

A stylized graphic of a church building. It features a purple cross on top of a purple roof. Below the roof is a teal horizontal band. The main body of the building is composed of several colored rectangular blocks: a purple block on the left, two light green blocks on the right, a dark blue block on the left, and a dark green block on the left and a light purple block on the right. The building sits on a grey brick wall. A purple beam of light shines from the ground up into a white rectangular opening in the brick wall.

MOVING FORWARD

2:18

A 40-DAY
DISCERNMENT EXPERIENCE
FOR
CONGREGATIONS

**Campaign
Planning Guide**

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The New Interpreter's Study Bible, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN 2003.

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CAMPAIGN PLANNING TIMELINE

Choose Leadership Team

The Leadership Team will be responsible for receiving the discernment groups' feedback from the study and utilizing it to create the vision and ministry plan.

This can be an existing team, such as a Church Council or Administrative Team, or a vision team can be assembled specifically for this task.

The team should represent a wide cross-section of the church's congregation. Including the Discernment Group Leaders is recommended if possible. These people will be familiar with the group responses and should be able to speak in detail about specifics. Most likely, this exercise will take several months. Make sure the members understand the level of commitment before joining the team.

Finalize Discernment Group Leaders

The Discernment Group Leaders will play a critical role in the success of the campaign. They are tasked with building community, promoting unity and equality within the group, and encouraging open and authentic responses from the group members.

The group leaders can be existing leaders, such as a Sunday School or Small Group teachers, or you might consider using members of the Leadership Team.

The Group Leader does not teach. He only facilitates the conversation and records the group responses. So while teaching is not a required gift, the spiritual gifts of wisdom, shepherding, administration, discernment and hospitality would be most useful.

Don't forget virtual groups. If you have members that cannot attend an in-person group, look at the need for an online group leader.

Hold Informational Meeting

Bring the group leaders onboard as early as possible. Bring them together and explain why the church is embarking on the campaign and be specific about what you hope to accomplish. Present the material and explain their specific role. These people will be your greatest advocates when encouraging your congregation to participate. So make sure they understand and support the goals of the campaign.

Finalize Worship, Events, and Meeting Schedules

Finalize all scheduled events and put them on the church calendar. As well, be aware of other church functions and do not allow schedule conflicts for this time. Once you have the calendar set, publish and communicate it to the congregation, especially things outside the normal schedule. If you have Leadership Team meetings, prayer experiences, or community gatherings planned, make sure everyone knows well in advance.

Finalize Group Logistics

Determine how many groups you have established. What are their meeting details? Where and what time each week?

Are there still people who haven't registered? You might need to reach out and make other arrangements.

Buy necessary group supplies to ensure proper resources when meetings begin.

Order Study Materials

Study materials need to be ordered 4 weeks in advance if at all possible.

1. Supply chain disruptions could delay your order.
2. Group leaders need their materials at least two weeks in advance to begin preparing.

Publish Campaign Information

Communicate all important information to your congregation. You probably already have.

Do it again. Remember, **"I DIDN'T KNOW THIS WAS HAPPENING"** is real!

Share the worship schedule, share group locations and leader contact information, share special events information, and most importantly - Share your reasons for doing it. And invite everyone, again, to take part.

Deliver Group Leader Materials

Group leaders need their materials two weeks before the study begins. Also, make sure to deliver any other group supplies if the study is held in a home.

If the groups are being held in the church, make sure the rooms are prepared in advance with all necessary items

PRE-CAMPAIGN CHECKLIST

Action/Activity	Person Responsible	Due Date	Date Accomplished
Discuss with Church Leadership			
Engage the Staff/Prayer Team			
Choose Leadership Team Members			
Choose Campaign Leader			
Finalize Group Leaders			
Begin Worship/Sermon Preparations			
Schedule Special Events			
Begin Church-wide Communications and Registration			
Finalize Worship, Events, & Meeting Plans			
Order Study Materials*			
Conduct Leader Training/Deliver Leader Materials**			
Finalize Group Logistics			
Publish Campaign Schedule: Group locations, Special Events, Etc.			
Make Final Contact For Registration			
Communicate Book Delivery Methods to Congregation			
Distribute Books			
Deliver Needed Supplies to Leaders or Their Rooms			
Campaign Begins			

* Study materials need to be ordered at least 4 weeks prior to the beginning of the study

** Leader Training should occur at least 2 weeks prior to the beginning of the study

NEEDED GROUP SUPPLIES

Each Discernment Group will need the following supplies available in their meeting space. Assign this detail to a person with the ability to purchase/acquire items on short notice if needed. If groups are added or locations changed at the last minute, this person needs to be able to create a working space quickly.

1 Leader Kit

- _____ Leader Guide
- _____ Participant Guide
- _____ Church Profile Poster

Classroom Supplies

- _____ White Board or a Flip Chart
- _____ Necessary writing tools
(Dry-erase markers do not work well on paper)
- _____ A Bible (for reference)
- _____ A Candle & Lighter (if possible, for the invocation)
- _____ Tissues
- _____ Pens/Pencils

If the group is meeting at the church, check these before the first meeting:

- _____ Lighting (any bulbs need replacing?)
- _____ Air (Is the heating/air system working properly?)
- _____ Writing Tools (Do markers, etc... need replacing?)
- _____ Can everyone in the group access the room? (are there mobility concerns?)
- _____ Signage (Is it clear where the group is meeting?)

Online Groups

- _____ Do all group members have link/meeting access?

CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE

Activity	Date	Title/Topic
Workbooks Distributed Leader Training		
Sermon 1		Campaign Introduction/Invitation
Week 1 Group Meetings		Our Witness
Sermon 2		
Week 2 Group Meetings		Our Past
Sermon 3		
Week 3 Group Meetings		Our Strengths & Resources
Sermon 4		
Week 4 Group Meetings		Kingdom Needs
Sermon 5		
Week 5 Group Meetings		Our Calling
Sermon 6		
Week 6 Group Meetings		Turning Points, Foundations and Challenges
Sermon 7		

THE GROUP LEADER'S ROLE

As group leader, you are not asked to teach anything. You are a discussion facilitator. You are welcomed to share your opinions, however, you are not to lead the discussion in any particular direction.

During this experience, you have six responsibilities:

- Pray for the wisdom and discernment of your participants
- Maintain a grace-filled and respectful environment
- Encourage your participants to engage fully in the experience
- Give each person the opportunity to share thoughts
- Faithfully record the collective responses on the group poster
- At the end of the experience, deliver your group's responses to leadership

What Does That Mean?

PRAY

This is an important exercise in determining your church's future.

As a leader, you should be praying daily that your church will come to a greater understanding of its role and calling in God's kingdom.

ENVIRONMENT

People will disagree on some issues. Your responsibility is to maintain an expectation of Christian love in the room, even through tension.

It is alright to disagree. It is not alright to be hurtful or demeaning to our brothers and sisters. This means you will need to be prepared to intervene with gracious words and attitudes if these things occur.

ENCOURAGE

This study is the avenue being presented to your congregation for those wishing to take part in the future planning for your church.

Some people, unfortunately, may wish to voice their opinions without actually engaging in the prayer, discernment, and scripture reflections provided.

Be grace-filled, understanding that some people fear any kind of change. However, be encouraging of the process. The goal of this discernment exercise is not to share our own opinions so much, but to join together in seeking God's will.

The question is not,

"What is your opinion?"

Instead, we will be asking,

"What has God revealed to you?"

OPPORTUNITY

Be aware of everyone in the room. Read the body language. Invite the quiet folks into the discussion. Do not allow anyone to monopolize the conversation. And do not allow anyone to push their own agenda.

RECORD

You will most likely not be able to write every response on your poster. Instead, have an initial place for the responses: a flip chart, white board, etc... Record each response given.

Once everyone has had a chance to respond, try to find commonality within the answers.

When completing your poster, try to record consensus thoughts from the entire group.

You have pages in each section entitled, ***Points to Consider***. Record the thoughts and ideas here that are not widely held, but could still be valuable for the leadership team.

DELIVER

The key word for this process is INTEGRITY. As a group leader, you are expected to faithfully deliver all relevant information to church leadership. You were asked to serve in this role because you are trusted by the congregation to show no bias in any direction. This is important because all participants need to feel that their thoughts are being taken into consideration as decisions are being made by the leadership.



Color Codes and Fonts



RGB: 74,106,101
Hex: #4a6a65



RGB: 57, 97, 122
Hex: #39617a



RGB: 157, 201, 186
Hex: #9dc9ba



RGB: 178, 180, 219
Hex: #b2b4db



RGB: 11, 45, 108
Hex: #0b2d6c



RGB: 97, 64, 153
Hex: #614099



RGB: 57, 20, 97
Hex: #391461



RGB: 229, 229, 229
Hex: #e5e5e5

Fonts

Open Sans

BANK GOTHIC MD BT

All colored bricks, logos and artwork can be found in your **Digital Assets Folder**. These are downloadable for social media, slides, and print communications.

SERMON NOTES

In this section you will find notes, summaries and scriptures that coincide with each week of the study.

The first sermon, "**God Still Speaks**," can be delivered at any time before the campaign begins. It is a good way to introduce the study and encourage the congregation to participate, so consider it for several weeks before group meetings begin. Use it as a registration kick-off to help your campaign manager prepare to order materials.

All other sermons are delivered following the group meetings for the week. Use the enclosed **Campaign Schedule** to create a calendar so everyone can stay on schedule. Be sure to adjust for any holidays or breaks in normal church activities.

Also included are optional activities that can act as spiritual formation enhancements to the services. These activities can be very meaningful to some in our congregation. Also, consider aligning your prayers, liturgies and music with the theme of the week.

A google doc can be found inside your "**Digital Assets Folder**." It contains all the sermon notes in one file. This one can be edited, copied, pasted, whatever will make it easier for you in sermon preparation.

FIRST SUNDAY

Theme: God Still Speaks

Focus Scripture: Acts 13:1 - 3

Introduces the study

Date: _____

Summary

The story of Paul's conversion on the Damascus road is most likely well-known to most. That experience was intimate and focused on the exchange between two individuals: Paul and Jesus. The story of his calling, however, is quite different. In this story, Paul, along with his friend Barnabas are called into mission. The call comes to the gathered believers in the church at Antioch. Reminiscent of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit leads a group into making a bold decision for the sake of Christ. And just like the early believers, Jesus has promised to speak to us as we gather and seek His will.

Main Points

Acts 13:1 - 3

Notice, God did not speak to Paul or Barnabas individually. The Spirit spoke to the leaders of the church gathered together. They were worshiping, praying, fasting - seeking God's presence. Why? Maybe because it wasn't just Paul's or Barnabas's mission. This was the church's mission. I figure the church had to be committed to supporting Paul and Barnabas if they were to succeed. Finances, Provisions, Prayer - The church had a huge role to play in the ongoing work of the Kingdom, Paul and Barnabas were important. But so were the bread bakers, cloak makers, and fund raisers. I bet it took that entire church to get those two fully prepared to begin their journey.

But also, when God calls His people, He confirms that call. He doesn't call just one person in most instances. Paul didn't have to convince anyone in his church of his plan. I believe God revealed His plan to the church for two reasons:

1. So Paul and Barnabas would be uplifted and encouraged
2. So the others would see their role in the process too

Matthew 18:19 - 20

God still speaks today. Jesus promised us, if we are unified in seeking Him, He will always be in our midst.

A NEW CREATION

Sample

Activity:

Create the space for considering the question,
"What does it mean for our church to be the temple of God's Holy Spirit?"

Prayer:

*Lord God, Maker of Heaven and Earth,
In your grace, reveal to us what You are creating
through us.*

Amen

Scripture:

"Come and be his "living stones" who are continually being assembled into a sanctuary for God.

For now you *serve as* holy priests, offering up spiritual sacrifices that he readily accepts through Jesus Christ."

1st Peter 2:5 (TPT)

Invite the artisans in your congregation to "create" God's vision for your church. It doesn't matter what kind of art: painting, wood carving, poetry, quilts, anything... Your youth will be possibly using Legos this week. So, assure your members, any form of creativity is acceptable.

Invite them to share what God has laid upon their hearts for the future of your church. Then schedule a time and space for their works to be shared.

Some people will be more comfortable expressing themselves this way than participating in group discussions.

Also, people are almost always fascinated by the work of their friends and neighbors. This time of sharing could be rich in the formation of common vision and ideas.

LEADERSHIP DISCERNMENT NOTES

Give a complete set of these worksheets to the Leadership Team members before their work begins.

They are a tool to be used when studying the ***Church Profile Posters*** submitted by the various discernment groups.

Each Team member is asked to study the posters and to complete the worksheets before the team's group meetings begin.

Depending on the flexibility of your Leadership Team members, it might be a good idea to take pictures of each poster so that the members are not required to come to the church to do all their homework. They can use the pictures as references during their personal discernment times.

LEADERSHIP DISCERNMENT NOTES

"You will hear your Teacher's voice behind you. You will hear it whether you turn to the right or the left.

It will say,

'Here is the path I want you to take. So walk on it.'"

Isaiah 30:21 (NIRV)

Lord,

Give me vision to see Your will, as revealed to Your people. Lead me, Holy Spirit, in the ways to become the church that You would have us be.

Amen

WHAT IS OUR WITNESS?

Common elements among the answers:

Sample

Things that caught my attention:

What I discern from these answers:



OUR WITNESS

What are the beliefs, values, and message that God has entrusted our congregation to share with the world?

What themes or ideas must be present in this statement?

LEADERSHIP DISCERNMENT PROCESS GUIDE

Use this guide as a framework for your Leadership Team meetings and activities. Consider making a copy of the following page as a handout for all team members so they can have a sense of direction during your process.

LEADERSHIP TEAM DISCERNMENT PROCESS



LEADERSHIP TEAM DISCERNMENT PROCESS

Step 1

MINISTRY INSIGHTS/ POINTS TO CONSIDER

Look at these documents. Answer the following questions:

- Are there any issues that require *immediate* resolution?
- Can we resolve this issue now, without long-term discussion or planning?

Fix these problems first; those that can be easily addressed and corrected.

Step 2

POSTER SUMMARIES

Study the posters submitted by the discernment groups. Use the enclosed worksheets, *Leadership Discernment Notes*. Give one complete set of the worksheets to each Leadership Team member to be completed.

Step 3

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Discuss the team members' notes. Are there any other issues that require immediate attention? Work on these issues until solutions are found and implemented.

When all immediate needs and concerns have been identified and addressed, update the congregation on those items. Let those that invested the time and effort into the process see that the church leadership is actively addressing the issues raised inside the group discussions.

Step 4

OUR WITNESS

What are the beliefs, values, and message that God has entrusted our congregation to share with the world?

Based upon the Leadership Notes, craft a statement that defines your church's witness. Begin by listing the commonalities found in the discernment groups' responses. As a group, answer the following questions:

- What sentiment, or idea, is prevalent?
- What elements must be included?
- Does this message glorify God and adhere to Scripture?
- Is it easily understood and memorized?

After the Leadership Team has agreed upon the first 3 questions above, consider allowing a group of 2 or 3 team members to take the elements and craft a statement (or several.) Once complete, the finalized version can be brought back to the group for approval and consideration of question 4.

Step 5

FOUNDATIONS

Based upon the Leadership Notes, determine those elements that **absolutely** must remain the same in your church. Most likely, you will not be able to include all items submitted by your discernment groups.

Focus on those items that appear to be universal in agreement. Do not dwell here on elements that will appease only one group, or segment of the church.

These are the fundamental elements that define your congregation.

When creating the list, ask the following questions:

- Why can't we change this?
- Is this important to the majority of our congregation?
- Does this support our witness?

What are the practices, attitudes and characteristics of the church that must remain unchanged?

Why These Two Questions First?

These two ideas, your witness and your non-negotiable elements, create the framework for all other decisions.

OUR WITNESS

All future ministry decisions will first answer the question,

"Does this support our witness?"

The integrity of your witness is paramount to following God's will for your church. Everything else must flow from that point.

WHAT NEEDS TO STAY THE SAME?

These elements are the foundations of your church. They make you who you are.

Not only do these elements remain the same in your design, but they set the direction for all other decisions.

Every process, ministry, and attitude going forward needs to align with your foundations. For example, let us look at a simplified illustration:

Your church has decided that your choir and traditional worship service are foundational. They must remain the same.

Your choir director takes another job elsewhere. Because this ministry is foundational, it makes no sense to hire a part-time replacement in order to save money. By doing so, you will likely erode the quality of this core ministry.

Your foundational elements take priority over other concerns.

What's Next?

Now that you have agreed upon your two critical support structures:

- **OUR WITNESS**
- **FOUNDATIONS**

you can begin to build out the rest of your church's calling and vision.

OUR MINISTRY PLAN

Our Vision

We will glorify God and live out our calling by:

Sample

"...whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

1st Corinthians 10:33b

OUR MINISTRY PLAN

Our Priorities

This is the point where actual ministry decisions will begin to develop within your Leadership Team. The question of,

"What should our church look like going forward?"

will now settle into priorities.

Most churches do not have the resources to make everything happen at once. So it is here that you must decide where to focus your efforts for the next 3, 6, 12 months, or even longer.

Go back to your **Leadership Discernment Notes**. On the back pages for each section, you will find those answers. Work as a group to make the decisions on what items will be accomplished and create a timeline of expectation for when all items will be accomplished. Create small pairs or teams to work on each goal. Divide the work according to the different gifts, skills and interests of your team members.

When you have your plan agreed upon, create a timeline to follow up on the progress of those goals listed. Go ahead now and schedule the check-in dates so your plans don't get lost in the busyness of church as usual.

And don't forget to update the congregation on your plan. Share it and ask for help in accomplishing your goals. Let the congregation take ownership in the vision they helped to create.

OUR MINISTRY PLAN

In order to be faithful to our witness and our calling, we have agreed upon these ministry priorities for the next 6 months:

How we will accomplish these goals:

Our challenges:

When do we expect to have these initiatives completed:
