

## Build a Movement, Not a Monument

*Does your church dream more about where you have been than where God is leading you?*

**Have you ever looked around to realize that your church might be living today by focusing on yesterday?**

Many churches long for the past, dreaming about the “good old days.” When faced with questions that are not easily answered, or walking through times of trial and doubt, churches, like people, often want things to be the way they used to be.

The problem is, the past has gone. While we may look back and respect it, and maybe even at times revere it, we cannot live in the past, especially when circumstances demand answers for the future.

If you are interested in learning how to lead your church away from the past in order to focus on what God has ahead, consider this solution:

**Solution #1: Protect the past while envisioning the future.**

### **THE QUICK SUMMARY - Church Unique, by Will Mancini**

*Church Unique*, by Will Mancini, describes a new kind of visioning process designed to help churches develop a stunningly unique model of ministry that leads to redemptive movement. He guides churches away from an internal focus to emphasize participation in their community and surrounding culture.

Mancini offers an approach for rethinking what it means to lead with clarity as a visionary. He does this by explaining that each church has a culture that reflects its particular values, thoughts, attitudes, and actions and then shows how leaders can unlock their church's individual DNA and unleash their congregation's one-of-a-kind potential.

### **A SIMPLE SOLUTION**

Bold aspirations must be rooted in the values and visions that have come before. For you to be alive and in touch with God's work in the world, you were necessarily touched by the vision of others who came before.

Leaders should look for the artifacts of vision every day within their specific ministry contexts. An ongoing discover of uncovering and appreciating the visionary contributions of past and present help prepare your own unique vision to take shape.

*Visionary leadership is the art of protecting the past as we champion the future.*

We must listen carefully to the ones who have gone before us and learn about their vision. How does their vision intersect with what God is calling us to do? What artifacts of vision exist in the past that can be used to support our vision of the future?

- **Uncover the creation story** – all vision has a creation story, the events and the passion that birth the idea of a better future. Visionary leaders uncover every creation story in the lineage of the people they are influencing.
- **Collect the hidden gems of vision vocabulary** – in the articulation of past vision, there are key terms that live large with meaning. They are “words within the walls” that often stay undiscovered or unpolished. Consequently, they are undernoticed and undercelebrated.
- **Find the “Hall of Fame” memorabilia** – Behind the pictures on the wall, the stained glass windows, and the sound system of your church home are the stories from the people who have forged the character of your church. These “hall of fame” memorabilia speak stories to your church’s uniqueness.

- Will Mancini, *Church Unique*

## A NEXT STEP

Dedicate 20 minutes at the beginning of your next three team meetings to discuss the three vision artifacts listed above.

**Meeting Number 1: Uncover the creation stories** – the problem with most stories of the past is that they remain in rough form, half-buried in the conscious of the organization with few people who can recall a God-moment that got it started to begin with. If your church is more than five decades old, there may be few, if any, living members who were present at the birth of your church.

Create a plan to recover lost or half-buried memories of your church’s creation stories from long-term members, attic crawl spaces, newsletter archives, or historical documents in your community. The end result should be documented, sharable stories of your church’s birth and ensuing growth that serve as momentum to move forward into what God has for tomorrow. Example: Use significant historical changes like a relocation or renovation to fuel vision for significant changes that lay ahead.

**Meeting Number 2: Collect the hidden gems of vision vocabulary** – as your teams complete the work of uncovering the creation stories, alert them to be intentionally looking for words and phrases that are often repeated or seem to have significance attached to them. Make sure the teams collect these words and phrases for others to see and enjoy.

As you review these words and phrases, consider how they may be polished and integrated into the living language of your church today, as a way of honoring the past while honing language for the future.

**Meeting Number 3: Find the “Hall of Fame” memorabilia** – as your teams complete the work

of uncovering the creation stories, also alert them to listen for mentions of items and objects to which others have attached importance. Most importantly, record the stories behind those objects that give them significance. Make sure the teams note these items and importance. An old window, chair, or other random object could serve as inspiration from where we have been to get where God is leading.

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