

Introduction to Pastoral Leadership and Parish Administration



by the Rev. Dr. Jamison J. Hardy

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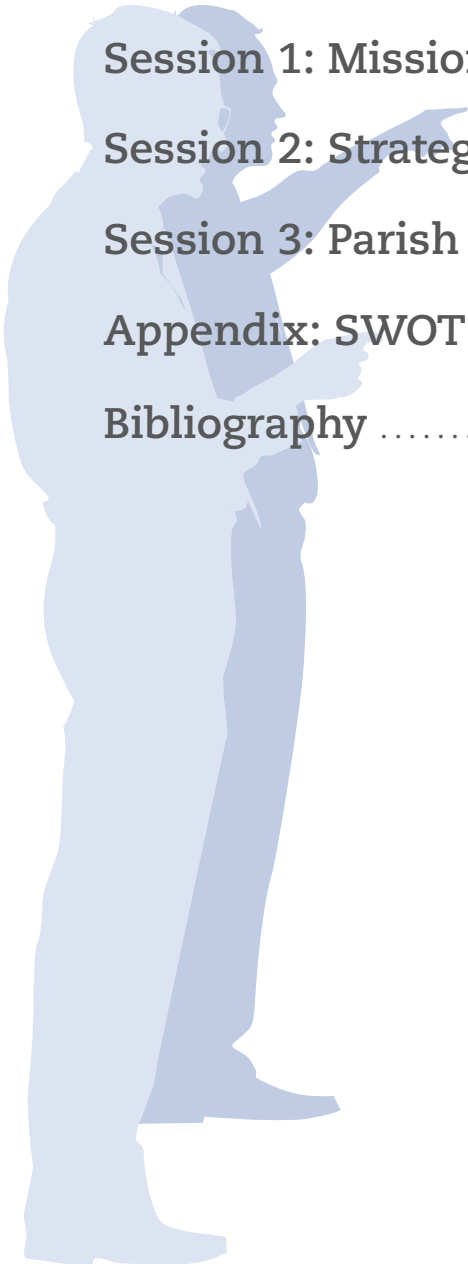
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Session 1: Mission Statement

Martin Luther, when writing on Hab. 3:19, declared, “Write the vision; make it plain upon the table” (Luther’s Works, vol. 19). In this, he was discussing the prophecy of Christ’s coming. What needs to be understood is the overall concept that a vision is only as good as the communication that precedes it. In no way should it be construed that the vision of Christ’s coming is co-equal with a parish vision/mission. It is a simple point that communication is critically important to any vision/mission statement.

There is much debate about what a mission statement or a vision statement should say. For our purpose, we will use mission and vision interchangeably. As Luther states, vision/mission must be clearly articulated and clearly repeatable. People need to know what the mission of their church is and *how* they contribute to that mission.

There is often a lack of focus and a lack of direction for members to latch onto and be guided by. Pastoral leaders must seek to provide vision/mission guidance to their people at all times in a Christological and theological manner. Having vision is having purpose. People in congregations across America are seeking an orthodox Christological mission/vision to latch onto and be a part of.

One author I recently read put it this way, “Vision/mission is a picture of the future that produces passion.” When people are passionate, they are energetic. When people are energetic, they are engaged. When people are engaged, they are ready to work hard and be successful. Give your people a vision/mission to be a part of. Make the vision/mission unique to your local ministry setting and not some generic concept that simply replicates what might appear to be working in some other church setting.

In preparation for this course, you should consider:

1. Why are congregations seeking high-quality pastoral leadership? Give three examples of why congregations have a need for strong pastoral leaders in the 21st century.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

2. What is the mission statement of your congregation? Can it be communicated simply and is it easily reproducible? Is your mission statement something that may need to be updated or changed?

- _____
- _____
- _____

3. Why does your congregation exist as a parish? This question can be an offensive one for congregations that are dying. The good, old-fashioned answers of the church will simply not cut it. Word and Sacrament ministry is the key and centerpiece of a congregation’s life. It is not the only aspect of getting people engaged in ministry.

- _____
- _____
- _____

4. Who are you targeting as a parish when it comes to evangelism? (Try not to make this a generic answer; in fact, it should be specific to the people, place and ministry where you are serving. Let me be clear: There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to this!)

5. Congregations that have no direction accomplish little to nothing for the sake of the Gospel. What can your congregation offer the community where you are located? What is God calling you to do in your community to be a beacon of spiritual light to the community?

6. Finish the sentence: “Because of our congregation’s mission, we will minister by...” This is specific to your congregation and should not simply be a reproduction of the closest and most successful neighboring congregation to yours. Be individual and unique in your ministry’s vision.

7. Effective pastoral leadership is always holding the mission of the church before the eyes of God’s people and challenging them to live the mission in word and deed. Are you holding the mission of your congregation up to your people?

Peter Drucker, the great leadership expert, discusses the idea of vision and mission by pointing out that a vision statement should be short enough to fit on a T-shirt. That is to say, a phrase should be simple and to the point when it comes to vision/mission. This is not overly complicated or something that should be taxing. Simply state what it is that your congregation is able to do well. This helps bring focus and clarity to your congregation and ministry. People want simplicity and direction when it comes to church life. Complicated long-windedness never wins over followers.

Session 2: Strategic Planning

A good leader spends time looking at ways to improve the ministry setting where he serves. A good leader also works with the leaders of his congregation to fashion a strategic plan that points the congregation in a specific direction. He also has a goal to help raise up other lay leaders in the congregation as a means of involving everyone in the process of doing ministry.

The Harvard Business School published a book about strategy that points out the importance of having a plan and evaluating your organization's capacity to carry out that plan. Churches tend to resist this type of business talk since it has historically been used to attack the theological position of a church/denomination. The reality is that churches are businesses and they must constantly examine the operational side of how they are doing within their ministry context. Luther points out in his commentary on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount that self-evaluation and self-examination are key to a Christian life. Without examining ourselves and measuring what we are saying and doing against the Word of God, we are no different than the pagans.

1. How do you know what to do if you don't know where you are going or what it costs to get there? Direction is a key element for ministry today.

a. Thoughts?

b. Why do congregations struggle to move forward in ministry?

c. What direction can your congregation move in that will accentuate the strengths of your people in ministry for the Gospel?

2. SWOT Analysis: Use the questions that follow to help fill out the SWOT analysis for your congregation. (The SWOT analysis template can be found in the appendix.)

Strengths

a. What are areas of your ministry where your congregation is successful? What is your congregation known for in your community? What are the strengths of your ministry?

b. What are the spiritual gifts of your people? Are they using them for God's kingdom?

c. Are you helping your people find and use their spiritual gifts?

One of the greatest contributions a pastor can make to his people is encouraging them to use the spiritual gifts that God has given to them. In some cases, people do not have the capability to see the gifts and talents that God has given to them, and they need others to encourage them to go and do.

Weaknesses

a. What are the weaknesses in your ministry? It is good that you are open-minded to discuss the areas that you can improve upon. Don't be put off with this discussion. Be honest and open.

b. Do you admit that you and your congregation have weaknesses?

i. What are the weaknesses of your ministry?

ii. What are you doing to address those weaknesses?

Opportunities

a. What are some opportunities in your ministry?

b. What are the areas of your ministry that need improvement?

c. Identify some areas that your congregation is not dealing with now and where it could make an impact in the future.

d. Think outside of your comfort zone. Do you have people with gifts and passions that can serve in areas that you cannot?

Take time to examine the strengths of your people and connect them with opportunities of service in the ministry setting where you are located.

Threats

a. What are some threats to achieving your ministry goals?

b. Identify congregational issues that could become threats to your ministry.

c. What are the competitive forces that exist in your ministry settings?

In the book *You Don't Need a Title to Be a Leader*, Mark Sanborn points out the importance of implementation. He writes, "Implementation is both an action and a skill." You can have the greatest strategic plan in the world that looks unbelievable on a shelf; however, if that plan is never implemented, it is only on paper.

Once you work through the SWOT analysis with your congregation, work together with your leadership to craft a strategic plan of implementation as a means of doing better ministry for the sake of the Gospel. This effort should bear fruit and help your ministry move forward with a strong and clear Gospel witness. Keep in mind that implementation is as important as crafting the strategic plan itself. Taking the time to implement a well-crafted strategic plan will pay dividends in the future.

Session 3: Parish Finance and Administration

The argument has raged for ages about whether the pastor should be involved with church finances. From my perspective, the answer is yes. If a pastor is not involved with the parish finances, how can he understand what the spiritual needs are of the congregation? Parish finances go hand-in-hand with the administration of the parish. The two are not separate, nor are they distinctive from one another. Without a clear understanding of church finances, a pastor can't be an effective administrator.

Some of my colleagues ask, "What does parish administration have to do with preaching and teaching about the Sacraments?" For me, preaching and teaching the entire Word of God is what we as parish pastors are called to do. Therefore, when speaking about parish administration and finances, a pastor must see his role as a proclaimer of the entire Word of God. That Word clearly calls us to be good stewards of the resources that our Father has entrusted to us. In that light, what part of the administration of the parish do you play?

1. List the responsibilities that you have as the pastoral leader in your congregation.

- a. _____

- b. _____

- c. _____

- d. _____

e. _____

f. _____

g. _____

h. _____

2. List the responsibilities that you have as the pastoral leader in the corporation at your church.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

f. _____

g. _____

h. _____

3. Do you know what ministry really costs at your parish? If you asked me today, I could tell you what our average cost is for doing business on a month-by-month basis. I could give you examples of our giving and spending for any given month without hesitation. What is the real financial cost of doing ministry in your local setting?

4. Discuss ways that you can assist your congregation in being a better fiscal steward as a congregation. What are the areas where your congregation can improve in order to be a better fiscal steward? Do you communicate those areas to your people and make them accountable?

5. Most congregations resist the idea that they are measuring themselves in ministry. For most congregations that I know, they resist because they are ashamed of the results that such an evaluation would bring. How can we know what is working and what is not if we are not measuring ourselves against some sort of benchmark or standard? Do you benchmark yourself or measure your congregation's progress as it is carrying out its mission? How could you do a better job at this?

6. Do you have a plan for your congregation and its activity/involvement in the community? If not, spend some time thinking about this question and come up with some ideas as to how your congregation can be involved and contribute to the life of its community.

Implementation is a key factor for most failed strategic plans. Congregations that fail to implement a strategic plan or an institutional plan will likely be a congregation that will struggle even to survive. Mark Sanborn points out that implementation is the single greatest factor that helps to determine the success of a congregation. What separates the good congregations from the great ones? The congregation that implements its plan is the congregation that is doing great ministry. The congregation that measures its progress is the congregation that is concerned about the work that the Father has placed in front of it. Good stewardship is not a reaction to what we have been given. Good stewardship is a lifestyle that places the firstfruits at the front of all that we say and do.

SWOT Analysis Template

Mission Statement:

Vision Statement:

Examples

- Advantages?
- Capabilities?
- Resources?
- Experience?
- Financial?
- Marketing?
- Location/Price?

Action items

Strengths

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Weaknesses

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Examples

- Disadvantages?
- Lack of Capabilities?
- Reputation?
- Financials?
- Vulnerabilities?
- Deadlines?
- Cash flow?

Action items

Opportunities

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Threats

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Examples

- Area developments?
- Technology?
- Market niche?
- Partnerships?
- Research?
- Seasonal?
- Trends?
- Competitors' weaknesses?

Action items

Examples

- Legislative/political?
- Environmental?
- Market demand?
- New technologies?
- Obstacles?
- Loss of staff?
- Sustain financially?
- Current economy?

Action items

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