

# Vision Renewal Overview



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## Introduction

*"In everyone of the growing, healthy churches I have studied, there is a discernible link between the spiritual and numerical growth of those congregations and the existence, articulation and widespread ownership of God's vision for ministry by the leaders and participants of the church. Conversely, there is invariably a clear absence of vision in those congregations in which there is neither spiritual nor numerical growth taking place. Rarely in my research do I find such overt, black and white relationships."*

### George Barna, The Power of Vision

**Healthy Churches have a vision!** This is nothing new. But, where does the vision come from? Some suggest from the Pastor or leadership team. They cast the vision and convince or entice the people to follow. Others suggest it should come from the people. Actually, however, it is God's vision the church needs not the pastor's or the leadership's. The church's vision must come from God.

**Healthy Churches have a vision given by God!** But there is more. Does God only speak to pastors or leaders or does He speak to all members of the body? The scriptures make clear the priesthood of all believers. God speaks to the entire body! As the entire body listens, they can know God's vision for their ministry. When they discover it collectively, they own it and develop a passion to see it realized. Therefore...

**Healthy Churches have a vision given by God, received and owned by all.** The greatest thing a pastor or leader can do for the people is lead them in a discovery of the destiny God has for them. How can this be done? The Vision Renewal uses many methods to involve the entire congregation.

**Healthy Churches have a vision given by God, received and owned by all, and effectively implemented.** Churches can have the right vision but still not accomplish it. Vision Renewal provides an easy-to-follow structure that the leadership can use to monitor progress and sharpen the church's effectiveness.

## **What is the Vision Renewal process?**

VISION RENEWAL is a discovery process for churches to follow when they are not crystal clear on what God wants them to do and how he wants them to proceed.

Just as a lack of direction in our personal lives can open us to greater dependence on God, so too a church experiencing vision uncertainty can have a renewed interest and passion to wait on God and discover His will. Consequently such uncertainty is not to be feared. Rather, it is an opportunity for the church to hear what God is saying in a fresh new way. At such times the church is much more willing to face itself honestly allowing the Holy Spirit to move with power. It is actually an opportunity for the church to hear from God in a fresh new way. In fact, hearing from God is a necessity if aggressive future ministry is to be realized.



A clear ministry vision from God, owned and understood by the congregation, is essential if the church is to make an impact for the Kingdom.

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## **Why is Vision Renewal an important tool for the average church?**

Few churches have a clear ministry vision. Consequently they lack focus and enthusiasm in their ministries. In an effort to remedy their situation they often try to create a vision rather than discovering the one that God has for them. VISION RENEWAL offers a way for churches to listen to God collectively and discover His agenda and the future He has for them. The result is a focused church with a realistic vision that makes a Kingdom impact.

Perhaps a "renovation parable" will help us grasp this significant point. Bob and Cheryl decided their old cabin at the lake needed some sprucing up. After looking at some of the neighbour's homes and developing some great ideas, they decided to make the living room larger by removing two walls and incorporating an unused bedroom. They also decided to enlarge the upstairs by constructing a new room over the single story garage. On the drawing board they had a vision that was sensational but within days they were in serious trouble. The ceiling in the new living room began to sag; the two walls they removed proved to be bearing walls; furthermore the floor of room they were constructing over the garage was dipping significantly. Their cabin was a disaster, their dream fell apart and they lost what little they had.

Mike and Linda had a cabin in the same area and also wanted to renovate. However, before making any plans they had an assessment done of the building: they checked the foundation so as to be sure of its condition; they determined which walls were bearing walls and which were not, gave careful attention to the heating and electrical systems and talked with others who had done extensive renovations. Not until they were clear on what "was" did they begin to envisage what "could be". Then they engaged a contractor who understood renovations, to coach them. They came up with a plan that took into consideration what they had and was realistic and achievable given their resources. In the end they had a cabin that brought joy and relaxation to the entire family for years to come.

Now, while a church is not constructing with bricks and mortar, it is developing a dwelling place for God out of "living stones." Church leaders in their desire to build a body of believers will behave like Bob or Mike. Some will come up with a dream that is wonderful, but totally unworkable for their situation. In their efforts to make it

work they may even destroy the church they hoped to build. Others, waiting patiently on God and listening to the people in the church and community, develop a vision and plans with the congregation, based on the Holy Spirit's agenda, which enables effective ministry for years to come.

The Vision Renewal process provides a way for the entire church to face themselves, listen to God, each other and the community and discover exactly what He wants them to do. The result is a vision and plan rooted in reality and embraced by all.

Catching God's vision for the church is more important than having a vision that looks good on paper.

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### **How does Vision Renewal enable the church to realize the future God has for it?**

VISION RENEWAL provides a way for the entire church to discover together the Holy Spirit's agenda for them and their ministry. It allows the people and their leaders to listen to what God is saying and then organize themselves to do it.

- It leads the church step by step to a discovery of God's **VISION** for them by:
  - a) Calling them to face the truth about themselves and their community.
  - b) Calling them to pray for God's direction and leading.
  - c) Providing a congregational forum for the entire church to participate in recognizing God's leading. (Vision and Goals).
- With clear vision and goals, VISION RENEWAL helps the church **PLAN** by coaching them in developing practical ways to accomplish the goals God has given.
- Lastly, VISION RENEWAL assists the church in translating their plan into **MINISTRY**.

When a church becomes honest about itself, the Holy Spirit has an opportunity to lead and direct it powerfully into the future.

### **Who implements the Vision Renewal process?**

The majority of work is carried out by a 20/20 Team, approved by the church, under the guidance of a 'coaching' leader. However, their work is of little value unless the congregation as a whole is included and valued in all decisions.

**Coach** - The coach gives supportive leadership to the entire process. The coach can be a denominational leader or a lay facilitator who understands the process and has the respect of the congregation. He must have no agenda of his own and possess a commitment to help the church discover the Holy Spirit's agenda for them. He orients those participating in the process and is the unbiased chairperson of all Congregational Discovery Sessions. (If the Coach is from the church, he should be the leader of the 20/20 Team.)

Congregational ownership is crucial therefore the coach must be a respected facilitator.

**20/20 Team** - The 20/20 Team gathers information from the church and community by listening, organizes it in a meaningful way and shares it with the church. Like a mirror, the team reflects as accurately as possible, in an unbiased manner, exactly what the people have said. It does not 'tell' the church what its vision should be or even recommend one, rather it helps the church focus its vision and define the kind of plans required to carry out that vision. It is selected by the church and responsible to the church for the process. The 20/20 Team is usually composed of one person from the church board and four or five members at large.

Congregational ownership is crucial, therefore the 20/20 Team must discover and reflect information, rather than pass on their own opinions.

**Leadership Board** - The Leadership Board must understand the process and be responsible to recommend it to the membership. They must insure the Vision Renewal process is funded and adjust the church calendar so other events do not conflict with it.

Congregational ownership is crucial, therefore the Leadership Board must support the process, encourage the people to express their feelings and listen without defensiveness.

**Congregation** - The congregation must prayerfully consider all the issues and information brought to them by the 20/20 Team. Through the four Congregational Discovery Sessions the people have opportunities for listening, sharing and reflecting. After discussion and prayer with each other, the congregation will make decisions on the basis of the leading of the Holy Spirit

Congregational ownership is crucial, therefore congregational participation is mandatory.

### **How does the Vision Renewal process insure congregational ownership?**

VISION RENEWAL insures congregational ownership by using tools that require the congregation to see and own their needs, realize their opportunities and identify their vision.

### **Ministry Fitness Check**

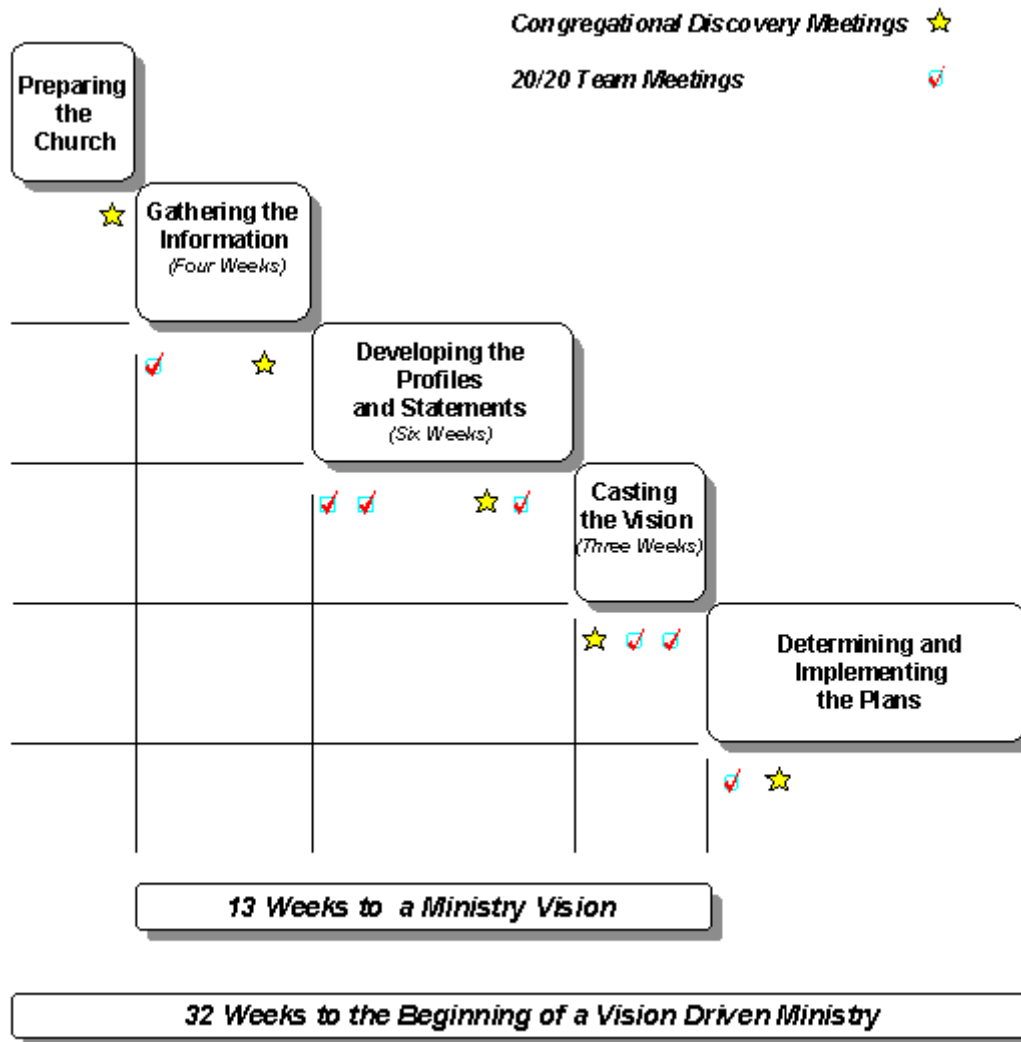
The ministry assessment tool has now been used in over 600 Canadian churches, with an overwhelmingly positive response. This tool is comprised of a multifaceted congregational survey with eleven categories of questions, which allow a church to "take a picture" of itself. They permit the congregation's members to express their feelings on their church's ministry confidently and confidentially. Everything from prayer, to organization and evangelism is covered. A church should select the Questionnaire most appropriate to its style of ministry.

The questions measure the health of the church across a ministry spectrum, from organizational structure to prayer. It is then processed through a custom designed soft ware package that correlates and analyzes all of the data producing a report of fascinating, pertinent information for the entire congregation to discuss and evaluate.

It results in the church family identifying and owning their strengths and weaknesses.

## Purpose and Values Survey

The Purpose and Values Survey is a series of questions designed to remind the congregation of its purpose and to enable it to communicate its values. Unless the church understands what it values, it will not be able to articulate a Philosophy of Ministry that is realistic. This tool allows the church to express its values and then discuss and affirm them. The resulting Purpose and Philosophy of Ministry is therefore the congregation's, not just something handed down from the leadership in which they have had little if any input.



*Timelines may be modified based on the specific needs of individual churches.*

## Community Survey

The Community Survey provides a way for the church to listen to its community. Often the church is so busy "doing" that it fails to listen to those it is trying to reach. Hearing the cry of the people and witnessing their lostness rarely fails to move hearts to once again realize they have "Good News" to offer a dying world. Discussing the findings in open meetings enables the church to understand its opportunity and responsibility. Because they have discovered it, they own it.

1. Are you an active member of a local church? Y - N Attend: Y -N Church: \_\_\_\_\_
2. What do you think is the greatest need that people have in our community?  
(Something the church needs to address)
3. Do you think most people would consider putting their children in a church children's club or Family Sunday School program? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Maybe
4. What do you think are the greatest frustrations that people feel in this community?  
\_\_\_ loneliness \_\_\_ lack of significance \_\_\_ lack of child care  
\_\_\_ marriage relationship \_\_\_ lack of purpose \_\_\_ guilt  
\_\_\_ relationships with family \_\_\_ spiritual emptiness \_\_\_ raising family

These tools, used together, with a proper process allow the congregation to know the truth about themselves and their community. When they know and own what "is" they can prayerfully determine what "should be". The result is a vision that the entire church owns and commits to.

Congregational ownership is crucial!!!

### How long does the Vision Renewal process take?

Once the church has approved the VISION RENEWAL track, the entire process takes thirty two weeks. This timeline may be extended if a church is in pastoral transition, or shortened if many of the stages have already been completed.

The biggest question many churches have at this point is, "We don't have time. We need to do something now!"

Churches are advised not to move more quickly than suggested even if they feel they can do so. It takes time to work through the information that will be gathered. If the church moves too quickly, they will not own the conclusions. Also, churches are advised not to 'skip' any of the steps in the interests of time. Each step is there for a reason and each "20/20 Update" has a purpose. If you become selective, you may jeopardize your results. Spending less time may be a waste of time.

Save time by taking time!