

## PURPOSE AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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**Purpose:** Research has shown that congregations who are clear about what God's purpose is for them in the world, are in a much better position than those who are not. This is one of the central points for renewal.

When defining congregational purpose, it is important to remember the following:

1. It is GOD'S purpose for us, not our purpose for ourselves that is to be defined and discerned. As such, clarification of purpose is a spiritual exercise.
2. Purpose for the congregation is always related to God's work in the world (the mission of God or "mission dei").
3. Purpose always includes the world as a focus. A purpose to 'survive' has been shown to be unfruitful ministry. This is in keeping with the gospel message reminding us that new life means risking or even experiencing death. The church is an instrument of God's work.

**Guiding Principles:** (contain core Values)

When a community comes to grips with its purpose, it must also come to grips with its identity. Every community has values, often unarticulated and taken for granted. A key to renewal is to claim the values of our future, the ones God desires for us. These values, articulated in missional statements, serve as guiding principles.

Guiding principles are the central things that are to be held in all things. They are the non-negotiables. By discerning them and articulating them ahead of time, they become useful in the midst of difficult decisions. A key is to be clear about them and to agree to them, not out of a sense of legalism but out of a desire to attain the vision that God has for us. Not everything has to be stated. What is said should be that to which it is most important to be held accountable.

Guiding principles are:

1. Directly related to the biblical values of Jesus and God's vision for the church in mission.
2. Only meaningful in the context of God's purpose.
3. Articulated in ways that will be helpful in making decisions on the journey.
4. Clear enough and few enough to be helpful.
5. Ideals to which the community agrees to be held accountable. They may conflict with current practices.

When writing guiding principles, it is best to articulate them in terms that help advance the purpose (you need to have some sense of purpose to do guiding principles – even if you have not yet formally written a purpose statement).

More than 5-7 guiding principles are probably getting to be too long to be helpful. Always be sure that "Jesus is Lord and Savior" goes to the top of the list and then develop the remainder.