

6 Times When It's a Good Idea to Change Your Church's Mission Statement

Classic wisdom taught us that our mission or purpose statements are timeless. In many ways that's true and it's a helpful teaching concept. And in an ideal world, it works. **But in reality, there are times when a leader should change or renew or recreate the sense of mission.** So don't let the classic wisdom freeze you and prevent a significant opportunity to create fresh meaning and new progress for God's people under your care today. When should you rewrite your mission?

1) When no one knows the one you have

This happens when leaders have not been emotionally connected to the big idea of what the church is about; therefore they don't use it as an everyday leadership tool. **It never makes it into conversations, team meetings, volunteer recruitment or preaching.** Usually this is the result of some ridiculous committee-based jargon that is way too long. Or it may be just a short over-generalization of the Great Commission or Great Commandment that has no real teeth for folks in the congregation.

*EXAMPLE: Grace Presbyterian in Houston is in a two-year interim between senior pastors. The people of Grace engaged a vision process to better articulate their identity their and direction. Their previous mission to "Love God, Love people" wasn't specific or actionable enough. So they are currently proposing a new expression, "**Building a faith family by encouraging people overwhelmed by life to trust Christ in everything.**"*

2) When your existing mission reinforces, unintentionally, a consumeristic mentality

We look for the "catalytic" factor in a good mission; that is, it should reinforce upon hearing it, that it involves everyone in the gathering of God's people. **Sometimes a statement subtly reinforces the idea that "we have a pastor or staff who does the mission for us."** (Even though this is always unintentional, it is more common than you would think.) The last thing you want is a statement that strengthens the death of the church with a clergy-laity false divide.

*EXAMPLE: Bruce Miller grew [Christ Fellowship](#) in McKinney, Texas to about 2,000 in worship attendance. As the growth began to slow, I challenged him the idea that his mission wasn't working any more: "Helping people follow Christ" What had clearly been everyone's role when the church was 200 people (helping people), wasn't so clear now that the church was 2,000 in attendance. He didn't believe me, so he tested it out. I told him to ask his leaders "Who helps people around here?" They all replied, "The staff." So within the Vision Pathway process, the team added two simple words that changed everything. The mission of Christ Fellowship is now "**People helping people, find and follow Christ**"*

3) When you simply have a better way to be more clear and compelling as your church grows and multiplies

Sometimes greater clarity comes as you lead. Sometimes a significant accomplishment behind you leaves you with an entirely new perspective looking ahead. At such times, a tweak or evolution of your mission can be strategic and powerful for the people you are leading.

*EXAMPLE: At [Faithbridge UMC](#), Ken Werlein saw tremendous growth in the first ten years to over 3,000 in worship attendance. Up to that point he had always led passionately with the same mission: "Making more and stronger disciples of Jesus." To keep it catalytic, it would often be followed with the phrase, "By being a bridge of faith to people everyday." But as the church grew, Ken was concerned about the quality of reproducing disciples. They spend an entire year re-envisioning their groups process and wanted to further clarify the end that was already embedded in the mission but not clearly expressed as it could be. Their mission now: **"Making more and stronger disciples of Jesus, who make more and stronger disciples of Jesus."***

4) When you have discovered your Kingdom Concept and can be more contextual with your language

We have worked with churches that have a good statements of mission that become less meaningful on the backside of our Kingdom Concept discovery work at [Auxano](#). The Kingdom Concept is an tool we use to further discern your church's unique strength by examining more thoughtfully, the unique place the church is located (local predicament) the unique people that God has gathered (collective potential) and the unique passion of the leadership team (apostolic spirit). It answers the question, "What can your church do better than 10,000 others." Church leaders love to refresh their mission after this experience.

*EXAMPLE: The Elders at [Northwest Bible Church](#), led by Neil Tomba, were excited to land the plane on their Kingdom Concept, that unpacked how the church was called to "Make Jesus real in a make-believe world." They discuss how their local area is filled with worldly and religious pretense. They discussed their passion to embrace and reinterpret brokenness. Afterwards their existing mission, albeit good, didn't feel great. It was, "Equipping people to passionately pursue Christ to do whatever he asks of us in the world." Now their mission is **"Inviting people into the unexpected joy of desperate dependance on Jesus."** Can you feel the difference?*

5) When you borrowed the language of another church model to get started and now you have "grown -up"

Yes, many great leaders planted churches in the 80s, 90s and 00s by looking to great models like Willowcreek, Saddleback, NorthPoint, LifeChurch.tv, to name a few. **These model churches also created vocabulary that leaders were inspired to adopt.** This borrowing of language works fine in the early years. The problem is, God is always doing something unique and new. That means at some point in the church's history and the leader's core, **a hunger emerges to express that something new;** that something one-of-a-kind that God is doing. If this is happening you should name it by re-articulating your mission.

EXAMPLE: David Saathoff at [Bandera Road City Church](#) has seen God do amazing things at their church in San Antonio. In the early days, David was proud to take many cues from Bill

*Hybels. In fact, BRCC was a poster child seeker church. The church's mission in its first chapter of ministry was, "Helping people far from God become fully devoted followers of Christ." The mission was meaningful and strong in the beginning. But a leader always knows where they get their words. David never forgot that his words were really articulated from the heart of Bill Hybels, not his own. Later, through the Vision Pathway, David would find the perfect words for what God was doing uniquely through the people of BRCC. Today their mission is, **"Helping people far from God be catalysts of spiritual and social change."***

6) When you are reinventing or reinvigorating a declining church

If the mission isn't happening it isn't happening. I don't think I have ever seen a turn-a-round without some new leadership or leadership tools in place. **Remember the most fundamental tool of leadership is the statement of mission.** It answers question zero- the question before all other questions. There are simply times where you need a re-statement to be a part of a congregational reboot.

*EXAMPLE: Years ago [Crozet Baptist Church](#) realized that life wasn't going to get better as a congregation unless they started focusing outward. With twenty-five deacons in the room we set out to re-articulate their mission. With many different opinions in the room, there was one thing they could agree on: their town was located in the fastest growing county in the state and they would see unprecedented opportunity to reach people in the church's one-hundred plus year history. At the end of the Vision Pathway, they had a brand new day of clarity starting with the mission **to encourage people in our ever-expanding community to follow Christ with ever-increasing passion.***

Read more from Will [here](#).