

Great **churches.**
Great **leaders.**
Great **disciples.**
Transformed world.

Vision and Goals Process for Vital, Transforming Ministry

The mission of the United Methodist Church is to *make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world*, and our local churches provide the most significant place to make disciples (*Discipline*, ¶120). As part of the Great Plains Conference, we all need to do our part in order to fulfill this mission by moving toward our preferred future: *Great leaders. Great churches. Great disciples. Transformed world.*

The annual Charge Conference is an opportunity to evaluate and celebrate how your congregation is aligning your vision and goals to answer God's call to greatness.

The process outlined below is designed to be used by the Church Council (or other appropriate group) as you develop your ministry for the coming year. **Prayer is essential to this process!**

Note: Some congregations use a different process or timeframe to do the visioning and goal-setting. You do not need to repeat the process. Record your information on the form as best as you can, or provide another format.

I. Clarify your Vision.

Think of your vision as your motto: *a short phrase (10 words or less) that is easy to remember, expressing the beliefs or ideals which guide your congregation to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.* An effective vision statement should be biblical, specific, motivating, and measurable. Keep it brief! You want both the community and your congregation to remember it and understand that this is why you do what you do. Recite it in worship and at meetings; use it in prayers, in print and in public; ... and most of all, live it out! The vision may remain the same from year to year.

Each congregation expresses its vision in unique ways that reflect God's call for the members, their gifts, and the needs of their particular setting. For example, the vision of a congregation in a diverse neighborhood might be, *"meeting people, meeting needs, meeting Christ."* In a rural setting, challenged by declining population and services, a congregation might experience God's call to a ministry of *"living and giving God's hope for all times."*

II. Assess your Current Reality.

Gather information on your ministry setting and measurements of your ministry efforts. Two resources include:

- Vital Signs - Each local church is asked to submit weekly statistics through the dashboard on the Great Plains website. If your congregation is doing so, you may access the requested numbers through the executive summary on the following site: <http://vitalsigns.trendsendapp.com/reports/25/overview>. Click on South Central Jurisdiction, Great Plains Conference, your district, and your church. To view current year data, you must use the drop-down calendar to select "to" and "from" fields by clicking on year, month, and date.
- MissionInsite – This tool is available free to every local church and offers census data, population trends, household composition, lifestyle segmentations and more by county, zip codes, or defined areas! You can even plot residences of your congregation. To access the site, go to <http://missioninsite.com>. For more info on registering for the tool, go to <http://www.greatplainsumc.org/knowyourneighbor>.

If your congregation used the visioning/goal-setting process for the current year, evaluate your progress by answering the following questions:

1. How are you familiarizing the congregation and community with your vision?
2. Which goals and strategies have worked and will be beneficial to continue?
3. What roadblocks and challenges have you encountered, and how will you move past them?
4. What “glory sightings” and stories will you tell your congregation – when did you see God at work, deepening your discipleship and bringing transformation to others’ lives through your members and your ministries?

III. Identify 2-3 attainable goals for the coming year that are aligned with your Vision.

Too often we make a long list of things we are going to do as a congregation and call those “goals.” They are not. Goals are the answer to the question, “What 2-3 big ideas can we accomplish that will have the greatest impact on our ability to live out our vision?”

Ex. After prayer and discussion, the diverse neighborhood congregation (mentioned above) set two goals:

1. To have at least 50% of the congregation actively involved in at least one ministry away from the church property that is “meeting people, meeting needs, meeting Christ.”
2. As a congregation, to become familiar with the cultures represented in the neighborhood.

Note: If a goal is not accomplished in one year, it may be continued into the next year with updated strategies.

IV. Plan the year’s Strategies.

Think about steps that your committees and groups - from Sunday school to the choir to the finance committee – can take to help reach those goals. List a few strategies for each goal. These strategies may continue to develop even after the charge conference.

Ex. The Nurture Committee hosts cultural celebrations at the church. Education designates one month of Sunday school when all ages learn about the Great Commission and how to talk about Christ outside the congregation. The Worship Committee will organize a “Christ for the World” worship service in a neighborhood park and involve the church’s neighbors in its planning.

V. Find vitality trainings in which your congregation can participate.

Each year, various opportunities are offered by the conference, districts, and others in order to create great churches, great leaders, and great disciples.

Explore and select ones that will enable your congregation to accomplish its goals/outcomes.

For ideas, check on the conference website (www.greatplainsumc.org/congregationalexcellence), on the United Methodist website (www.umc.org), or with your district office.