

In the mid-nineties, I was pastoring a small and struggling church in Wisconsin. I was young and ambitious, willing to try anything for the church to be effective in reaching our town. But no matter what I learned at the Bible conference or the church growth seminar, it never seemed to work back at the home church. It was so difficult to get the church energized about the new plans and to defeat this dangerous attitude of apathy that had entrenched the church.

But how can we find a new vision, build teamwork and help motivate the church to be relevant and effective?

My Director of Missions, Dennis Hansen, led our church through what we called a VisionClinic. This series of meetings gave the church the opportunity to discuss together the future of the community, as well as the future of our church. Questions raised and answered included the following:

- Who are our neighbors?
- What trends are occurring in our neighborhood over the next few years?
- Where has God worked in our church in the past?
- What would the "Ultimate Church" look like in our community?
- Are we prepared to effectively minister to those without Christ?

The VisionClinic provided a new direction and new motivation for achieving God's plan for our church. Through the VisionPath Process, we can coach you through the discovery, implementation and completion of the God-given vision for your church.



**"Death comes when your memories of the past smother your vision for the future."**

The Sullivan Baptist Association is a service ministry, whose primary purpose is to encourage and strengthen our autonomous churches to expand their effectiveness. Our desire is to see all of upper east Tennessee experience a saving relationship with Christ Jesus. No one church can accomplish this lofty goal – therefore, we will attempt to realize this vision by supporting and assisting our churches to be all they can be through Christ.

The Sullivan Baptist Association exists to partner with our churches in...

## **S**trengthening

Christ-like Servant Leadership  
as a *Coach*

## **B**uilding

Christ-like Unity and Community  
as a *Connector*

## **A**dvancing

Christ-like Love and Acceptance  
as a *Catalyst*

For more information on the Vision Path Process, please contact the Sullivan Baptist Association.

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# The VisionPath Process for Churches



**A coaching process that  
enables the church to**

## **Discover Implement and Complete**

**their unique God-given vision**

In order to win our community, state, nation and world to the Lord, every church must know what their vision is and how they can achieve it.

**Dallas Bivins, EdD**  
Associational Missionary/  
Leadership Coach  
Sullivan Baptist Association

**"Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths." Psalm 25:4**

**"I run in the path of Your commands..." Psalm 119:32**

## For Pastorless Churches

**"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion, but willingly...nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock..." 1 Peter 5:2-3**

*Perhaps the most traumatic experience a church undergoes is when she loses a pastor. But what an opportunity to discover new directions and vitality—to move the church toward relevance and effectiveness. The VisionPath Process is designed to help those churches without senior leadership to determine a new vision and provide a blueprint for the pastor search team in determining future leadership.*

### **The R&R Meeting—Release and Refocus**

This church-wide meeting will help to discover, discuss and remedy any past conflicts, or potential future conflicts. Before focusing (or re-focusing) on our future, the church must come to grips with any past discrepancies. This meeting will also have an explanation of the VisionPath Process, ask for a commitment to that process, and contain a celebration of the process.

### **VisionClinic**

This 8-10 hour process helps the church interpret the community around them. Usually held in 3-4 sessions, the VisionClinic allows for team-building and unity enhancement as we explore such subjects as the ultimate church, where God is at work, and what will our future neighborhood look like.

### **Pastor Search Team Training**

Based on the information from the VisionClinic, a congregational and community profile will help the pastor search team realize the intricacies of their mission field, including demographical data. Likewise, the PastorProfile is a working blueprint of the type of future leader the church is preparing for, one that will lead the church to achieve the new vision that was revealed through the VisionClinic. We will also help the search team in the hiring process through search assistance, interview helps, and negotiation processes.

### **Transition Team Coaching**

Finding the new leader is just the beginning; now the real work begins! To ensure a smooth and profitable transition, we will help you with the assimilation and implementation process – for both the church and the new leader. This process enables the new pastor or leader to gain sure footing in his new assignment, and is an excellent tool to build teamwork and accountability. This coaching usually lasts about six months.

## Churches Going Through Conflict



**"I plead with you that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Corinthians 1:10-11**

*Nothing is more destructive in the local church than disruptive conflict. Whether the conflict is corporate or more personal in nature, it can fester and take the effectiveness out of the church. Such problems cannot be left unresolved, but must be dealt with in a clear and biblical manner. Because of the uniqueness of each situation, the VisionPath Process for conflictive churches can deviate greatly, though most will follow some semblance of the following procedure.*

### **Informational Interviews**

These one-on-one and small group discussion meetings are designed to discover and interpret probable future disagreements. The intimate conditions allow for more open and honest dialogue, enabling the VisionPath staff a better understanding of the problems at hand.

### **Leadership Coaching**

Providing biblical coaching and consultative helps is a must for both the individuals and the church at this point. The Leadership Coaching helps us to find appropriate solutions for the present difficulties, as well as provide possible visionary strategies for the future.

### **Mediation Services**

If the conflict(s) cannot be services for either the individuals involved or the church. Based upon biblical relational principles, these services provide the opportunity for restoration and redemption.

## For Churches in Need of Refocusing

**"Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed."  
Hebrews 12:12-13**

*The current statistics say it all: about 90% of our churches are stagnant or declining. But how can we restore our church to vitality? Perhaps your answer can be found in the VisionPath process for those churches in need of refocusing their direction. This is not another consultation, but an effective and proven coaching process.*

### **Informational Interviews**

The process begins with face-to-face discussions that expose potential difficulties within the church. Most of these meetings are conducted as one-on-one discussions or in small group settings. Through this process, we can more readily identify potential opportunities for growth and maturity.

### **Leadership Team Diagnostic Interviews**

After conducting the interviews with church members, we can then present these findings to the leadership team. These problem-solving discussion meetings seek to find possible solutions to the growth opportunities on the horizon.

### **VisionClinic**

This 8-10 hour process helps the church interpret the community around them. Usually held in 3-4 sessions, the VisionClinic helps to formulate vision implementation strategies for the church, and helps to set-up vision task teams for accountability.

### **NextStep**

After the completion of the VisionClinic, we will continue to coach the church and her leaders for maximum effectiveness. Coaching sessions for ministry performance are provided for both the staff and the laity. Accountability and responsibility are keywords for the NextStep Process, as we continue on the journey toward reaching our neighborhood for Christ.

