



Futuring Your Church: Finding Your Vision and Making It Work

By George B. Thompson

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"A vision is not a mission statement" declares George Thompson. In the throes of establishing their congregational identity, many church leaders resort to developing a mission statement which gets put in a file drawer and forgotten until the next budget review. The problem is that mission statements focus on concrete achievements; a vision, in contrast, establishes the larger picture of aim, broad purpose, and hopes. In *Futuring Your Church*, church leaders explore the congregation's heritage, its current context, and its theological bearings. From the insights gleaned, members can discern what God is currently calling their own church to do in this time and place. Once this vision is found, Thompson provides a simple organization model for applying the vision--for making it work. A practical, helpful tool for futuring authentic ministry.

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Editorial Review

Review

A book designed to help church members discover and apply fresh vision in their church.

Is your church as vibrant as it could be? What does a healthy, dynamic local church look like?
What would it take for your congregation to get out of its ruts and follow God into the future?

Questions like these took shape in my mind over the years that I pastored a variety of churches. I wrote *Futuring Your Church* because I wanted to provide motivated church members with a road map for discovering fresh vision. More and more church leaders recognize the central place of vision, but it can be perplexing to find a vision and make it work within your congregation.

This book offers a step-by-step process without being simplistic. It is based upon the idea that churches get their vision by paying attention to three things: their heritage, their context and their theological bearings. Activities are laid out in each chapter to help a team of leaders in your church uncover its heritage, context and bearings. It is the creative (i.e., Spirit-led) interplay between these three elements that produces a fresh version of a congregation's vision.

But coming up with a vision is not enough. As A.N. Whitehead said, "Ideas won't keep. Something must be done with them." One full chapter of *Futuring Your Church* is devoted to actually applying your new congregational vision. This chapter focuses on the church's present activities, its constituencies and its operational processes. And all throughout the book, the working team is urged to use specific techniques for keeping the congregation informed and interested in the visioning process.

Futuring Your Church contains no "magical" answers or techniques for revitalizing a congregation. It does, however, utilize a sound, creative discovery process, informed by cultural awareness and grounded in a concern for faithful church witness. Written for people in local churches, the book also can be used in continuing education events and seminary courses related to church renewal and leadership.

May your church follow God into the future!

-- *George B. Thompson, Jr. M.Div., D.Min., S.T.D., Ph.D. gthompson@itc.edu*

About the Author

George B. Thompson Jr. is Professor of Leadership and Ministry Practice at The Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Thompson is the editor and coauthor of *Alligators in the Swamp: Power, Ministry, and Leadership* (2005), and author of *Church on the Edge of Somewhere: Ministry, Marginality, and the Future* (2007).

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