

Twelve Keys Planning Outline

- A. Stage One - assessment of present standing. Requires statistics on worship attendance, church school attendance, membership, etc. Complete by March 1.
- B. Stage Two - primary direction for the future. Takes into account ratio of members to constituents, to persons served in mission, and demographic information to gauge current reality, possible growth reality, and chosen growth goals. Complete by March 10.
- C. Stage Three - assessing strengths in respect to the twelve central characteristics of an effective church. These are:
 - 1. Specific Missional Objectives
 - 2. Pastoral and Lay Visitation
 - 3. Corporate, Dynamic Worship
 - 4. Significant Relational Groups
 - 5. Strong Leadership Resources
 - 6. Solid Decision Process
 - 7. One Major Program
 - 8. Open Accessibility
 - 9. High Visibility
 - 10. Adequate Parking, Land and Landscaping
 - 11. Adequate Space and Facilities
 - 12. Solid Financial Resources

Complete by April 14.

Notes

Strong, healthy congregations strike a balance between sprinter and marathon opportunities. Sprinters do one-time, seasonal, short term. Marathoners do weekly, monthly, year in and year out. In a healthy church of this culture there will be more sprinter opportunities and fewer marathon opportunities. (location 630)

The Twelve Keys

1. *Specific Missional Objectives* (location 884). "It is in the sharing of mission that we discover Christ. In this new day, Christ invites us out...to live and serve with him in mission."

A healthy congregation helps directly with one of these: a life stage, a human hurt or hope, a common interest, or a community concern. These can be related to tragic events, grieving and leaving, sinful events, moving in or out of town, addiction, serious illness, special events/graduations/celebrations, dying, life stages such as birth, grades of school, marriage, family stages, vocation, pre-retirement, retirement, older adult, children of aging parents, etc.

There is one major mission outreach. As a college student has a *major*, so also the congregation has a *major* missional outreach. "There are many possibilities. The art is to deliver one of these as a major mission outreach in your community."

There is concrete help provided. It is not "third party" help, but rather "hands on" help. It may be seasonal, short-term, monthly, or year-round.

The congregation is *legendary* for this mission outreach.

2. *Pastoral and Lay Visitation* (location 1127) The congregation shares shepherding visits.

Visits with the hospitalized, homebound, and in nursing homes. Visitors have gifts of grace and compassion. They know how long to stay and how to help. There is a pace developed that keeps our visits to the homebound regular. We are generous and immediate in the work.

Visits with those of our congregation: members, constituents, family and friends. These visits are intentional and proactive, not just reactive. We shepherd in times of tragedy, of celebration, and in times of normal life. We encourage informal shepherding groups (around vocation, recreational interests, life stages, geographic locations, social networks, etc.)

Visits with those in our communities: unchurched, first-time worshipers, newcomers, friends in the community. Balances with shepherding our own congregation ("one foot in the church and one foot in the community"). These visits are our *gifts* to the community. It is often done informally as we network among community groups. We develop relationships of sharing and caring.

Visits that benefit and bless. The goal is to bless, not to hustle new members or to sell activities.

3. Corporate, Dynamic Worship (location 1354)

Warm & Welcoming. Congregation is warm, winsome and welcoming. You feel it when you arrive, when you enter. Involves parking lot greeters, door greeters, ushers, worship leaders: the entire progression. The shape, colors, lighting and seating of the worship space should also reflect warmth.

Inspiring Music. The music matches the congregation. The music fits as part of a whole worship experience. There must be competence in those who sing and play. The quality is good and growing.

Helpful Preaching. The preacher has a spirit of grace. She shares humor and good news, not with a spirit of anger or legalism. Sermons are in the themes of grace, forgiveness, reconciliation, hope, new life, recognizing tensions of judgment, sin and law. Sermons are delivered in a way that connects, in a manner that matches the pastor's character.

Stirring & Moving. The service has a sense of balance between that which is simple, stirring, inspiring, emotional and that which is complex, thoughtful, profound, intellectual. The service meets both the intellectual and the emotional needs of the people. The service should a) start well, b) end well, c) have warm moments, d) help people discover one step.

4. Significant Relational Groups (location 1672)

Groupings are warm, welcoming, open and inclusive. Informal groupings kind of "live life together." There are no rules or formal structure. They can gather around common interests, life stages, friendships, networks, etc. Formal groupings have clear structure and procedure. Whether formal or informal, the goal is to move the groups toward *being warm, welcoming, open and inclusive*.

Balance of one-time, seasonal, short-term, long-term, weekly, monthly, and year-round groupings. One-time (senior prom), seasonal (VBS, Advent study), short-term (3-5 week gathering or study), long-term (FPU), weekly (Faith Lessons), monthly (circles), year-round (Sunday School). Each have capacity for reaching certain people.

There is encouragement for new groupings. New groupings (less than

five years) are more likely to attract new people. The congregation needs to always encourage new groupings, formal or informal. It comes from a permission-giving culture.

People discover depth of sharing and caring. Groupings are places for community.

5. Strong Leadership Resources (location 1952)

Achieves our key objectives. Focus on achievements, not activities.

Achievements come from objectives, not activities. Key objectives are both *important* and *urgent*. Key objectives are few; they are those that deliver the greatest impact. There is positive recognition and reward.

Lives the four steps of leadership:

Loving: we love those whom we hope to lead. *Listening:* we want to hear the hopes, interests and suggestions. *Learning:* we are attentive to what others can teach us. *Leading:* we are able to lead after we have loved, listened and learned.

Encourages leadership qualities.

Competency. Competent leaders are neither enablers or managers. Competent leaders have compassion for persons, compassion for the congregation and its mission, passion for key objectives, wisdom, common sense and good judgment, specific competencies that match key objectives, *sprinter* and *marathon* capacities, constructive spirit, grace, integrity trust, thoughtfulness, and mutual respect.

Continuity. Key objectives can take time. Leaders must be given time to achieve objectives. It involves matching people's gifts with their areas of service.

Mutual Leadership. We recognize the need for and benefit from the gifts of one another. Leaders work together for the good of the whole rather than creating silos.

Helps people fulfill their life searches. People search for grace, compassion, community, individuality, meaning and hope. Leaders help people on this journey.

6. Solid Decision Process (location 2197)

Makes wise, thoughtful decisions in relation to key objectives. Decisions

focus on important priorities rather than urgent trivialities. Decision Levels: A - important and urgent; B - important, not urgent; C - urgent, not important; D - neither important nor urgent. Healthy congregations invest most of their decision time on A and B level decisions. A-level decisions focus on strengths we claim, one or two current strengths we plan to expand, one or two new strengths we plan to add, current strengths we plan to sustain, and key objectives with which we will act swiftly.

Has a strong sense of openness and ownership in the decision process.

Formal and informal networks of conversation move toward decisions. The process is open and inclusive, not closed and restricted. People have the opportunity to share wisdom if they want to do so.

Shared spirit of integrity, mutual respect, and trust with one another.

Integrity and respect help to resolve conflict that will arise. Effective churches resolve rather than repress conflict.

Simple Structure based on Key Objectives. Objectives shape organization; function determines form. Where we are headed shapes how we organize to get there. Effective churches have just enough of a structure that we accomplish our objectives. The structure feels like a fast break down a basketball court rather than a neat, tidy, slowly unfolding plan that barely moves. Healthy congregations conserve their members' time by developing minimal, streamlined organizational structures.

7. One Major Program (location 2343)

(Difference between a mission outreach and a program is the beginning focus of each. A mission outreach begins primarily to serve persons *in the community*. A program venture begins primarily to serve persons *in the congregation*.) (location 2374 for distinctions)

Among the best in the community. There is a myth among some congregations that the more programs and activities a church can offer, the more people it will serve in the community. This likelihood is remote. Any two of the first four characteristics (mission, shepherding, worship or groupings) will be more valuable in helping a congregation to be more healthy.

The program provides major resources to members and constituents of the congregation. It may address a human hurt and hope, a life stage, common interest, community concern, or some combination. It is measured by the community-wide standards of competence for this kind of program.

Serves many persons and families. There is both quality and quantity. The program serves enough people to “hold its own” with the size of the community. It is multidimensional, serving a range of groups and age levels.

Leaders are both person centered and program centered. It is wise to select leaders who have both relational and functional skills for the one major program.

Connection with our one, major, specific, concrete mission. There is a bridge between the community and the congregation. A disconnected venture would be to have a mission that focuses on slum gangs and a major program that focuses on early retired persons.

Consider an emphasis with youth. The commonality is that both the mission and the program focus on youth. The life stage is the connection. The point of differentiation is that community youth and church youth can be very dissimilar. The art is to have a mission and a program that bridge to each other...with a sufficient connection that each helps the other.

Some congregations are like “Bo-Peep” churches. (“leave them alone and they’ll come home, wagging their tails behind them.”) They do not seek out persons in the community. They leave them alone. Their many meetings, planning sessions, busy programs and activities prevent people from being genuinely involved in mission in the community.

The hope for our time is to be a people caring congregation, not a program-driven church. We quit trying to offer everything for everybody all the time. The hope is to carry out one major program so well that the congregation develops a community-wide respect for the competence of this program.

8. Open Accessibility (location 2541)

Excellent location, matching traffic direction patterns and average trip time horizons for our community. The church is located along traffic patterns as people move about going to work, shopping, to and from school activities, and social and recreational activities. If a congregation plans to be a large, regional congregation, it is important that the location match with three or four of these major traffic patterns.

People have regular patterns of average trip time. In some communities the average trip time horizon is 25 minutes. In others it is 15 minutes. Think of

what the average is for your community, and what it is projected to be in the coming ten years.

Generous site accessibility with adequate points of ingress and egress to our site. The site has a sense of openness. The more open and spacious, the more likely people are to experience the site as accessible. Consider the interrelationship of land, landscaping and parking. What kind of space is created? The site is easy to enter and leave. The larger the site, the more important it is to have multiple entrances and exits. Consider the size of the entrances and exits, how well they handle volume. Also consider “turnover time” between worship services with traffic coming and going.

Offers open, spacious entrances and exits to our building and helpful visible and hidden signs of welcome. The larger the congregation, the more important it is to have more than one major entrance. It is useful to have a major entrance near the “real front door” (the door nearest the parking).

There are visible and “hidden” signs that communicate a sense of openness, warmth, and accessibility...of welcome and invitation. First-time worshipers feel welcomed by what they see. Some congregations, regrettably, have hidden signs that say “we know what to do, you have to figure out what to do.”

Shares a “people accessibility” of compassion with members, constituents, persons served in mission, and community persons. People accessibility includes the spirit of open accessibility that the congregation has with these four groupings: 1. *With one another.* We share an open spirit across the whole congregation and a genuine sense of family together. 2. *With shepherding leaders.* We have an open spirit of sharing and caring, compassion and community with one another. 3. *With pastor and staff.* Together we encourage and practice a spirit of people accessibility. 4. *With persons in the community.* There is a spirit of genuine respect and compassion with persons in the community.

Most persons discern the warmth (people accessibility) of a congregation by their contacts with specific individuals. They discover that several people speak to them, warmly, when they come to worship. They sense that the key leaders and the pastors haven an open-door spirit. Information is generously shared. Shepherding is of considerable depth. People experience a spirit of openness and caring, compassion and sharing, community and family. They are welcome.

9. High Visibility (location 2755)

Excellent site visibility. When the longing for the grace of God stirs them, many persons go to the church that they have “seen” on their traffic direction patterns. Consider factors such as how many people travel past your church site, the visibility from the road (angle of vision, amount of frontage, adjacent properties, etc.), and speed of traffic.

Helpful signs and seasonal points of interest. Church signs consider the speed of traffic (no more content than can be read in two seconds). Signs match the community the congregation seeks to serve. They are tasteful and artfully done.

Post attractive, interesting signs that highlight special events happening at the church (Christmas Eve, Easter, VBS). These help persons see our site in fresh, new ways.

Churches that fail to add “points of interest” to their landscaping from year to year tend to become anonymous buildings.

Excellent communications with congregation and community.

Communications visibility happens with web site, postal service, email, cell phone, text message, newspaper, and social networking opportunities. It also happens with radio and television. There is nothing that suggests we lift up a litany of busy, bustling programs and activities, nor that we take credit for what God is doing in people’s lives. The spirit of the text is joy for the grace of God and gratitude that God is moving, stirring, and working in the lives and destinies of persons.

Integrity is the first element in communications. *Content* is the second element. *Trust* is the third element. We don’t try to “pitch” to get volunteers, nor do we overstate and glorify what the church can do for them. We state what the church is doing to be of help in the community.

Excellent people visibility in a worthwhile community project. People are the best signs. The more persons a congregation has helping the community (not in the church), the more visibility the church will have in the community. Key leaders, laity, pastor and staff are involved in a worthwhile project in the community.

10. Adequate Parking, Land and Landscaping (location 2919)

Owens sufficient, usable land for our present life and future mission. The church takes opportunities to secure land that will be beneficial. An ongoing “land study team” in the church can be helpful. Useful land can be contiguous with existing property or at another location.

Has landscaping that contributes to a first impression of an open and spacious, warm and welcoming, inviting and gracious spirit. The landscaping contributes to the sense of welcoming. It conveys a sense of safety and security, is attractive and well-kept. In city areas where there is little opportunity for landscaping, focus is upon the signage and front of the building, keeping it clean and attractive..

Has adequate parking for our ten major Sundays of the year. Your biggest Sunday is God’s way of teaching you the pool of persons who think of your congregation as home. This may be Easter or some other special day. The way forward is to develop your one major Sunday into two or three, and eventually, over 3-5 years, into ten major community Sundays a year. These include Easter, Christmas Eve, and Christmas.

Basics for Parking. Parking, worship attendance and giving are in direct correlation. (Remember that inadequate parking is a source of dissatisfaction, but adequate parking is not a source of satisfaction.) Parking can be on-site or nearby, church owned, borrowed or public. Parking lot greeters are helpful. In good weather they can bring a card table, some coffee, orange juice and donuts as a special treat. They can also help on the ten major Sundays.

11. Adequate Space and Facilities (location 3258)

Adequate space for present and future mission, shepherding, worship, groupings and programs. Determine the major uses of current space and facilities, and the extent to which they are being used. One way is to secure a floor plan and mark on it the frequency of use of each of the various facilities on a week-to-week basis. By this you can determine the major uses of space, areas of crowding, spaces that are underused, and potential uses of spaces that are not yet available.

Worship Home. Is the worship space comfortable (not too crowded, not too empty)? Consider in light of your ten best Sundays and your normal Sundays.

Fellowship Hall / Community Life Center.

Kitchen.

Church School. It is more helpful to have a few classrooms that are adequate and spacious than many “walk-in closets” called classrooms. These rooms should be flexible and highly useable.

Nursery, Toddler and Kindergarten. Children frequently need more space than adults. These spaces also should communicate safety and security to parents. They should also be decorated in a way that reflects modern children’s decor.

Storage. Adequate storage is achieved when we store only items that have some reasonable probability of being used on a regular basis. We store other things in other locations. We create “museum” space for cherished items of significance and historical value.

Restrooms. Are they adequate for your most busy times? Do they service people who are handicapped or parents with children? Are they clean and secure with adequate ventilation and lighting.

Arrangement. The way a facility is arranged influences a visitor’s perception. Facilities should be easy to locate. Hallways should be sufficiently large and not give perception of a puzzle or maze.

Has a balance between our land, landscaping, parking, and our space and facilities. The worship home, fellowship hall, church school classrooms and parking should match one another in size and capacity of use. Flexibility contributes to balance. This means that several groups can share a given space over the course of an average week.

Has space and facilities that are well maintained on a regular basis. The four good friends of space and facilities are *regular cleaning, preventive maintenance, ongoing restoration, and major emergency repairs*. The art of facilities is to show something new each year, especially for older facilities.

Has space and facilities that create a warm first impression of welcome, being attractive, and helping persons feel at home. Decorate with a sense of home, not organization.

12. Solid Financial Resources (location 3543)

Congregation of generous people. Generous people create strong, healthy congregations. Strong, healthy congregations create generous people. Both are true. Strong, healthy congregations never have enough money. They are always giving away more money than they have...to serve persons in the grace of God. Weak, declining congregations never have enough money. They are always conserving and holding, protecting and preserving their

meager resources.

Three to five persons with a spirit of generosity can help a whole congregation to be a generous congregation. Three to five persons with a spirit of conserving and holding can help a whole congregation be protecting and preserving.

Make available all six sources of giving.

1. Spontaneous gifts (impulse giving--directly helping a worthwhile cause)
2. Major Community Sundays (ten big Sundays with *regular* offerings)
3. Special planned (2-4/year, usually with institutional focus)
4. Major project (every 3-4 years, may focus on mission, building, etc.)
5. Annual giving (pledging to annual budget, tithing)
6. Enduring gifts (endowments)

Lives the principles of giving.

1. Living is Giving
2. People give to a winning cause
3. People have a spirit of generosity
4. People live forward to positive expectancies
5. People give to people
6. Money follows mission
7. People give out of compassion, community and hope
8. Relax, have fun, enjoy life, live in Christ

Builds on the best practices, the three resources, that contribute to generous giving:

1. Giving pattern: giving goals are based upon past patterns.
2. Assets: quarterly analysis makes us continually aware of our full assets.
3. Giving family: we encourage all to share their generosity.

The congregation's whole giving family includes a) leaders, board, team clusters, b) friends and family, c) mission project persons, d) community persons, e) persons served in mission, f) constituents, g) members of your congregation.

(location 3919) Appendix A: Twelve Keys Celebration Retreat

(location 3958) Appendix B: Charts

- Seating Capacity
- Available Parking
- Giving Value of Parking

(location 4003) Appendix C: Twelve Keys Action Plan

Relational Characteristics

1. One Mission Outreach
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Shepherding Visitation
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Stirring, Helpful Worship
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Significant Relational Groupings
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Strong Leadership Team
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Solid Decision Process
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Functional Characteristics

7. One major program
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. Open accessibility
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. High Visibility
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. Land, Landscaping & Parking
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11. Adequate Space & Facilities
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. Generous Giving
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Claim current strengths (underline 8s, 9s, 10s)

Expand one current strength (underline a second time)

Add one new strength (circle a 1-7 to grow to an 8)

Act on your plan (decide your one-time actions)

Strengthening a Current Strength

Key Objective 1:

Key Objective 2:

Key Objective 3:

Key Objective 4:

Adding One New Strength

Key Objective 1:

Key Objective 2:

Key Objective 3:

Key Objective 4: