

## Church Growth - Developing a Parish Vision

*Bishop Malcolm Harding*

- A question to prayerfully ponder – “If your parish ceased to exist, would it really be missed?”
- Proverbs 29: 18 “Where there is no vision, the people perish”.
- A recovery of Apostolic Christianity we find in Acts.

A church with a vision will sense it is being “stretched”. It will recognize that the expansion of God’s kingdom is far more important than simply maintaining what already exists.

Let’s avoid the “Edifice Complex” – maintaining the status quo at all costs.

Parish leadership is a key factor.

Traditional leaders are driven by heritage – being faithful to the past.

Visionary leaders are faithful to the future, and guided by the Holy Spirit, they help parishioners embark on a parish visionary process. A survival mentality prevails where there is no vision to challenge people, no updated mission statement to reflect on, and no mission plan with short and long term goals to implement.

To discern God’s mission plan we need to prayerfully ask: “Lord, what do you intend for us to BE for you, and to DO for you?”

Resources available for parish visioning on the book list provided:

- Releasing Your Church to Grow by David Beer.  
3 meaningful chapters on “vision” – Preparing for Change, (the process), Communicating the Vision, and Implementing the Vision.
- Your Church Can Thrive by Harold Percy (on the booklist provided). Harold provides an acrostic of the word VITAL in emphasizing some of the key elements influencing congregational development  
V – visionary leadership  
I – inspirational worship  
T – training in discipleship  
A – authentic community  
L – loving outreach and evangelism

May the new wine of the Holy Spirit be allowed to stretch us with a passionate commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and, may we see evangelism and social outreach as top priorities.