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THE SGI  
**JOURNAL**  
OF LEADERSHIP

CELEBRATING OUR

**30th**

**JOURNAL ISSUE**

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2025



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## MISSION STATEMENT

Leading the United Pentecostal Church International to think strategically about future growth.

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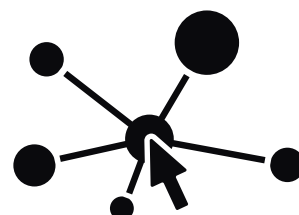
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**This resource is interactive. Click the items in the Table of Contents to move around and explore each issue.**



# The Vision of SGI

Darrell Johns / SGI Committee Chair

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## Welcome to the 30<sup>th</sup> issue of the SGI Journal!

This issue reflects the heart, direction, and purpose of the Strategic Growth Initiative. As we reach this milestone, our current and past editors Paul Records and Seth Simmons are to be commended for their fine work, as well as our writers and translators for the Spanish and French versions.

The Strategic Growth Initiative is not a program intended to excite enthusiasm alone. It is an initiative to advance the mission of the church. SGI serves the vision of General Superintendent Dr. David K. Bernard and the General Board of the UPCI. The SGI team seeks to partner with ministers and ministries to add value by strengthening, growing, and increasing the body of Christ.

Being strategic does not imply being unspiritual. We must have the operation of the Spirit or we are a dead church. We cannot advance our mission by might or by power, only by the Spirit of the Lord (Zechariah 4:6). Strategic leadership is how we implement the direction of the Spirit.

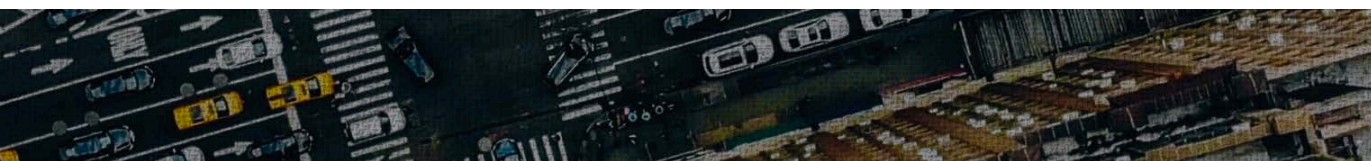
When we know *what* to do, being strategic is determining the best way to do it. When the Spirit instructed Paul to go into Macedonia, his strategy was to go first to Philippi, a chief city of that region (See Acts 16).

When Jesus issued the great commission to the church, He gave clear instructions—*by whom, to whom, and where* the Gospel was to be preached. It is thoroughly Apostolic for leaders to value both spiritual sensitivity and strategic clarity.

SGI strategies include this journal, church growth, retention, district strategic plans, and partnerships with UPCI ministries. SGI stands for Strategic Growth Initiative with a threefold mission to strengthen, grow, and increase.

## Strengthen

Ministry places sustained demands on those who lead. Growth that comes at the expense of the health of ministers and their families is not an acceptable outcome. While SGI is not a solution to every challenge, it is designed to support leaders in cultivating strength—spiritually, relationally, and organizationally.



**Healthy  
leadership  
remains  
essential to  
lasting impact.**



## Grow

Growth has always been God's intention for His church. The Great Commission is inherently expansive, calling leaders to actively engage in the multiplication of disciples and churches. Jesus repeatedly taught on Kingdom growth, particularly in Matthew 13, and the early Church demonstrated this principle through intentional evangelism and discipleship.

If growth is to continue, leaders must recommit to clear, biblical models of evangelism and disciple-making. Resources addressing church growth and retention are archived at *Ministry Central* ([ministrycentral.com](http://ministrycentral.com)) to assist in this effort.

## Increase

Ultimately, the mission of the church and focus of SGI is to see the kingdom of God increase. Isaiah prophetically saw it: "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:7). When we plant and water the seed of the Gospel in the hearts of people, God will give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6-7).

**As I added these biblical references, I was challenged and convicted that so much energy and time is spent maintaining existing ministries rather than being invested in increasing the Kingdom.**

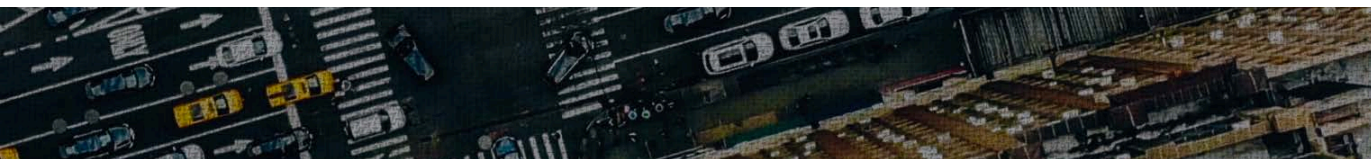
It is not my intention to put you (or myself) on a counterproductive guilt trip. However, what would happen if we strategically focused our attention and invested more of our resources on reaching and then teaching the lost people around us. After all, that is the mission of the church.

In summary, SGI is a strategic growth initiative. It is the vision of our UPCI leadership and the mission of the church. We exist to serve our constituency to strengthen, grow, and increase the body of Christ.

**By the grace of God, we can do this!**



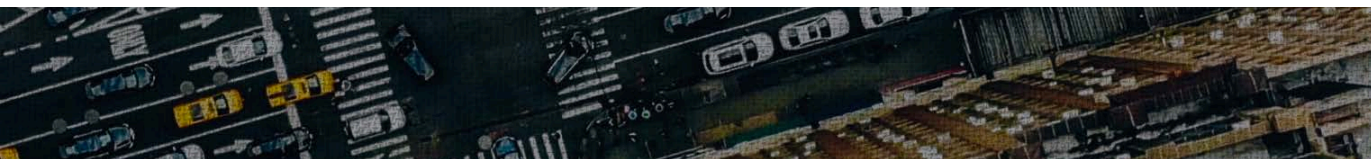
Darrell Johns serves as pastor of Atlanta West Pentecostal Church, assistant general superintendent of the Eastern Zone, UPCI, and chair of the Strategic Growth Initiative Committee of the General Board.



## EDITOR'S NOTE

**In commemoration of of 30<sup>th</sup> issue of the SGI Journal of leadership, we have selected a series of signature articles from past issues stretching all the way back the launch of the journal in January of 2021.**

Since the beginning, our objective has been to produce practical articles from credible leaders for team development, group training, and personal enrichment. As you reflect on these articles, may you be blessed and encouraged to continue striving for strategic growth!





# Strategic Preparation

*David K. Bernard / UPCI General Superintendent*

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**Leaders must continually plan for the future while attending diligently to the work of the present. They must prepare for future growth.**

Any outreach-minded pastor would be thrilled to win one hundred souls in a year—especially if he or she could retain a strong majority of them. For this dream to become a realistic objective, however, pastors must ask themselves and their churches several key questions. The following questions are not exhaustive but illustrative of the kinds of issues they must address.

## **1. How will the church effectively reach this many people?**

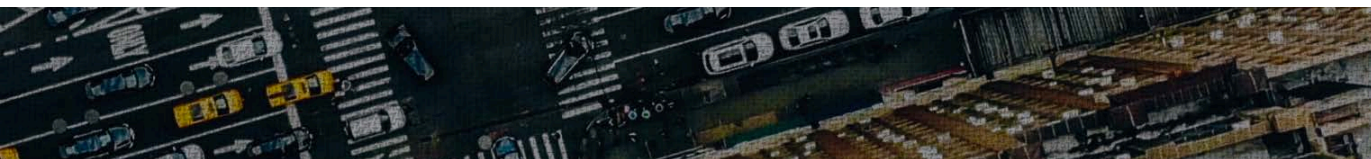
The church needs to develop strategies for intercessory prayer, effective publicity, effective outreach, special evangelistic services, and a visitor-friendly approach.

## **2. What will the church do with people when they come?**

The church must develop departments, classes, and activities that meet the social and spiritual needs of people of various ages and backgrounds. It also needs an effective discipleship program to incorporate people into the church, as well as an open attitude that makes it easy for new people to become fully integrated into the body. People of all backgrounds should be able to see that they can quickly become involved in the full range of social and spiritual activities of the church and that they have the opportunity to attain positions of recognition, influence, and leadership.

## **3. How will the church expand its structure and leadership as it grows?**

It will have to increase the number of departments, Sunday school classes, care groups, and activity groups. To do so, it must increase the number of volunteer staff and ultimately the number of paid staff. From the outset, then, pastors should begin leadership training and development. They should identify (at least in their own thinking) potential leaders and then invest time in preparing and qualifying them for leadership roles. Department heads and activity coordinators should continually look for qualified workers and for others who could become qualified through encouragement and training.



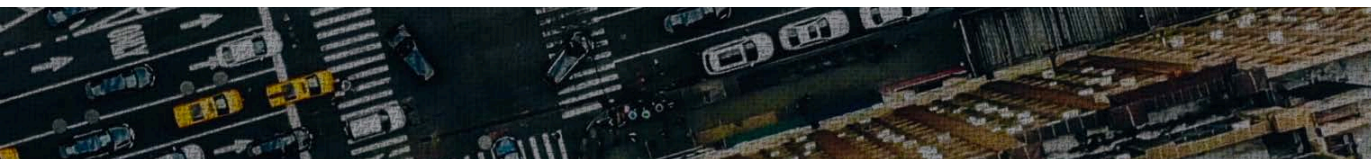
It is a good idea for leaders to develop assistants—not only to help in the present but to receive on-the-job training for leadership positions in the future.

#### **4. What kind of facilities will the church need as it grows?**

At every phase of growth, pastors and other leaders should think about what the church will need for the next level. They should formulate definite plans for the next two to five years and long-range ideas beyond that. They should plan the specific steps that will help them reach their goals in the desired time. When it comes to building, it is never too soon to begin dreaming, researching, praying, saving money, and working on-site and floor plans. Unexpected obstacles, delays, and cost increases are inevitable, so the sooner the planning begins the sooner the project can become a reality.



David k. Bernard serves as the general superintendent  
of the United Pentecostal Church International.





# Strategic Church Planting: Three Creations of a Church Plant

FEATURE ARTICLE

SCOTT SISTRUNK



## IDEA IN BRIEF

In this article, Scott Sistrunk challenges church leaders to rethink church planting as a progressive, Spirit-led process rather than a single administrative event. Drawing on Stephen Covey's concept of creation and applying it to ministry, he argues that every church is formed three times: first in the mind of God, then in the calling and preparation of the planter, and finally in its public and organizational expression.

He calls leaders to recover the primacy of the local church in God's redemptive plan, to intentionally nurture the divine calling of future church planters through training and spiritual formation, and to resist overemphasizing the final stage of official church launches.

Noted author Stephen Covey declared that all things are created twice. The first creation is in the mind. Then the visualization must become a physical reality as the second creation. I believe new churches are created at least three times in a progressive fashion. Because of this, we cannot expect church plants to spring up overnight. It is not reasonable to expect districts to add new works without significant care and cultivation. Instead of focusing on the end stage of an official church start, it may produce better results to give attention to each stage of the planting process.

### First Creation

The first creation of a church is in the mind of God from the foundation of the world. The second creation reaches an individual as the divine call, and God transmits His plan—remember, Jesus is the church builder—to the individual He has called. The third creation, the plan, must then become a reality. Each of these creations has serious implications and must be given careful attention. God's grand plan to save the world in the local church. It is His will for the church to grow both in the number of souls saved and in locations or congregations.

God has already paid the price for every soul in every city, and He has laid the foundation for a local church to be planted. No church planter is the originator of the idea to plant a church; the vision for every church plant comes from God Himself! God has already created the church He has laid on your heart to plant in the next town! Every church planter should rejoice that God has already gone before them and prepared the way. Leaders must be clear in communicating that our evangelistic mission is to win souls (make disciples) and to plant churches.

## **Second Creation**

The second time a church is created is in the heart and mind of the church planter. Much like a sermon is given by God to a preacher, God begins to give a plan and a vision to a church planter. This plan will, like a sermon, utilize the planter's unique talents, giftings, and experiences. The church planter's will, mind, and emotions become so interwoven with God's Will that the two become indistinguishable.

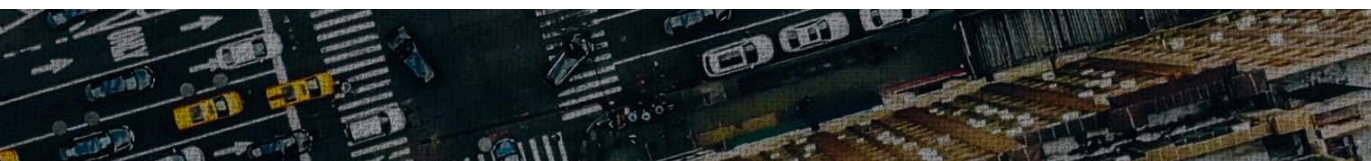
**Although God will use all of a person's talents and giftings to accomplish His purpose, no true church can be founded on the personality of the church planter. The essential elements of every church planting plan must come from the leading of the Holy Ghost.**

Just as the teaching of homiletics is never meant to usurp the place of the anointing, neither is church planter training such as North American Mission's Launch training meant to supplant the leading of the Spirit.

## **Third Creation**

The third creation is the one with which we are most familiar. This creation is the actualization of the new work. The plan becomes flesh if you will. The application is approved by the district board, paperwork is sent to headquarters, a church name is chosen, a pastor is named, and it is listed in the UPCI directory. This final creation is exciting, and we can inadvertently focus on it more than on the other two. When this happens, there is a lag in growth because the third creation cannot take place without the first two.

What I am advocating is that we make sure we are intentionally focusing on each of the creations of a church plant. To focus on the first creation means that we must believe, teach, and preach the primacy of the local church in God's plan to save the world. A city without a local church is a lost city. Every city is a city worth saving. The offence of God's Kingdom against Satan's kingdom is the expansion of the local church. The way an individual interfaces with the universal and invisible church is through the visible local church.



We must not succumb to the evangelical fad of emphasizing a “relationship with Jesus” and de-emphasizing the importance of the gathered local church and its leadership. Jesus is coming back for the Church that He purchased with His own blood.

When we focus on the second creation of a local church, we will emphasize the calling by God of an individual to plant a church in a specific location. Often there is a lag between the call to plant a church and the fulfillment of the call. Perhaps we could call this a germination or gestation period. We may not see it at the time, but the call to plant a church may begin at a youth camp altar and take several years to develop.

**As leaders, it is our responsibility to nurture this calling through inspiration and training.**

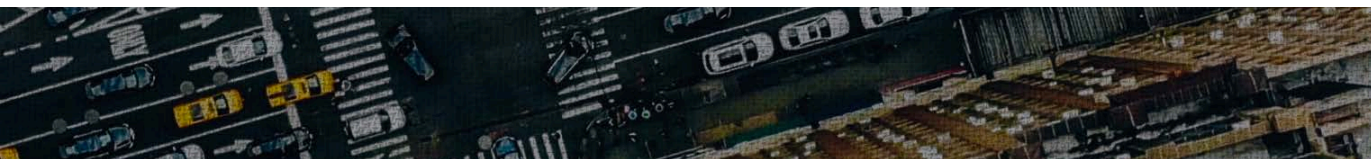
I meet so many young men and women at Launch training who do not have a start date nor a location, but they are there preparing. North American Mission’s Next Town initiative aims to cultivate this germination or gestation period. We believe that if we can get individuals to acknowledge that God has laid a city on their hearts by filling out a Next Town commitment card, then we can begin to give them monthly inspiration and training.

Every salesman knows that today’s sale will not pay tomorrow’s bills. The sale made today was the result of a “pipeline” process and the current customer is a product of many hours of follow-up and cultivation. Every pastor knows that if the altar is to be filled with hungry seekers this Sunday, much work will have gone into making the contacts and building the relationships that bring them there.

In conclusion, I’m calling on leaders to focus on cultivating a “pipeline” of church planters that will produce a consistent and sustainable pattern of growth in the number of new churches planted. We must raise up a mighty army of church planters in North America!

*Scott Sistrunk*

Scott Sistrunk serves as the  
director of North American  
Missions for the UPCI.





# Preaching to a Post-Christian Generation

*Ken Gurley*

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Newspapers are dying.

People are less literate and more visual, less inclined to spend hours poring over print, and more apt to scroll vertically or swipe horizontally. The average person no longer awaits the Sunday newspaper any more than they do Sunday worship. Witness Gallup's eighty-year decline in church attendance—with the steep decline from 2000 onward.

Effective preaching of the gospel (good news) demands an audience. For news to be acted upon, it must first be heard (Romans 10:14-15). Unheard preaching is like an unread newspaper. Embrace the challenge of presenting the everlasting gospel to a changing audience.

## **The changing audience**

In today's post-Christian West, the audience has changed radically. Godlessness, not godliness, is the spirit of the age. Witness the rise of the "nones" in the past few decades. Eight percent of Americans answered "None" to religious preference in 1990. That rose to 28 percent in 2023 (Pew Research Center). The fastest-growing religion in America is no religion. How else has the audience changed?

## **Collapse of trust in ministry**

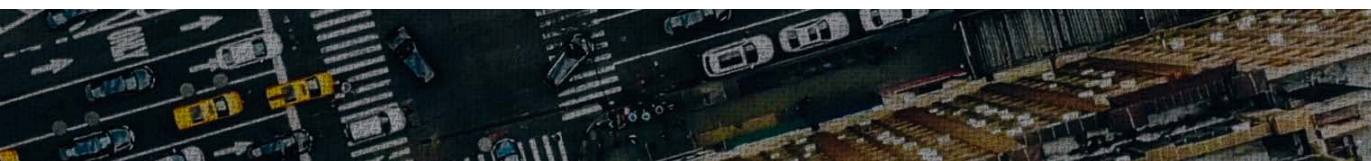
Society has forgotten the respected days of the "man of the cloth." Preachers rank right alongside used car salesmen in the minds of many. (No offense meant to purveyors of rusting wrecks.) So, we no longer preach with the former advantage of people trusting what we say.

## **Dissolving families**

The message of "repent" has been augmented with "reparent." Hence, the number of preachers graduating from our institutions is rivaled by the number of counselors. John 3:5 and Acts 2:38 are needed more than ever, but on their heels are the messages found in Colossians 2:9-10 and II Timothy 1:7.

## **Biblical illiteracy and shorter attention span**

Although accessibility to the Word has never been greater, the average American has less Bible knowledge than previous generations. Post-pandemic, Bible engagement has plummeted (State of the Bible, 2023).



**“The first job of  
a leader is to  
define reality.”**

**- Max Depree, *Leadership is an Art***



That means we must presume a lack of biblical knowledge on the pew. Shorthand references to Bible stories and concepts go over the heads of most Americans, and once their attention is lost, it's hard to regain.

### **Seasoned complacency**

Some in the audience will know the Word, but the probability is high that these individuals are less apt to have reached and disciplined a soul than previous generations. The Word has never traveled the eighteen inches from their brains to their hearts. They are hearers, but not doers (James 1:22).

These and other factors affect how preachers communicate. Preachers should not assume that communication occurs simply because the message is delivered. People need to hear and respond to the good news.

*The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.* - George Bernard Shaw

Preachers are honored to make God's Word come alive in hearers' hearts. What a sacred privilege and weighty responsibility! To communicate the gospel, we constantly insist on being heard by navigating the modern hearer's roadblocks and filters. Consider these timely suggestions that stem from timeless communication methods.

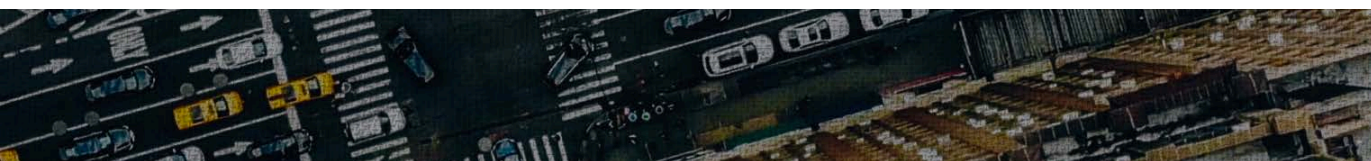
### **People should get their news from you—living letters known and read of all men (II Corinthians 3:1-3).**

Building relationships with hearers has never been more critical. The greatest preaching probably occurs in a small group, at a kitchen table, or in a coffee shop. Think Acts 2:42 or Acts 20:20. "Back to Acts" should be more than a slogan; it should be a way of life.

### **Where you start matters**

In our preparation, we begin with the Word, but in speaking, we start with a perceived need. Lloyd John Ogilvie, the late US Senate chaplain and prolific author, welcomed people at the front door of his church each Sunday morning and asked, "What do you need from God today?" Although his message was prepared, he mentally took those responses into the pulpit.

Lest that sound heretical, remember the building of the furnishings of the Tabernacle. God described them from the inside out, beginning with the Ark (Exodus 25-27). But when a man approached the Tabernacle, it was from the outside in, starting with the Brazen Altar.



The preacher knows the unseen objective, but always leads the hearer from where he is to where God wants him to be. So, begin by planting a bold “You Are Here” marker in your message. Then sherpa your way with the help of the Holy Spirit to the objective.

### **The way you take matters**

Visuals, illustrations, and Bible stories told and explained are needed waypoints in a message. Stories are more crucial than ever. People find themselves in a narrative, so tell stories. You will never have people’s undivided attention better than saying, “Once upon a time...”

### **The length of the sermon matters**

I could listen to preaching for hours—I love it that much—yet I recognize that every second counts when the Spirit convicts a human heart. So, my messages today are shorter than they were in years gone by. If the subject needs more time, it becomes a series. How long should the sermon be? Just long enough—and no longer.

### **The altar matters**

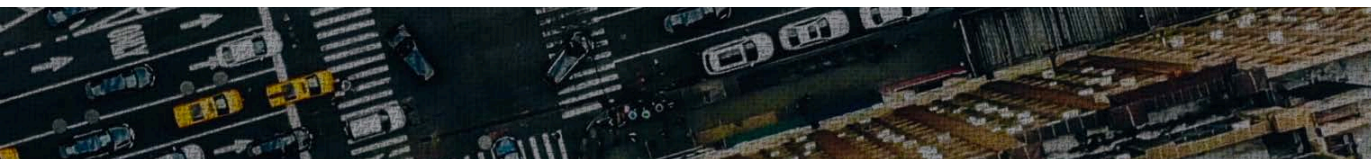
My personal conviction is that no sermon should be preached without the gospel. And no service goes by in our church without inviting people to the altar and salvation. If it does not lead to that, are we preaching the Good News? I know those “seasoned saints” who consider themselves connoisseurs of phenomenal sermons will be disappointed. But we get what we preach: tickled ears or changed lives.

I recently preached about the Holy Spirit baptism in our church. Two of those who received the Spirit have been raised in Pentecostal churches their entire lives but had never received the Spirit. Assume nothing. Preach the whole counsel of God, but always include the gospel (Acts 20:27).

The preaching doesn’t stop when the sermon ends. Who you are matters as much or more than what you say. Jesus said the words He spoke were “spirit” with a lowercase “s” (John 6:63). Our human spirits entwine with the words we speak (Luke 6:45). Hearers can sense if you love them—and that has more eloquence than a wordsmith. Preaching matters, and how we preach matters now more than ever. Try these suggestions. Innovate and experiment. New wine deserves new wineskins (Mark 2:22).

*Ken Gurley*

Ken Gurley has served as senior pastor of First Church since 1988. He and his wife reside in the Clear Lake area and have six children - one son, two daughters and their spouses - and eight grandchildren. He is the author of numerous books and the host of “Morning Devotion with Ken Gurley.”





# When the Disciples Multiplied

*Stan Gleason*

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The desire of every pastor and church leader is to see their congregation and ministry grow. Healthy and balanced local churches are growing and significantly impacting their community. The vision of Strategic Growth Initiative is to grow our number of ministers, congregations, and constituents, and all such kingdom growth begins in the local church.

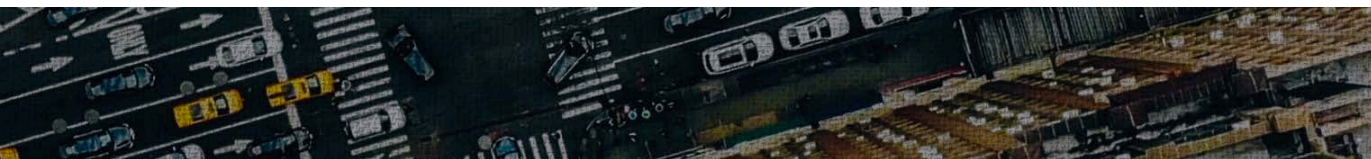
Our Pentecostal hermeneutic for all things “church” is The Acts of the Apostles. The narrative of that first church records that they were continually growing, and the kingdom of God was exponentially expanding. How was this possible? What was their strategy or method that produced such a remarkable impact in their communities? It appears that they had a pattern or a model that resulted in their extraordinary growth.

“Then the word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7, NKJV). Luke knew that his readers would recall this special apostolic epoch that was singularly marked by a dramatic increase of disciples (church growth) and massive conversion of local priests (i.e. our equivalent of denominational ministers coming to the truth). This was a direct result of the church intentionally increasing the Word of God (i.e. many individual presentations of the saving gospel of Jesus) in Jerusalem.

**Keep in mind when reading this verse that the first church had no local church campuses, no books on church growth, or seminars and conferences on growth. All they had was the model and training that Jesus gave them.**

Jesus was a communicator who understood how to keep his vision simple: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them...” (Matthew 28:19, NKJV). That’s it! *Go, make, baptize!*

Paul reiterated Jesus’ leadership model in Ephesians 4:11. He situated the fivefold ministry as the spiritual authority of the local church. He said that their job description was to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. Church leaders are directed to lead, train, and share ministry with those they lead. The result will be world impact. We will never reach the world without a fully engaged fivefold ministry, along with a trained, equipped, empowered, and released ministry of the saints.



Let me pause and mention that the average size congregation in America is seventy-five. The reason is because a local church can survive at seventy-five. They can raise enough money for a facility, they can pay their bills, they can have programs, and be part of a faith community. As long as the pastor is the primary “minister,” and doing most of the ministry, the growth of the church will hit the “75” ceiling.

**The only way that a local church can continue to grow is if the pastor decentralizes the ministry and shares it with qualified and equipped leaders and saints in the congregation.**

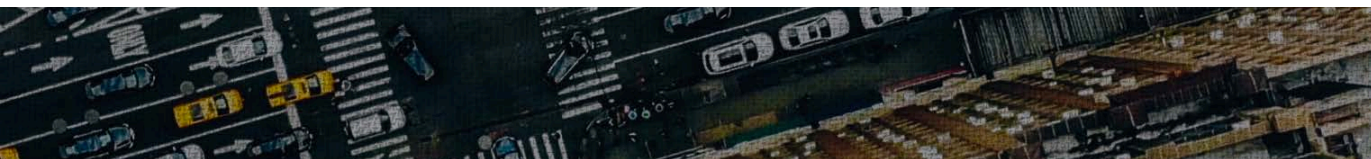
Sharing the work of the ministry could not be better demonstrated than the decision that the apostles made in Acts chapter 6 when they ordained seven deacons. Their initial job was to serve tables, but Stephen and Philip (who started out as saints) soon moved into spiritual ministry by working miracles, casting out devils, preaching, and baptizing (Acts 6,7,8). As a result, disciples multiplied and at least one church was planted (Samaria).

Every pastor has to ask themselves the question, “Who am I willing to train, release, and allow to do the work of the ministry?” Many pastors are content to see their new or old church members come to services, pay their tithes, and sing in the choir. But Jesus and the apostles had a much different expectation of the work of the ministry among the saints.

Jesus apparently believed in the saints when He prophesied that signs would follow (the believers) faith, including laying hands on the sick for their recovery, casting out devils, speaking with new tongues, etc. (Mark 16:17-18). A close reading of the Acts narrative demonstrates that church leadership and saints worked together in spiritual ministry to impact their world.

Peter picked up the importance of rightfully situating the saints in the place of spiritual ministry when he addressed them as “A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...” (I Peter 2:9). According to Peter’s language, saints are qualified for more than folding bulletins, opening doors, and passing offering plates. We will never reach the world without involving equipped saints in the work of the ministry as Jesus and Paul directed.

Perhaps the book title “The Acts of the Apostles” could have been called “The Acts of Apostles and the Saints.” In the first church, saints worked miracles, baptized (Acts 9:17-18), opened cities with the gospel (Acts 11:19-20), went everywhere preaching (Acts 8:4), released Saul of Tarsus into the night (Acts 9:25), spread the Word throughout all Asia (Acts 19:10) and so on. Would you agree that this is a little different picture than what saints do today? Why do we not think of saints doing this magnitude of ministry?



Saints are sheep and need to be led, but I tend to have a high view of the saints. In fact, the word “saint” carries the idea of being holy, set apart, sanctified, and having status. It’s a wonderful thing when the saints believe in the pastor, but it’s even more wonderful when the pastor believes in the saints. Do we view the saints as just a number to count on Sunday, our ATM, or our “Amen” corner? Or can we see them like the apostles saw them in the first church, as ministry partners sharing the work of the ministry and reaching the world?

The primary ministry of the saints should be as Jesus directed, to go and make disciples. This simply means to follow the model of Jesus who turned sinners into friends (Matthew 11:19) and friends into disciples.

**Making disciples requires the same skills it takes to make friends: be friendly, love, accept, share, and so on. It also requires bringing the taught Word of God into the relationship so that they can obey the gospel.**

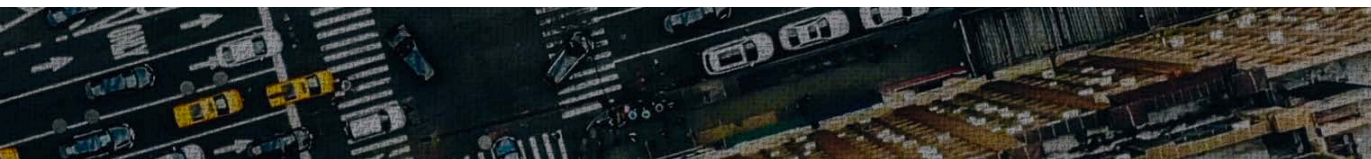
Living as a first-century disciple is a different idea than living as a typical 21st-century Christian. For example, there are Christians today who don’t believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, 80 percent of professing Christians in America are not in church on Sunday, and the average Christian gives less than 2 percent of their increase to the Lord. Today’s Christian is typically a consumer who is looking for the best attraction-model church where they can come, sit, sing, and soak. But Jesus said, “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:27, NKJV).

When I was pastoring and I preached or taught about evangelism or outreach, I could see a glazed look come over 95 percent of the people as they disqualified themselves because they were not extroverted or triple-A personalities. They were not excited about unnatural calendar events like door-knocking, street services, cold-turkey conversations with compete strangers, or big Sunday visitor contests.

Temperament has nothing to do with making disciples, but it has everything to do with obeying Jesus. In fact, in John 14:15 (NLT), Jesus said, “If you love me, obey my commandments.” Anyone who can make a friend can also make a disciple.

If a pastor desires to release saints into the harvest using a disciple-making model, there are four steps to creating a disciple-making culture in the local congregation:

- **Model the behavior you desire to see reproduced.** People don’t do what we say, but they do what they see. We can’t lead from behind a pulpit, but we must come off the platform, love sinners, and make our own disciples. I have personally disciplined and baptized future church board and staff members, missionaries, and denominational (ordained) ministers.



**If saints can  
make friends,  
they can make  
disciples.**



- **Place an expectation on your staff to make disciples.** Why do we need any ministry if it is not on the mission to make disciples? Too much of our ministry endeavors are inward rather than outward. Why can't worship leaders, youth pastors, and head ushers make disciples? Just because they have a ministry doesn't mean they get a pass from the mission.
- **Have regular training on how to turn sinners into friends and friends into disciples.** Share the training with your staff members who are doing it. Build disciple-making expectations among them and let them share their example and stories throughout the congregation.
- **Tell their stories.** Don't just tell your stories, but let your staff and saints tell their stories among the congregation. You can certainly do live testimonies but it's best to record them and show the video. A video can be edited for content and time. These stories will inspire other members of the congregation to get involved in making disciples. Their attitude will be, "If they can do it, I can surely do it."

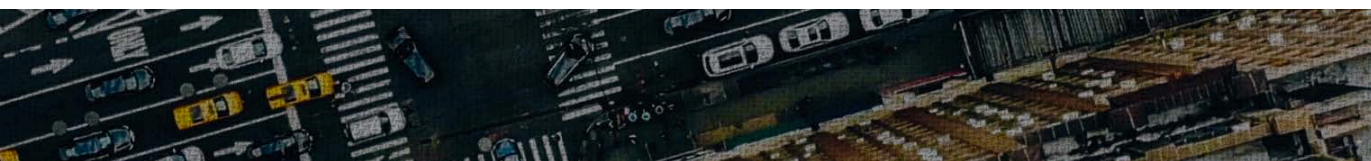
Disciples can be made one-on-one, or in small groups. It's wonderful to have a discipleship track at some point during your weekly church schedule. The most common time would be during a Sunday morning Christian Education session. You can offer various levels suited for degrees of spiritual maturity. Pentecostal Resources Group provides many wonderful discipleship training resources.

The Acts model multiplied disciples, ministers, and churches. By definition, disciples make disciples. If someone does not have a disciple, then they themselves are not a disciple, but if they have a disciple, they are on the mission. The apostles and their associates multiplied other members of the fivefold ministry. Peter disciplined Mark, Aquilla and Priscilla disciplined Apollos (Acts 18), Paul disciplined Crispus (Acts 18), Paul disciplined elders in Ephesus (Acts 19), and perhaps most remarkably, Acts 6:7 says that a great company of priests were obedient to the faith (i.e. denominational church leaders).

In summary, when pastors and their fivefold ministry partners each do their job of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, leaders will be trained, disciple-makers will be released, ministry beyond the walls of the church will dramatically increase, disciples will multiply, revelation will break in around the community and denominational pastors can receive more truth. In addition, churches can multiply through planting or absorbing existing congregations and properly incorporating them into the UPCI (this is happening more frequently among us).

*Stan Gleason*

Stan Gleason is bishop of The Life Church of Kansas City, MO. He has been happily married to the lovely Marlene for forty six years. Together, they have raised four children who are passionate Christ-followers and leaders in the Apostolic church. He is the author of *Follow To Lead, The Unflawed Leader, A Culture of Generosity* and soon to be released, *A Few Good Men*. He currently serves as assistant general Superintendent UPCI Western Zone.





# Thriving Through Chaos and Change

*Bryan Parkey, SGI Committee Vice Chair*

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**God placed you and His church in the middle of a chaotic and rapidly changing world with complete trust that you will advance His Kingdom! You are a mighty man or woman of valor, and you can do this.**

Quit worrying about whether you have "what" it takes to survive and rejoice because you have "who" it takes to survive and thrive!

Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5 KJV). Here are seven ways of staying that will help you during chaos and change.

## **#1 - Stay Calm**

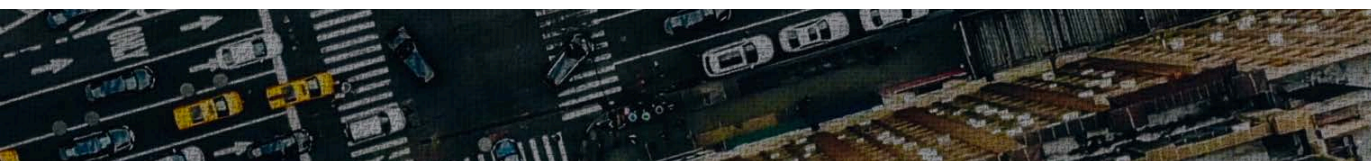
We are all hard-wired with a fight or flight response which can be very valuable in times of crisis. However, you cannot live in a state of panic and still be productive. Don't panic. Pray! As Paul writes, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV).

Don't beat yourself up for feeling fearful or overwhelmed because that can be an involuntary response. Faith is not the absence of fear but rather a decision to act in the face of fear. Many great men and women of the Bible were encouraged with the words "Be not afraid" because sometimes the answer to your prayer may scare you to death.

One of my life verses is when God tells Joshua, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." (Joshua 1:9 KJV). Don't worry; stay calm. God is with you wherever you are and will bring you through.

## **#2 - Stay Healthy**

You are a prize possession unto the Lord, and he cares about your well-being in every area of your life. Paul wrote, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23 KJV).



Sickness is sometimes unavoidable. Still, we should be as healthy as possible for the Kingdom's sake. Wellness comes from stewardship across the health spectrum.

- Spiritual Health
- Physical Health
- Emotional Health
- Financial Health
- Social Health
- Intellectual Health
- Vocational Health

Parker Palmer said, "Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to our true self and give it the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves but for the many others whose lives we touch" (Pete Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*).

When traveling by airplane, the flight safety announcement always reminds the traveler about the oxygen masks that will appear if the cabin loses pressure, and we are told to be sure to secure our own masks before assisting others. Don't apologize for taking care of yourself to better care for others.

### **#3 - Stay Connected**

We need each other! Isolation is a death sentence for a leader. The quiet people of Laish were destroyed in the book of Judges because "...it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man" (Judges 18:28 KJV). Don't be a loner! Be intentional about connecting with God and with others! Connect with your friends! Connect with fellow ministers! Connect with the body of Christ, where you will be strengthened!

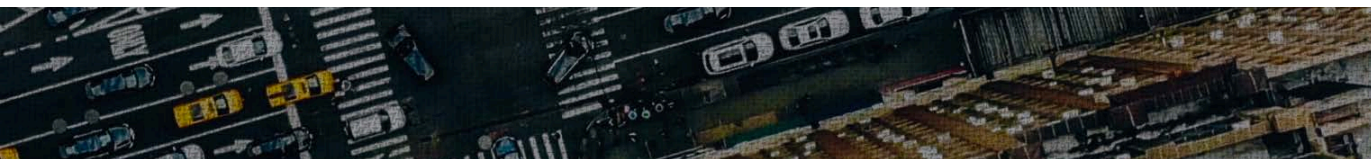
Someone said, "You are only as good as the people you surround yourself with." The chaos of our world and the rate of change necessitates the help of others. You can't be an expert in every subject. Build networks with others who are professionals in their field.

If you are a younger pastor, connect yourself with an elder. The counsel I have received from my elders has been more valuable than gold.

### **#4 - Stay Flexible**

"Blessed are the flexible, for they will not allow themselves to become bent out of shape!" ~ Robert Ludlum

Navigating through the Covid-19 pandemic taught us all how to be flexible. We learned how to fulfill the mission in different ways, although inconvenient and uncomfortable, as we wrestled with the learning curve of online communication. Who doesn't have a funny or embarrassing story of something that happened while we adjusted to our circumstances? Ministry doesn't always turn out as we plan, and that is ok!



In his book *Canoeing the Mountains*, Tod Bolsinger writes about the quest of the Lewis and Clark expedition to find a Northwest water passageway to the Pacific Ocean. They had to adjust their approach when they encountered mountains instead of rivers. You can't canoe over a mountain!

**"The same is true for all who are called to lead beyond the boundaries of what is known. We go through a personal transformation of identity and mission intention. We go from being river rats to mountain climbers. We keep on course with the same goal but change absolutely everything required to make it through this uncharted territory. We ditch the canoes, ask for help, find horses, and cross the mountains" (Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, p.34).**

#### **#5 - Stay Humble**

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6 KJV). God can do great things with humble people! Don't let your success inflate your head or your failure destroy your heart! Lay your victories and your defeats at the feet of Jesus.

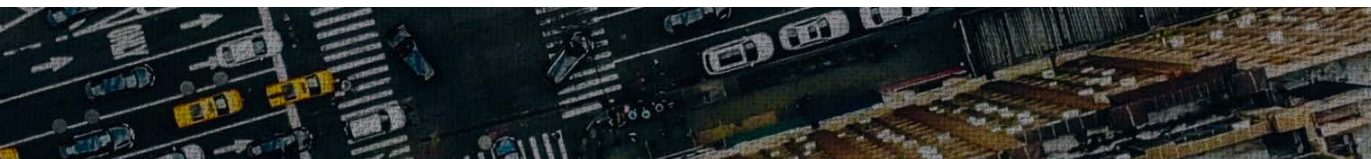
As Kingdom leaders, we are not trying to climb the corporate ladder or seek the recognition of man but rather the approval of our Father in Heaven. Humility, not hubris, is the pathway to face the challenges of our times. We follow the example of our Savior who "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:7-8 KJV).

#### **#6 - Stay Grounded**

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:1-3 KJV).

Everything we do and every solution we pursue should be built upon the foundation of God's Word. Doctrine matters! Filter everything you believe, feel, and do through God's Word and the leading of the Holy Ghost. Guard yourself against voices and solutions that attempt to circumvent the scripture.

"There are three aspects of Truth. Orthodoxy—Right doctrine. Orthopathy—Right motivation, right heart. Orthopraxy—Right practice. Any one of these aspects pursued alone will lead to destruction" (Dr. James Little, Jr.).



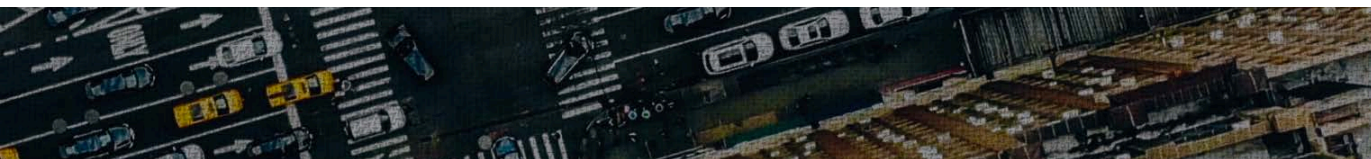
## #7 - Stay Patient

Anything worth having takes time to develop. Sometimes, when the culture pushes us to hurry up and go, God just wants us to sit back and wait. Don't be frustrated by the waiting. God knows exactly where you are and has a solution for any dilemma that may challenge your leadership.

"When waiting feels like death, realize you're exactly where God wants you to be. Declare that his goodness, his wisdom, and his timing are right. Admit your distress; be honest with him about your frustrations. Develop a heart of waiting on the Lord, expecting him to open doors when the time is right. And demonstrate a heart of faith as you wade through your time of ambiguity" (Chand, *Bigger Faster Leadership*, p. 35).



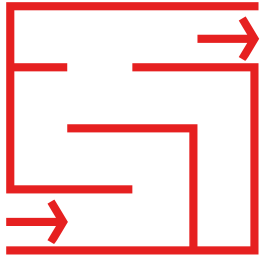
Bryan Parkey is the district superintendent of the Missouri District UPCI and serves as the vice chair of the SGI Committee. He and his wife, Lisa, have been married for 25 years and live in Wentzville, MO. Bryan is passionate about seeing a thriving Apostolic work in every community.



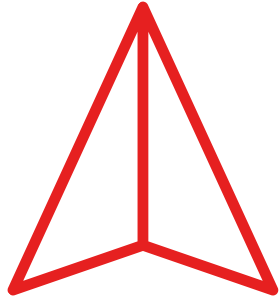


# ISSUE 30 TOOLBOX PRACTICAL TOOLS YOU CAN USE





# STRATEGIC VISIONEERING



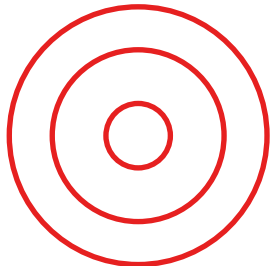
## Vision

Every meaningful action in the organization contributes to vision.



## Values

Values unite organization through shared core beliefs.



## Focus Area

High-level goals help the organization focus on vision.



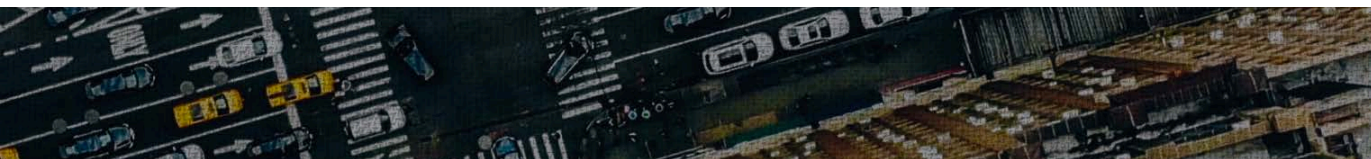
## Objectives

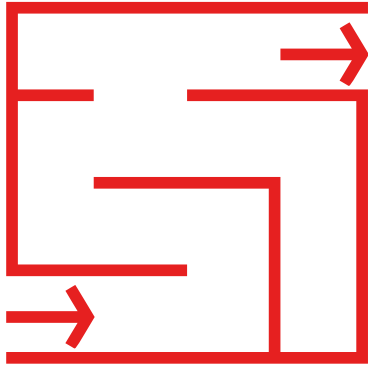
Objectives set specific details with a deadline to reach goals.



## Projects • KPI

Projects complete objectives and Key Performance Indicators reveal the success of the actions.





# STRATEGIC VISIONEERING

*Cascade Strategy* provides strategic planning software for organizations. They offer free guidance on how to write an organizational strategic plan. (Source: <https://www.cascade.app>)

## Vision

*A great vision statement provides the inspiration for the strategies and the daily operations of your organization. It is the anchor-point of your organization and should describe in an ideal world, what you want to achieve in the mid-to-long term.*

*Keep it short  
and passionate.  
Dare to dream.*

*Does it communicate why we exist?  
Will it inspire our people?  
Can it be easily memorized?*

## Values

*Values answer a simple question: how do we do what we do? Leaders and employees should be proud of them, as they define the organization's culture and identity. Values are the core principles of the organization and what people should experience when interacting with members of the organization.*

*No more than 4.  
Start with a verb.  
Keep them short.*

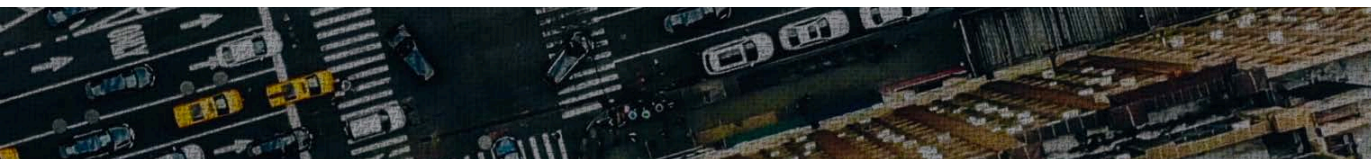
*Can your people translate them  
into actions? Are they tangible?  
Can they be easily memorized?*

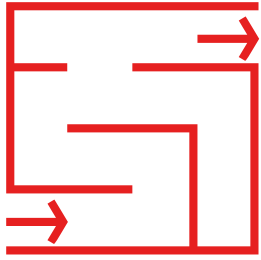
## Focus Areas

*A Focus Area is a high-level aim or intention that will help you to realize your Vision. In the same way, as your Vision should be understood by everyone in the organization, you should create Focus Areas that everyone can identify with. They are calls to action and point your members in the right direction.*

*No more than 5.  
Start with an adjective.  
Keep them short.*

*Do they make your vision happen?  
Are they all critical for your success?  
Together, can they capture your  
organizational activities?*





# STRATEGIC VISIONEERING

## Objectives

An Objective is something specific that will help you to actualize one or more of your Focus Areas. Unlike Focus Areas, your Objectives should be specific and contain a deadline where possible. Objectives will often have a deadline of 1 year or more.

*Group by Focus Area.  
Provide 3-6 per area.  
Start with a verb.*

*Is it action oriented?  
Is it detailed and specific?  
Does it include a deadline?*

## Projects

A Project is a specific thing that you're going to DO to deliver against your Objectives. Projects must be very specific and involve a tangible (non-metric-based) deliverable. You should aim for at least two Projects for each of your Objectives

*Connect to objectives.  
Provide 2 per objective.  
Start with a verb.*

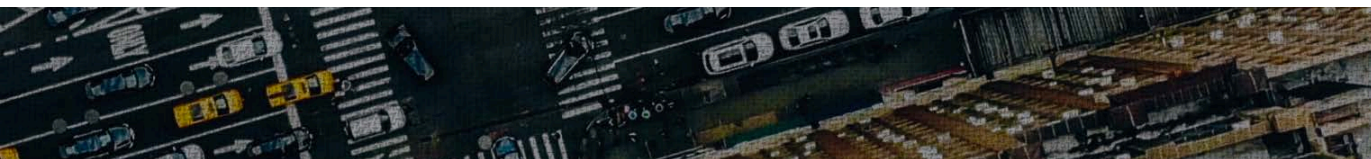
*Is it action oriented?  
Is it connected to an objective?  
Is it specific?*

## KPI

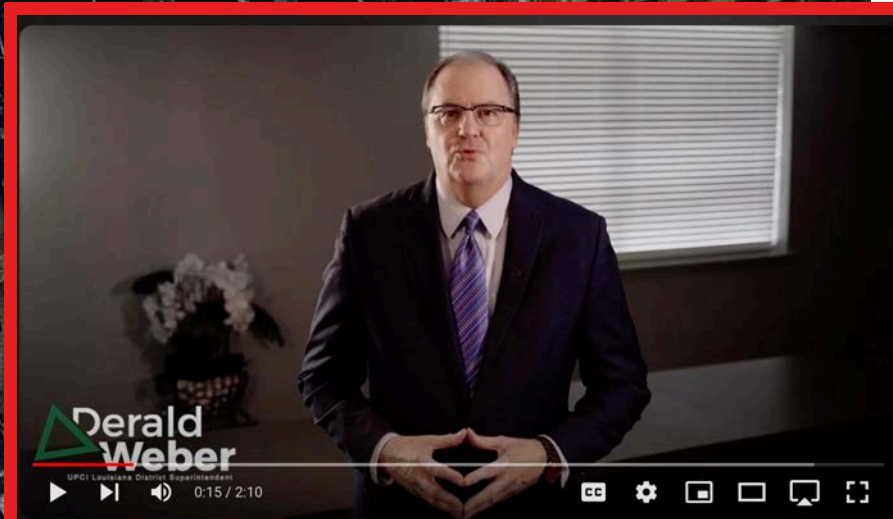
A Key Performance Indicator evaluates the success of the organization by directly measuring the objective and project outcomes.

*Link to objective.  
Use metrics if possible.  
Start with a verb.*

*Is the KPI defined with metrics  
(attendance, tithing, etc.)?  
What does the metric reveal?  
How should it improve?*



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### SGI Church Growth Resources

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### Strategic Growth Initiative

The mission of SGI is to create a culture of health that produces spiritual and numerical growth in ministers, churches, and districts in the UPCI.

#### Church Health Check-Up

Welcome to the *Church Health Check-Up*. This evaluation is designed to give you a more clearly defined understanding of your church's overall health. With a better understanding, you, as a pastor, can move forward to make the proper changes necessary to either continue the growth process, begin to grow again after a period of non-growth, or restructure for growth after a period of decline. Click below to access the Church Health Check-Up.

[Click Here](#)

#### A Church Growth Track

Now available for ALL! View this tremendous resource for pastors, districts, church leadership teams and those involved in the local church. This Church Growth Track will consist of eleven lessons, each taught by Apostolic leaders on the front lines of revival and growth. Please click VIEW COURSE for this free resource.

[View Course](#)

**SGI RESOURCES! CLICK  
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### Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) Resources



The Strategic Growth Initiative (SGI) was born in the heart of General Superintendent David K. Bernard as God gave him a vision for growing the North American church. The General Board of the UPCI approved the forming of SGI for the purpose of highlighting growth in the areas of the number of churches and ministers in North America. The four focus points of SGI are outlined below along with resources available through the Pentecostal Resources Group.

### Multiply the number of churches

SGI will assist districts by providing promotion, planning, and training with the goal of enabling every district to at least double the number of churches (including preaching points, daughter works, autonomous church plants, multicultural church plants, integrate independent Apostolic churches, etc.) in one decade.

