

Goals for a Presbytery Discernment Process

While a communal process of discerning God's vision for the future will take different shape within different contexts, the following six goals are offered as a general outline as you consider a communal discernment process in your presbytery:

1. To stimulate broad participation throughout the presbytery in discerning God's vision for the future.
2. To provide biblical, theological, and liturgical resources to cultivate faithful imaginations—the renewed capacity for hoping and dreaming.
3. To surface, share, and test personal visions in the context of discerning a shared vision for the future of the presbytery.
4. To offer processes which create the space, time, and opportunity for meaningful and honest dialogue among leaders and members of the presbytery in a caring and supportive setting.
5. To discover anew and celebrate the giftedness, diversity, and creative potential of the presbytery community of communities.
6. To enable members of the presbytery to give substantive input to the expression of a faithful, hopeful, and compelling vision to guide the presbytery into the future.

Steps in a Presbytery Discernment Process

1. Identify, enlist, train, and support a Vision Panel.
2. Build the case for why a compelling and broadly owned vision of God's calling is needed in the presbytery.
3. Design a communal discernment process of study, reflection, and prayer.
4. Engage in a study of biblical and theological materials in order to discover the nature and purpose of the church.
5. Gather and analyze insights and learnings of study participants.
6. Express a Guiding Vision that depicts a faithful picture of God's calling for the presbytery.
7. Conduct a process that builds broad awareness of and participation in analyzing and shaping the Guiding Vision.

8. Make an organization-wide decision to move into the future on the basis of the Guiding Vision.

Roles

The role of a Vision Panel, in partnership with the Transformation Coordinating Team, will be to enable church leaders and members throughout the presbytery to discern what God is calling it to be and do in the future. Members of the Vision Panel serve as guides, interpreters, and consensus-formers. The Vision Panel will interact with helpful resources (i.e. the Strategic Issues, the booklet *Discerning God's Call*, Bible study) and with the leaders and members of the presbytery community give expression to a vision of the future shape of the presbytery.

VISION PANEL: Key Result Areas and Goals

To fulfill its role, the Vision Panel will be responsible for achieving the following key results and goals:

1. **Participation:** To stimulate broad participation throughout the presbytery in the discernment and envisioning process, so that the entire process itself is open and inclusive in its method.
2. **Prayer\Study:** To engage in a significant time of study, prayer, and team formation, moving into a posture of creative and collaborative openness, listening to the Holy Spirit and to the Body of Christ within this Presbytery.
3. **Strategic Documents:** To draft a Guiding Vision, Mission, Key Result Areas and Goals for the presbytery that is faithful to Scripture, shaped by the rich history of the presbytery, that is forward-looking and compelling, and that can serve as a strategic resource to guide the presbytery into the future.

Responsibilities

The Vision Panel will be responsible for the following work:

- a. Become equipped for its task by the study of materials relating to the God's mission (*mission dei*), vision, and cultivating the Presbytery as a discerning community.
- b. Shape the Guiding Vision. While the Transformation Team will be primarily responsible for designing, planning, and managing the vision retreat and congregation study processes, the Vision Panel will be creating a series of drafts of a Guiding Vision, and participate in leading broad participation in testing and shaping the drafts.
- c. Participate in presbytery Leadership Workshop to craft the Missional Strategy.
- d. Take the results of the Leadership Workshop and write up the Missional Strategy.
- e. Enable the building of a strong consensus to embrace the Guiding Vision, involving participation at Presbytery and cluster meetings.

TRANSFORMATION TEAM: Key Result Areas

The Transformation Team coordinates the Presbytery discernment process, working closely with the Vision Panel to achieve these goals:

1. **Participation:** To stimulate broad participation throughout the presbytery in the discernment and envisioning process, so that the entire process itself is open and inclusive in its method.
2. **Presbytery Study/Prayer:** Along with the Vision Panel, to design and manage a presbytery-wide process of prayer and study to prepare the presbytery for discerning its future direction.
3. **Resources:** To discover, adapt, develop, and recommend study resources to the congregations and presbytery groups, units, committees, and council to stimulate and undergird the discernment process.
4. **Strategic Direction:** To design and facilitate those events where Presbytery groups and leaders can interact meaningfully, shape, and eventually embrace the emerging directions as expressed in strategic documents.

Vision Panel Timeline

The Vision Panel's work will cover 10-12 months, beginning with its enlistment and concluding when the presbytery community has accepted the new Missional Strategy. The following dates and key milestones in the Vision discernment process are:

Vision Panel Training: May 5, 2007

Presbytery Vision Retreat: **October 4-6 (Fall 2007 Palo Duro Presbytery meeting)**

Work is completed to express the Guiding Vision by Dec. 1, 2007

Leadership Workshop (to craft the Missional Strategy): tba January 2008

Work is completed to craft the Missional Strategy by February 1, 2008

Cluster meetings: tba winter/spring 2008

Futuring Conference, building On the new Missional Strategy: tba spring 2008

Criteria for Membership

The Vision Panel as a whole should meet the following criteria:

1. Desire to discern God's activity in the world and God's vision for the local church.
2. Open to new ways of thinking about and perceiving the church in today and tomorrow's world.
3. Have the ability and the willingness to think and converse theologically, especially in the area of the nature and calling of the church.
4. Have the ability to put ideas forward for exploration and discussion.
5. Engender a high degree of trust and respect from both leaders and members of the presbytery and its congregations.
6. Be willing to give the time required.

7. Have the ability to express ideas creatively through writing.
8. Have the ability to influence and be influenced by others.

Accountabilities

The Vision Panel will be a sub-committee of the Transformation Team, and report to it on a regular basis. Appropriate structural linkage will be maintained throughout the Panel's existence.