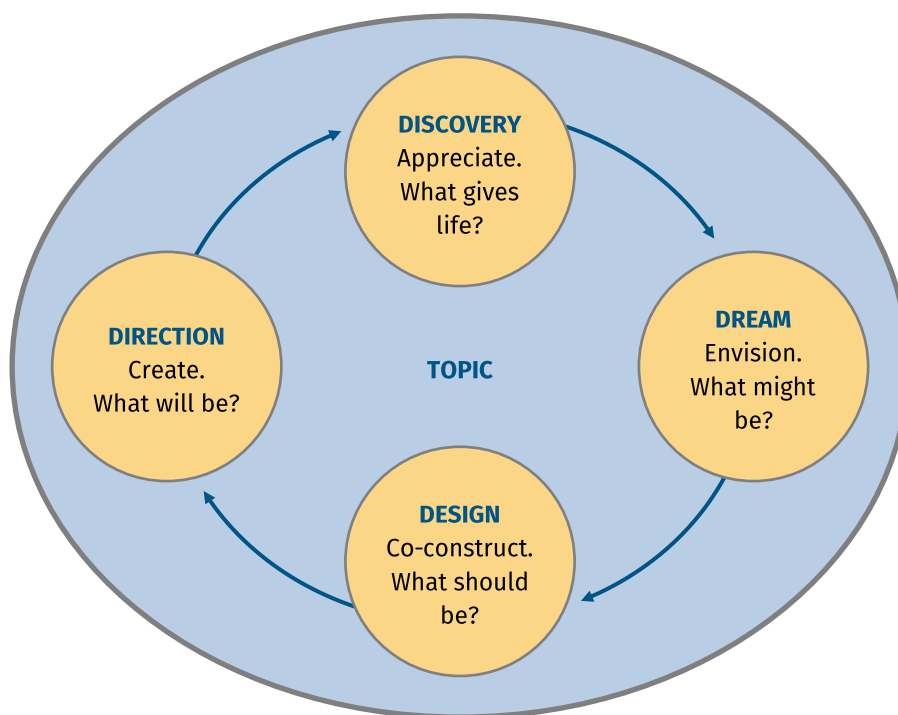
'Most major works of God come close to the buffers.

Why? Because God wants to see if we are just in it until it gets tough or hard.'

Mike Hill

Leaders are called to commit to the vision, to embody it in their daily life, be prepared to pay a price, to make hard decisions. There is only one thing worse than no vision, and that is a long and costly process of discerning a vision which produces passion in people... and then nothing is done about it!





Appreciative Inquiry is a particular way of asking questions and envisioning the future that fosters positive relationships and builds on the basic goodness in a person, a situation, or an organisation. In so doing, it enhances a system's capacity for collaboration and change. Appreciative Inquiry utilises a cycle of four processes focusing on:

- Discovery – appreciate the best of what is.
- Dream – imagine what could be.
- Design – determine what should be.
- Direction – create what will be.

The basic idea is to build organisations around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't. It is the opposite of problem solving. Instead of focusing on gaps and inadequacies to remediate skills or practices, AI focuses on how to create more of the exceptional performance that is occurring when a core of strengths is aligned. It opens the door to a universe of possibilities, since the work doesn't stop when a particular problem is solved but rather focuses on 'What is the best we can be?' The approach acknowledges the contribution of individuals, in order to increase trust. The method aims to create meaning by drawing from stories of concrete successes and lends itself to situations where confidence is low, people have been 'burned' by other approaches, and collaboration is key to forward movement. (Taken from Wikipedia, adapted.)



EXERCISE

- Which of the three approaches could fit best in your context?

THE ROLE OF THE LEADER

FIVE THINGS

- Steering and grounding.
- Regulating pace.
- Ensuring clarity, communication and ownership.
- Challenging timidity.
- Maintaining spiritual integrity.



NEXT STEPS

REFLECT

- What has struck you? A phrase, an idea, or a challenge.
- What has God been stirring in you during this session?
- What feels clearer now about your context, vision, or next season?
- What assumptions or limitations have you noticed in your current approach?

VISION TO REALITY

- If your vision became reality, what would be different in your church community? (any key words or phrases?)
- What resources do you need to move forward?
- What are the key obstacles that might prevent you from moving forward?
- If you had to capture one next step in a sentence, what would it be?

RESOURCES

THE ONE TO READ

- How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You Are Going, Susan Beaumont (Rowman)

TOP READS

- Memories, Hopes and Conversations, Mark Lau Branson (The Alban Institute)
- Appreciative Enquiry, Andy Schuman (Grove Leadership 33)
- Canoeing the Mountains, Tod Bolsinger (IVP)
- Mission Action Planning: A Vision Centred Approach, Mike Chew and Mark Ireland (SPCK)
- Discerning Direction, Graham Cray (Grove Leadership 1)

OTHER RESOURCES

- Church of England resources on developing a vision. www.churchofengland.org/resources/churchcare/making-changes-your-building-and-churchyard/develop-your-vision
- www.clergyleadership.com A website dedicated to appreciative inquiry in churches.
- Lots of diocesan websites have helpful material on this topic. Google them.



Leading Evangelism Learning Hub

Want to see the ministry of evangelism central to church life rather than on the periphery? Then sign up for our 14 month Hubs for incumbents to attend with others involved in leadership.

www.cpas.org.uk/hub.



How to Nurture a Faith Sharing Culture

An exciting and accessible church resource to help leaders nurture a faith-sharing culture in their church, congregation, fresh expression or church plant.

www.cpas.org.uk/faith-sharing.



Venture and Falcon Holidays

CPAS runs around 70 fun-filled holidays for 8-18 year olds each year. The holidays are run by volunteers, and if you are interested in helping on one or know a young person who would benefit from a great holiday with a focus on Jesus visit www.ventures.org.uk.



Making Mission Possible

CPAS enables churches to help every person hear and discover the good news of Jesus. We are a registered charity working with individuals, churches and dioceses to resource local churches for mission in the UK and Republic of Ireland. To support our work or find out more, please visit www.cpas.org.uk or contact 0300 123 0780.