



Wakefield Ministry Scheme



VISION BUILDING
A Resource pack for
Churches

(1) Mission and Vision
Statements

About this booklet

Many churches have been tempted to jump on to the Mission Statement bandwagon without really thinking through the processes involved. A church that means business will need to address the basic questions of what it is there for and how it hopes to fulfil that purpose over time. In today's world it is no longer self-evident what any particular church is for—certainly nothing can be taken for granted, such as 'to care for the spiritual needs of the people', 'to be a religious presence', 'to keep alive the rumour of God', and so on. There need to be more precise decisions and choices about what any particular church is setting out to be and to do. Mission and Vision Statements can be a valuable tool to help with this. This booklet gives some guidelines about the right way to use them.

4. Review and monitoring

Perhaps the greatest pitfall of all is when a church goes to the trouble of producing its Mission / Vision Statement and then never returns to check out progress in implementing it. A Statement should not be set in stone. The more general Vision element may well be pretty permanent for the church in question, but the elements of Mission should at least be open to reappraisal as circumstances change. PCCs should revisit the Statement on an annual basis so that what has been agreed cannot simply become a taken-for-granted piece of history ('been there, done that...') Churches need to be honest about how they are getting on.

b. *Aims and Objectives*

Statements in general terms need to be spelt out through 'milestones'? along the way: measurable practical goals which are the way anyone can see whether the Statement has 'cash value'.

c. *Personal commitment from the congregation.*

Ownership is always hard to achieve. The nature of most congregations is such that people are inevitably at different levels of commitment and there will always be some who are only dimly aware of what is going on beyond coming to church on Sunday. But in building and sharing a vision certain things need to be clear:

- Every vision has a challenge and a cost: it isn't a real vision if everyone feels perfectly comfortable with it and it's fully compatible with the *status quo*;
- There needs to be a 'ripple effect' of commitment to the vision, out from the centre, as people pass it on so that it reaches the 'fringe', if not in detailed form, at least as a sense of something happening;
- Accommodation has to be made for different degrees of acceptance and involvement- it is potentially damaging for a vision to become something which people are either 'for' or 'against' in the life of the church.

1. Basic Principles

- a. A Mission or Vision Statement is a piece of shorthand. To produce one implies that homework has been done first. In particular the church needs a *sense of its history* :
 - an understanding of the past can lead to
 - a clear analysis of the present which is necessary for
 - a realistic plan for the future.
- b. In the mission of the Church, *being* precedes *doing*. Remember therefore that any Statement must reflect a view of what the church is called to be (and to become). Biblical images such as the Body, the Temple, the Vine, God's People, etc. can help to discover this.
- c. However: an *action plan* does need to follow. To jump straight into 'what must we be doing?' without paying heed to a. and b. above will not work; but to stop short at b. leaves things up in the air. Thus for example it will be useful to break things down into different spheres of activity such as Worship, Outreach, Communications etc.

2. Mission or Vision?

Unfortunately, the terms 'Mission Statement' and 'Vision Statement'? are sometimes used interchangeably, and sometimes in different ways by different writers and organisations. There is no 'right answer', but as a recommendation:

A Vision Statement will tend to be shorter and will set out in a sentence or two the fundamental *raison d'être* of the church. It will state in the most general terms who we are and what we are here for. It will express our ultimate aim in a way that sets forth something to strive towards.

A Mission Statement will probably be longer and will give a little more concrete detail about the means by which this church sets out to make its vision a reality. It will set out something of who we are and what we believe we are called to do- what our mission is- in terms of key beliefs, values and activities.

Many churches will produce a single statement which in fact incorporates elements of both- typically it will say something like 'St So-and-So's church is here to glorify God and make known the Lord Jesus Christ [vision] by being a warm and welcoming family offering lively worship and serving our neighbour in the power of the Holy Spirit [mission]'.

Another way would be to keep the Vision element separate by having an extremely brief statement which could appear on all church publications, and developing the Mission element in a more detailed statement which could then be unpacked into aims and objectives corresponding to the

various sections within it- for this see more under **Implementing Your Vision.**

Either way, the advantages of having such a statement, if properly prepared, include:

clear direction	positive thinking
motivation for leaders	sharper focus
measure of effectiveness	pulling together
new ideas	changed lives
moving from maintenance to mission	new growth
slaying of sacred cows	tensions addressed

3. Making the Statement effective

Too many Mission Statements get published in parish magazines, pinned up on church notice boards, and then are quietly forgotten! Here are some ways of ensuring that this doesn't happen:

a. *Application to every area of church life*

A typical statement will offer a common vision for every part of the church's life, together with some elements of mission which clearly relate to distinct areas. Thus each area of the church's life can have its own version of the statement as a basic document to which to work. Each group, organisation, and individual involved in ministry should be encouraged to refer back regularly to the statement to check out whether ongoing activities are on track and in line with the rest of the church.