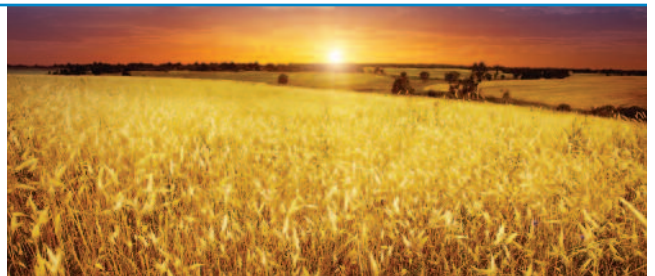




EQUIPPING FOR... LEADERSHIP

2016 Strategic Plan: A Tool to Help Congregations Imagine New Possibilities for Ministry & Mission

Produced by Canadian Ministries



Imagine for a moment that your congregation is a field and you are being asked to plant seeds in it. What type of seeds would you plant? How would you help them to grow? What type of harvest would you like to see?

When representatives from across the country were asked to give their input during the strategic planning process for The Presbyterian Church in Canada, they were asking themselves similar questions. What areas of ministry and mission is God calling us to grow? How can we nurture that growth? What types of new things do we need to plant in order to have an abundant harvest and continue to feed people into the future?

The strategic plan, approved by General Assembly in 2016, is an invitation to *all* members of The Presbyterian Church in Canada to boldly seek God's will, embrace Christ's teachings and live out the justice imperatives of the gospel in our contemporary context.

This *Equipping for Leadership* begins the conversation about how the objectives from the strategic plan can come to life in your congregation. The full plan can be found on our website: presbyterian.ca/strategic-plan. We encourage you to use the strategic plan as a visioning tool to help your congregation imagine new possibilities for ministry and mission.

Read the following objectives from the strategic plan:

- Engage in theological reflection and education that deepens understanding of and commitment

to God, the church and its place in Christ's ministry and mission.

- Pursue spiritual renewal and faith formation as the basis for transformation within our congregations.
- Engage in evangelism, outreach and discipleship.
- Embrace a missional culture that nurtures initiative and risk taking at the local, national and international levels.
- Discern, prepare and support leaders – lay, youth and young adult and clergy – for faithful and vibrant ministry.
- Articulate and live out the rich traditions of Reformed theology.
- Live out the justice imperatives of the gospel and sow seeds of hope through our words and actions in the public sphere.

Reflect

- What excites you about the objectives laid out above? Are there any that pique your interest as a group in particular?
- Choose one from your list. If you were to really do it well, what would it look like? What impact would it have on your congregation and community?
- What gifts and strengths do you already have as a congregation that would help the ministry you identified grow? Are there things that you are currently doing that you would need to let go in order to allow this ministry to thrive?

Pray

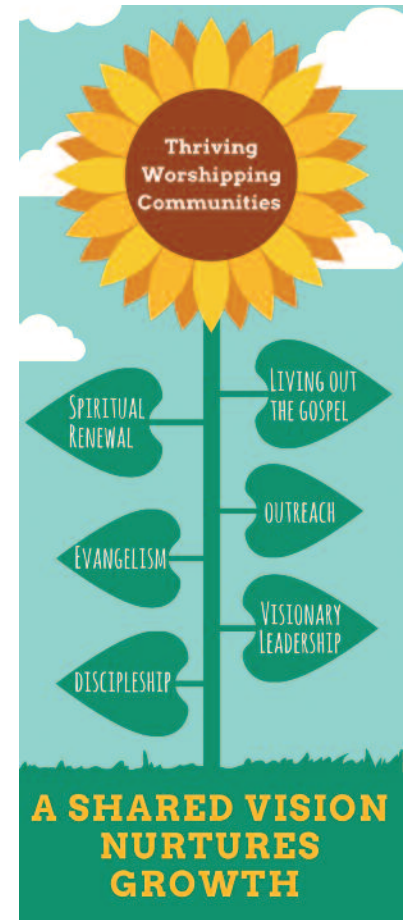
God of the past, present and future. Open our minds and hearts to new understandings of what you want us to be. Help us to dream your dreams, hear your Word and discern your mission for us. Turn us into fertile soil where your renewing vision for the church can take root and flourish. Unite us together in our desire to follow your will as a congregation and show us how to move forward faithfully. Amen.

Read

Matthew 13:3-8, Parable of the Sower

In this parable, Jesus uses the imagery of planting to teach his followers about the necessity of readying ourselves for letting the gospel message take root in our lives. The seeds thrive when they fall on good earth. Likewise, our congregations thrive when they ready themselves to receive and pursue God's vision for their ministry.

In the following section, you will find discussion prompts, questions and ideas to help your congregation begin thinking through which areas of ministry and mission need to be strengthened in order to prepare for an abundant harvest.



Areas of Growth for Congregations



Discussion Prompt



Two Questions



Two Ideas

Visionary Leadership

Rooted in spiritual depth and maturity, this type of leadership operates with an understanding of the complex and ever-changing face of today's religious landscape and takes responsibility to creatively address emerging needs.

It is important to recognize that leadership comes in all different forms in the church. From eldership to hosting coffee time, many people share responsibility for the health of a congregation. A strong leadership team embraces and affirms this diversity while, at the same time, uniting the congregation under a shared vision and common purpose.



- Are you drawing upon the leadership gifts of all or only a few in your congregation?
- What leadership qualities do you see in yourself and others that you want to grow?



- Celebrate and affirm the gifts of the established and emerging leaders in your congregation often and in multiple ways (cards, words of thanks, encouragement).
- Support leaders at all levels (elders, teachers, ministers, lay leaders) by offering opportunities for leadership training and development.

Discipleship

Congregations that prioritize discipleship offer people multiple pathways for deepening their relationship with God. They emphasize the *experience* of God through worship, bible study, theological reflection, spiritual practices and community.



As churches, we are called to help people become active and faithful disciples of Christ. Ideally, faith formation should weave itself through every aspect of congregational life for adults and children. Equipping people to be disciples is an

educational and relational process, happening both through programs and through the everyday spiritual practices of the congregation.




- What experiences, resources and/or tools do you offer to help people deepen their connection to God?
- How are you inspiring people to find joy in prayer, scripture reading and theological reflection?



- Build small group ministries within your church that focus on spiritual practices. Don't be afraid to be creative! For example, start a Saturday morning walking group and incorporate elements of prayer into each walk. Or, have a monthly potluck where you invite members of your congregation to share how they practice their faith in everyday life.
- Using the input of your congregation, create a list of web resources for Christian formation, personal devotion or small group ministry. Visit The Presbyterian Church in Canada website at presbyterian.ca/resources, theacademy.com and d365.org to get an idea of some of the online tools that are available.

Outreach

Congregations that effectively reach out understand themselves to be connected to the overall health and wellness of their communities and the world. Outreach can take many forms, but it is most meaningful and productive when it is responsive to real needs and matches the gifts and strengths of the congregation.

 In *The Twelve Keys Leaders' Guide* (2010), Ken Callahan writes: "We spend too much time trying to get people to come to the church building. We need to invest more time being the church – with the people – in the world... The focus of the congregation on the mission field is at the front lines of human hurts and hopes..."



- What is your congregation's mission field?
- How are you addressing the hurts and hopes of people in the world around you?



- Study Luke 10:1-12 together. Discuss where Jesus is calling you to go.
- Organize an informal community needs survey by inviting your congregation members to ask their neighbours how the church could better serve them. Contact Canadian Ministries for resources on starting new initiatives.

Evangelism

In its simplest form, evangelism is sharing with others how you experience God in your own life and inviting them to discover the experience of God in their own. Congregations that do this well lead with love. Modeling themselves on the early church, they practice compassion, kindness and forgiveness as a means of inviting people into a life of faith.



We know we are called to share the Gospel, but the idea of evangelism is intimidating for many of us. It is therefore important to recognize that evangelism takes different forms in different contexts. We are invited to seek out the form of evangelism that is best suited to the gifts and strengths of our congregation. A good way to start a discussion about evangelism in your congregation is to ask members what it is about their faith that they feel has added meaning to their lives.



- How does your congregation approach evangelism?
- What is it about your faith and your life together as a congregation that you want to share with others?





- Develop and prioritize the practice of testimony in your congregation. Amanda Drury's book *Saying is Believing: The Necessity of Testimony in Adolescent Spiritual Development* (2015) is a good resource for exploring the importance of testimony, not only in youth ministry but also in congregation life as a whole.
- It is important to create pathways for people who don't normally attend church to connect with Christian communities. A good way to do


this is by organizing fun and inclusive events, such as sports nights, games/trivia nights or book clubs, and encouraging congregation members to invite their friends and neighbours.

Living out the Gospel

Congregations inspire people to live differently in the world by offering an experience of a loving and supportive Christian community – opportunities to share meals, serve together, discuss faith, support one another and work towards God’s justice together. Living out the gospel is a daily decision to be part of a community that sees the world through God’s eyes and lives out of this perspective.

 Our faith in Christ gives us hope that many do not have in our chaotic and difficult world. It also calls on us to “act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly” (Micah 6:8) in a hierarchical society build on divisions and inequality. It is easier to live as agents of Christ’s love, justice and peace when we are in community. Together, we are a much stronger witness to the liberty of life in Christ.


-  • How do you encourage your congregation members to live out the gospel in their everyday lives?
- What community practices do you encourage?





-  • Read sections 8.3, 8.4 and 8.5 of *Living Faith*, available from the PCC website, and discuss how you as a congregation are living out the vision of Christian love, justice and peace that it sets out.
- Offer opportunities for regular participation in justice initiatives. See the PCC’s Justice Ministries website for resources and ideas: presbyterian.ca/justice

Spiritual Renewal

Spiritual renewal is an ongoing process of seeking out, acknowledging and celebrating God’s ever-present gift of life. Congregations actively pursuing spiritual renewal are open to being transformed, even boldly

seeking new life in the midst of death, in order to be in line with God’s Spirit as it moves through the church and the world.

 “God has prepared for us things beyond our imagining. Our hope is for a renewed world and for fullness of life in the age to come. As Jesus taught us, we pray: ‘Thy kingdom come’” (*Living Faith* 10.1). In this vision of a renewed world from our Presbyterian statement of faith, the restoration that we long for is ready and waiting for us. We live in a broken world, but believe that God is renewing it, and us, day by day.

-  • How does your congregation help people to see and experience renewal in their lives?
-  • Does your congregation “dream big” when it comes to kingdom-building mission and ministry?
-  • Pray regularly for the ability to see where God is calling your congregation to be agents of restoration in the world.
-  • Place a poster board and markers at the back of your church and invite people to write down one way that they see God at work in your congregation.

By taking the challenge to explore one or two of these areas, your ministry is opening itself to transformation and renewal. These types of conversations will move you in a direction of reflection that will ultimately lead to bigger questions. As you engage in these discussions, know that you are a sacred community and that you hold an important piece of God’s redemptive work in the world. God is with you helping you decide which seeds to plant and what ministries to grow.

Canadian Ministries has continuing education grants for Christian educators. Visit presbyterian.ca/canadian-ministries/funds for more information.

Contact us at canadianministries@presbyterian.ca or call 416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301 Ext. 290. Find more great ministry ideas through our weekly Facebook post *Take it Up Tuesday*. Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/pccconnect.