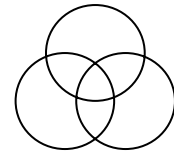


Staying on Target

“If you don’t know what you are aiming at, you will hit it every time.” Learning how to take careful aim is a key skill leaders need to develop. And for those leaders desiring to enhance the mission of the church, knowing how to accurately identify that mission is the first priority.

Being Open. Begin by laying aside your personal agendas, expected outcomes and pet priorities. Instead decide to “dwell in the questions” for a while – questions about purpose, values, meaning and, especially, what God seems to be saying to you and your congregation. Spend lavish amounts of time in scripture and prayer with leaders. Do not go to scripture to ask questions, but to allow scripture to ask questions of you.

Shaping the Target. The target that defines your mission is formed by the intersection of three interlocking circles.



- Circle one is **IDENTITY**; it is being clear about the answer to the question “Who are we?” Who are we as followers of Jesus? Who are we as members of this community...as people of talents and history...as Lutherans...as seekers of truth and justice...as members of a global church? Being clear about the uniqueness of your congregation in the midst of God’s greater family tells you how you begin to fit in to the whole.
- Circle two is **PURPOSE**; it is being clear about “Why are we here?” What is God’s expectation of us? What does scripture tell us...or our heritage...or our history and tradition as a congregation...or our place within this community? Knowing the reason for your existence helps you order your priorities.
- Circle three is **CONTEXT**; it is being clear about “Who is our neighbor?” Describe the neighborhood. What is the mission field right outside our doors...what gives your neighbors energy and hope...what describes their needs and problems...who are these people that we are called to serve?

Hitting the Bull’s Eye. For something to be a part of your congregation’s true mission it must grow directly out of your identity, purpose and context – not just one of them or two of them, but all three. Holding an annual ethnic food festival may grow logically out of your identity (and may be a lot of fun), but if it does not fit your context or the purpose God has for you, it is not a part of your mission. If your neighborhood desperately needs opportunities for physical exercise, but this need does not fit your understanding of the congregation’s purpose, it is not part of your mission. Your mission is a natural expression of **WHO** you are, **WHY** you are here, and **WHAT** your neighbor asks of you.

Questions to Ponder

1. *What is your congregation’s Identity? Purpose? Context?*
2. *Can you list six defining characteristics for your congregation’s Identity, Purpose, and Context?*
3. *How does your congregation’s budget reflect its priorities for mission?*

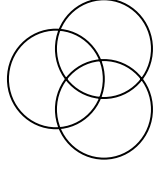




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