

Discovery to Dreaming

Looking back over the six sessions, what can you affirm about

- your understanding of mission
- your awareness of local community
- the way you describe yourselves
- the people you partner with
- the people groups you connect with
- the ways in which hold together the fullness of mission

What clues have you found that would help grow your effectiveness as God's people in mission?

- your understanding of mission
- your awareness of local community
- the way you describe yourselves
- the people you partner with
- the people groups you connect with
- the ways in which hold together the fullness of mission

What do you need to explore further in terms of

- your understanding of mission
- your awareness of local community
- the way you describe yourselves
- the people you partner with
- the people groups you connect with
- the ways in which hold together the fullness of mission

What are the resources you need to develop or find to help you take your next steps?

Which are the stories you need to hear and share?

Write Postcards to yourselves from 10 years in the future, writing about the way your community will have engaged in God's mission. You could use the six topics we used in Mission Stories, or the Five Marks of Mission, or just choose one thing that will have happened.

Dreaming Together a Future with God

The dream phase is an exploration of what might be, in which people look at their hopes and dreams for their work, their working relationships, their organisation and the world around them. This is the “thinking outside the square” time, in which the lessons of the past provide clues but not final restraints.

The Dream process gives an opportunity to assess or reassess the shared vision, values and mission priorities of the congregation.

Shared Mission Statement

What language do we use to help us focus on our shared purpose? A mission statement or a vision statement needs to be memorable, repeatable and inspiring – something that can be demonstrated in a story, and shared visually.

Values

Having spent time in the Discovery phase are there any shifts in values? Values are the principles and assumptions that bind the congregation together. They help shape vision, clarify ministry distinctives and style, determine priorities and motivate people for action.

Missional Priorities

What are the emerging missional priorities that come out of the Discovery phase? Missional priorities are strategic focus points that connect with people groups. You could have one missional priority. You could have five missional priorities.

An effective missional priority names the focus of ministry, rather than a program. For example, religious education in a state school could be related to a missional priority of connecting with and empowering children in the local state school. This

Powerful Dream Questions

The questions we ask in the Dreaming time are about what could be. What is our potential future? How can we imagine God working around us, with us and through us in the future? The six questions used in the Discover phase can be used again in the Dream phase, applied to each missional priority.

1. How might our environment be different? How might we need to change our understanding of mission in response?
2. How could we embody the gospel as a community of compassion and generosity?
3. How might we resource people as everyday disciples of Jesus? What expressions of the gospel could we explore in practices of faith?
4. Who might we partner with, in our local community and beyond? What could we do together?
5. Which people groups could we be connecting with? How might we do that?
6. How might we more fully express the reconciling nature of God in our mission?

Listen to Members of the Community Faith

Shared dreams often rise out of the hopes, desires, frustrations, angers, hurts, drives, interests and passions of individuals and groups. Tom Bandy talks about identifying “heart bursts”, the God-given callings that align us with our community. Bill Hybels asks the question, “What is my holy discontent?” Ann Morisy asks, “What is my prayer burden?”

It takes a community to dream a dream that will transform the community. It’s helpful to change the flavour of an organisation by bringing together different stakeholders whose perspectives will bring out different possibilities in each other. Bring in people who don’t normally have a say in the running of things. Borrow the perspectives of sub cultures which normally are glossed over for the sake of “middle of the road” peace. Bring people who can articulate what could be. Bring people who have been elsewhere and know that things could be different.

Kennon Callahan, in *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*, suggests we ask our members five invitational questions.

1. What specific human hurts and hopes do you have longings to help with?
2. What concrete strengths do you have with which to share effective help for those specific human hurts and hopes?
3. What three to five persons do you know who have similar longings and strengths in your church or in your community?
4. What events in the community would make this mission effort timely?
5. In what specific ways is this emerging outreach one in which God is calling you to invest your life?

We could look at responses in terms of how we worship together, the programs we run, our engagement with the community, the ways in which we use and develop property, the ways in which we use our financial resources, planning for staffing, and collaboration with other congregations, agencies, companies and community organisations.

Provocative Proposals

We can foster provocative shared visions that need significant investments of time and resources. We can foster equally provocative visions that can be picked up and implemented by individuals and small groups without large budgets.

Take the Time

Dreaming requires patience, perseverance and prayer. It is tempting to short circuit the creative process when we become anxious about overly ambitious or competing pictures of the future. Rushing straight into design and delivery of programs can sabotage the development of effective mission.

It can be helpful to name a period of time as the era of fluidity, flexibility, possibility, in which we deliberately foster dreams. If you're looking at future building projects, for example, set aside a time for "camping", like the Israelites did with the Tabernacle, trying out different options. If you're planning to start a new worship service, set aside a time for experimentation with different styles, formats, times and places. Get used to the idea of "one-off" learning opportunities that don't have to be continued forever.

Future Thinking

How do we avoid merely repeating the patterns of the past? Future thinking requires an awareness of how life progresses. I've found it's helpful to document the positive changes that have happened during the life times of an organisation or group of people. What technical advances made it possible to try new things? What people groups changed the way the organisation worked? What did each generation bring to the table? How did changes in the neighbourhood change the priorities and callings of the community?

Are there any changes in attitude and action that need to be explored in response to God's calling for the future? What needs to be let go? What needs to continue? What needs to be started?

More Than One Approach

There is usually more than one right approach for any challenge we set ourselves to. To get people to share a provocative proposal they need to have explored the options, shaped the options and flavoured them with their God-given perspectives.

Quotes on Dreaming

Some people see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not?

George Bernard Shaw

Nothing happens unless first a dream.

Carl Sandburg

"When I dream alone, it is just a dream. When we dream together, it is the beginning of reality."

Brazilian Proverb

Developing a Ministry Plan

A “ministry plan” is the people connecting with people part. We can become so caught up in the delivery of a service, or the running of an event, or the provision of an environment, that we overlook the human connections that need to be fostered. Who will be connecting with whom? How will this project deliver hope and healing? How will we embody compassion and generosity?

Events, whether they are one off or regular, need a ministry plan that goes beyond the running sheet. Who will be inviting people to these events? Who do we expect to turn up? Who will welcome the newcomers? Who will incorporate them into a community? How will we ensure that there is an experience of community? Playgroups, for example, become intergenerational centres of community when volunteers learn to build relationship as they serve cups of tea and coffee, read stories and facilitate play.

Service based projects need a community of people at their hub. An op shop, for example, thrives when staff and volunteers see themselves as a compassionate and welcoming community that turns customers into friends. Having professional staff can help ensure that our projects are of a high standard, but it takes a community to reach a community with warmth.

Ministry plans need to include “consumers” in decision making. We minister with people, not to them.

Carl S. Dudley, in his book, “Community Ministry”, puts it this way....

“When we minister to people, we reduce them to objects. “They” and “we” are different. “They” are called the clients, the “program consumers”, or the “target population.” We mistakenly believe that with our resources we are all powerful, and that with their needs they are weak. We are tempted to think as the providers of ministry, that we are the decision makers, and they are the recipients”.

A ministry plan needs to address the various levels of complexity in community work, as described in Dave Andrews’ book, *Compassionate Community Work*...

1. Community relief – You help people yourself
2. Community education – you train people to help themselves
3. Community confrontation – you challenge groups who won’t help
4. Community formation – you develop a way of helping one another
5. Community transformation – people adopt that way as a way of life

A ministry plan also needs to include leadership development and succession planning.