

A Vision for Ministry

Giving Witness to the Members of the Congregation about the Ministries Supported by the Offerings of the People

A Vision for Ministry provides members of the congregation with a meaningful narrative that celebrates your parish's mission and ministry. In your Vision for Ministry you will celebrate your identity as the people of God who share enthusiasm for your ministries. Through your Vision for Ministry you will help people see why we invite their joyful, thankful offerings and how their offerings of time and money further God's kingdom here on earth.

The Vision for Ministry

Objectives:

- *To focus on, to place emphasis on, the current and future mission and ministry of the congregation.*
- *To enhance a sense of participation and ownership in the mission of the church.*
- *To show the members of the congregation how their offerings serve God and support the mission and ministry of the church.*
- *To encourage greater, even more generous participation in mission and ministry.*

Strategy:

Involve as many members of the parish as possible in identifying the current ministries of the parish and in a discernment process that will help us determine other ministries for which there is a need and to which God may be calling us. This involvement is designed to enable all members to see the ministry functions of the parish as part of their stewardship. The results of this process are reported back to the parish in creative ways that not only identify the current and future ministries but also offers witness/stories from those who have been touched by these ministries. Active participation by members of the parish is solicited throughout the process.

The process of collecting the stories and publishing the results quite often results in "Ah-ha" experiences. While members may be aware of the individual ministries, seeing them all together and reading the stories is often inspirational.

The Vision for Ministry precedes both the financial commitment program and the preparation of the parish budget for the coming year. After the Vision for Ministry is prepared and distributed, the members of the parish are invited to participate in and support the ministries through their response to the financial commitment program. The parish budget is then prepared. The budget is the financial plan that supports the Ministry Plan of the parish. It is a spending guide for dollar resources. It is not meant to be an ironclad set of chains that restrains ministry. It should be what support and enables ministry, not what prevents ministry.

Techniques for the Development of a Vision for Ministry:

Begin with the parish's Mission Statement. Review it and update it if necessary. The entire Vestry and other interested parishioners should be involved in the update process.

After your review of the Mission statement, you are now ready to look at the current ministries in which the parish is involved. Many parishes have found that their ministries can be grouped into the following four ministry areas as the focus for the Vision for Ministry:

- *Ministry of Service/Outreach*
- *Ministry of Worship*
- *Ministry of Christian Formation/Nurture*
- *Ministry of Pastoral Care*

If your parish uses other terms, use them if members are most accustomed to seeing them. One word of caution, however, some parishes include a ministry they call the "ministry of administration." Administrative functions should be allocated into the four ministry areas noted above since administration serves to support the other ministries of the parish.

A group with access to the current parish budget information does an allocation process. Each line item figure in the parish budget is allocated against the four ministry areas. Most of the line item areas will be allocated

across more than one ministry area based on the amount of time the individual (when the line item is someone's compensation package) spends in each of the four ministry areas or based on the amount of time the church buildings are used for a particular ministry area (when allocating property and building expenses).

Another group determines the amount of volunteer hours that are offered in support of each ministry in the parish. The total volunteer ministry hours given are then allocated across the four ministry areas in a manner similar to the allocation for the line item budget.

Finally, another group of people collects stories/witnesses from people whose lives are being touched and transformed by the ministries of our parish. These stories are collected with the best stories being included in the Vision for Ministry.

A Vestry Member leads a visioning group. The participants in the visioning group come from various ministry areas in the parish so as to produce a comprehensive overview. Initial input may be sought from the entire congregation through a congregational survey. The visioning process identifies ministries in which the parish may not currently be involved but which are ministries in which the participants feel God may be calling the congregation. This may include the increase or enhancement of current ministries or the development of brand new ministries.

The entire Vision for Ministry is then compiled in one document. It will include the description of each of the four ministry areas. It will describe the particular ministries that comprise each ministry area. It will offer a summary of the allocation of financial resources that support the ministry area. If volunteer hours are collected, it will also offer a total of the voluntary hours that are being given to support the ministry area. It will include some of the stories/witnesses of people whose lives are being touched and transformed by the ministries of the parish. Finally, it will include the new ministries in which the parish feels it is being called to engage.

The Vision for Ministry is published in a brochure and mailed to each member of the parish with a cover letter (see sample). It also makes a fine brochure for introducing new members to the parish. You may also wish to put the Vision for Ministry in PowerPoint format. In which case, it can be

used at an Adult Forum, with an Adult Christian Formation Class, or with an Inquirers Class. It could also be used at a Festive Meal (if you are using the Festive Meal Commitment Program) or at the Annual Meeting of the Parish

Proposed Letter to accompany the Vision for Ministry

Dear Partners in Ministry,

This is your 2003 copy of our Vision for Ministry. We think that it contains an exciting vision for the ministry we share together. Please study it carefully, think and pray about our possibilities for ministry together, and consider ways in which you may play an even larger part in our ministry.

The vision presented in this brochure is not our 2003 budget. It is not our 2004 proposed budget. Rather, it is a realistic assessment of the ministries in which we are currently engaged and shows our potential to do ministry together in the coming year. It is based on our parish mission statement, a mission statement you helped us develop. How much of this ministry we are actually able to do will depend largely on the decisions each of us make as part of our stewardship commitment program.

The parish budget will be developed following our ingathering Sunday and will reflect the projection of what all of us said we are willing to do in support of the mission and ministry God has given us. As God's people, we have been sent out to serve. If we are willing to trust God who empowers us, we can do all that is proposed in this Vision for Ministry and much, much more.

When you consider your financial commitment, we hope you will prayerfully consider your commitment to God as a sacrificial, joyful offering of yourself to God, an offering that will support the ministry we believe God is calling us to do at this time in our history.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

*The Rev. _____
Rector*

The Parish Narrative of St. Luke's Church in Fairport NY, The Stewardship Report of St. John's Church in Clifton Springs NY, and The Parish Narrative of St. John's Church in Oakland CA show the ministries in which these congregations are currently involved.

What follows are some suggestions/additions/examples that would make these documents a more forward-looking Vision for Ministry.

These Vision for Ministry pieces would be inserted, or added, following the description of the ministries in which the parishes are currently involved.

[These are examples only. They probably represent more new ministries than any congregation would consider in any one year. But they are offered as possibilities that a parish might consider.]

The Ministry of Outreach: Our Service to Others

Our Vision for Ministry includes:

- The implementation of a food cupboard to provide for the hungry in our community*
- Providing transportation for the elderly in our community*
- Forming a Social Ministry Committee that will assist us in searching out and serving the hungry, the naked, the sick and imprisoned in our community*
- Taking up an offering for Jerusalem 2000 to help meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in the Middle East*

The Ministry of Worship: Giving Glory and Expressing Thanks to God

Our Vision for Ministry includes: *The addition of a Saturday evening Eucharist of an alternative worship style that will appeal to a new generation of Christians*
The addition of a youth choir
Televising our Sunday services on the local cable TV station

***The Ministry of Christian Nurture/Formation:
Providing Support for the Health and Growth of Our Spiritual Community***

Our Vision for Ministry includes: *The implementation of a time/talent bank so that the God-given gifts of the members of St. Peter's on the Rock can be offered to do God's work in a number of new and creative ways*
The creation of a New Member Ministry Team who will provide leadership for us as we seek to invite others to join our Christian family
The implementation of a Vacation Bible School to invite the young people of this parish family and their friends to learn about the love of Jesus for one week during the summer
The implementation of the Emmaus Program to assist us in our faith journeys

The Ministry of Pastoral Care: Providing God's Compassionate Love

Our Vision for Ministry includes: *Trained Lay Eucharistic Ministers to take the Eucharist to the shut-ins of our parish*
Trained Lay Pastoral Care Ministers to assist the ordained clergy with pastoral care in the parish

Draft of a proposed back page to the Vision for Ministry

YES, WE ARE GOD'S PEOPLE SENT TO SERVE ...

AND YES, WE DO SERVE ...

BUT GOD CALLS US TO DO EVEN MORE ...

AND WE CAN DO MORE ...

The Vision for Ministry presented in this brochure is our invitation to do more. To meet this challenge, this opportunity, will take the participation of all of our members. It will take our prayers. It will require the offering of our time and our talent, and it will require the sacrificial, joyful, generous offerings of our money.

We ask you to pray regularly and frequently for the ministries of our parish.

We ask all of you to take advantage of the ministry opportunities that are offered, and to give of your time and your abilities to see that they are all accomplished. Just think what we could do if all of us, each and every single member of this parish, gave just a bit more of our time and talent to support each of the ministries described in this brochure. We believe we are called to these new ministries and we don't want to do them without your commitment, support and participation.

We ask all of you to prayerfully consider your financial commitment. If all us give sacrificially and thankfully to support this work, if all of us make offerings to God that truly represent our thanks to God for God's love and generosity, just think of the wonderful work of ministry we can do together!

AS GOD'S PEOPLE, WE HAVE BEEN SENT TO SERVE ...

LET'S DO IT!

**Prepared by Bruce Rockwell, Financial Officer and Assistant to the Bishop for Stewardship,
Diocese of Western Massachusetts**