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Strategic Planning, Church of the Nazarene

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FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1996

“STRATEGIC PLANNING, CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE”

I. Where I am coming from.

ServiceMaster story. Growth not an option but a mandate. Doubling in size every 3 - 3 1/2 years. 6 million customers. Over 230,000 people. Revenues and profits up every quarter for over 25 years. Public company with expectation of the market of always more. Resulting in a pressure cooker environment. In a place where we can seek to honor God in all we do as we develop people and pursue excellence in serving our customers and grow profitably. Explain those objectives.

II. It is in this type of environment that I am trying to live my faith.

A faith that was nurtured and developed in my youth through my family and my church.

A faith that is renewed and refreshed today through my worship and reflection in my church and a faith that is supported and sustained through my family and friends at church today.

So my church has played a vital role in my development and life.

Its leadership, its governance, its spiritual vitality, its place of worship and learning, and communion are all important to me.

But my church has changed over the years.

The sanctuary, frankly, is more plush and comfortable.

The facilities are better. There are more staff, and the budget is much higher.

The meeting schedule no longer competes with television on Sunday night. We simply close our doors.

The music is more professional, louder, and most of the time, entertaining; and by the way, so is the preacher.

There are multiple support and prayer groups for almost every need.

The Bible is the same, but the translations are many. And although we don't talk about it much in church, I realize from my independent study something of the mass confusion developing over interpretation. Or to use one of those fancy theological terms, hermeneutics.

Women are more prominent; but for some, this is a change with tension.

The members, for the most part, are still growing in the understanding of their faith, although older in years in attendance.

The meat of learning for me usually comes from the dialog of the Sunday School class, the Bible study, not from the monologue of the sermon.

Its single and most important function continues to be a place of worship for the Lord I love and a place where my faith is renewed and refreshed.

III. So that is where I am coming from. Where does that put us in considering the future? A strategy for development.

1. We live in a world of accelerated change and choice. In our own business alone, over 2/3 of the business we are doing today we were not doing ten years ago. In 1983 we were listed as one of the leading Fortune 500 companies. 70 percent of the companies in that list in 1983 no longer are in existence.

People want more choice. [Here describe school computer, 6th grade class discussing plaintiff and defendant, and committee that reviews teachers.]

2. It is a world that is increasingly hostile to Christian principles.

Whether the issues are abortion or euthanasia, sexual orientation or promiscuity, pornography or child or spouse abuse, drugs or alcohol, the gap between society and Christian standards is growing. Hunter has called this period a time of cultural wars.

Thanks to TV, the sensual and the visual increasingly becomes a way for us to assimilate information. Entertainment is part of communication.

3. The world is smaller and more interdependent. The story of buying American. Interdependence with economies of Germany, Japan, US. Wars in faraway lands like Iraq in order to fill our gas tanks. The balance of trade is not so much the issue as our control of other economies through our debt. It is a complicated web of interdependency.

4. Pluralism and diversity are the buzzwords of today. But how do we build community and unity? Must we always celebrate our differences and suppress those things we have in common? While differences can energize and vitalize, they can also be disruptive.

5. And what about authority? Where does it fit in the post-modern world where we are all encouraged to do our own thing; I'm O.K., you're O.K.

Where are the answers? How does one proceed with the development of a strategy?

The fundamental question for the church in the 21st century may well be: does it withdraw and protect or does it involve and influence?

There have been times in history when the church or certain segments of it has done one or the other. While I suggest these two strategies in juxtaposition to each other, they do not necessarily have to be. However, saying it the way I have said it does frame the parameters of what may be the basic generic issue.

Will the role of the church be limited to becoming an enclave for people to withdraw and protect to hold onto their faith with others of like mind? Or will it seize the opportunity to be an instrument of change, reaching out to the hostile and needy and developing a preparing its members to act and lead in a world around them based upon the knowledge of motivation and encouragement they have perceived within this church? To do the latter, the church may well be required to:

1. Draw fewer lines of exclusion, reach out to involve and relate beyond the comfortable limits of the inner ring of like minds.
2. To increasingly become a vehicle of teaching and learning with the expanded use of technology in things like distance learning.
- 3 To encourage its membership to have compassion and caring for others including that odd group that may have a different sexual orientation.
4. To provide opportunity for growing participation and interaction in community and worship including a greater role for laity and for women.
5. Accept that the lessons of good organization and management may apply to the church, that is, an organized division of labor, skills and talents inherent in any organization of people, and to recognize and resolve the issues of authority, governance, and the importance of leadership and ministry.

However, we must remember, that if it is a persecuted church, one that finds itself in a distinct minority, it may well need to withdraw to survive. But should this be a reaction or a plan? Where will the Church of the Nazarene be?

After reading your material, I assume that you are committed to growth--growth in the number of churches, growth in membership, growth in financial resources, growth in your international and global presence. What about growth in inner cities? What about growth in the large metropolitan areas of the world such as Mexico City, Paris, London, Tokyo, Singapore, Hong Kong? Who are your members? What is the profile of your members? What about issues of cultural, ethnic, racial mixes? How does one measure winning or success as one looks at growth?

Explain sigmoid curve.

Discuss participation in setting strategy. Give some examples of ServiceMaster's participation. Recognize limits and problems and turf. Bureaucracy and insecurity.

Drucker's advice in setting a strategy is to make sure you focus on the generic issues, not the symptoms. Don't decide until there is disagreement, and implementation makes a good decision.

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.

Close - Moses' experience in Exodus 32 and 33. Picking up the pieces and going forward.

Discussion.

9/11/96