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A couple of questions I often ask pastors: how many parking places do you have and how many people can your sanctuary or other spaces seat? It is surprising how many pastors have no idea. I think it is difficult to plan next steps, especially if our next steps are to grow our church, if we don't know where we are starting and what the possibilities and potential might be.

If we were going to do a resource inventory, where would we begin?

God:

Prayers that connect, empower, direct and help us and our church leaders to be effective in the mission God has called us to do and inviting others to pray with us. If we are not careful, we will exhaust every other resource before we look to the One that got us into ministry in the first place. The God who parted the Red Sea is just as invested in His Church as He was in the journey to the Promised Land. It might be hard to believe that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are a neglected resource, but often they are.

Space:

Sometimes we can miss the opportunities our spaces offer us, and by doing so, limit ourselves. Can the sanctuary, no matter its size, be used more than once a week? Is there a fellowship hall or other meeting space that might be transformed into a worship space for a New Faith Community (NFC), children's worship or youth worship? Is there an open outdoor space that can be developed for a unique worship experience? Are there community gathering spaces where we can develop an NFC or other ministry? It's important we don't limit ourselves when we have unused space or times that can help us reach people we are not already reaching. An inventory could be very helpful.

People:

This includes staff, laity and community people. Who are the decision makers and influencers? Who has the grace and gifts to step up and partner with the mission and vision we have? Sometimes laity can fill the role often filled by staff and do it better. They want to help and they are free. We can easily overlook laity who want to do so many things. We need to inspire, invite and then support them by creating a team culture and involve them early. If they are in the church too long without connecting to a mission, they often never will. A staff and volunteer inventory should be done every year. Are the positions, roles and people helping us achieve the vision the church has accepted and celebrated? This is often not the case and something we can fail to examine closely. Misalignment either of positions

or people can often damage more than help. We can't look at this too much. Restructuring to meet the set goals and vision begins first with the people God is calling.

Finances:

It's easy to operate from a culture of scarcity, especially if our church has had financial problems in the past. We also can fall into a budgeting pattern that can maintain what we have, which usually means decline in the future. So, I share two things with you: more money is not always the answer, and often there is money available that has not been identified. I know one church that desperately needed a staff person to help with children's ministries. This was an area identified as a great need within the church and an area that would keep them from serving young families well if the position wasn't filled. They could not fit this position into the budget. After much consultation, a decision was made to ask for a small funding campaign aimed specifically towards this need. The response and giving from the church for this fund was overwhelming. People who might not have given to a general fund offering gave generously.

The Vision:

Is the vision we had at one time still applicable to our changing culture? Are the missions we are doing still applicable to our vision? Are we reviewing our goals, vision and missions regularly and connecting them to our space, people and finances, to ensure they are what they should be and have not morphed into something else? When we continually review who we are, what we are doing and what we are called by God to do, it gives us a chance to align and realign to be the church our community needs us to be. Asking God what they should be is the most important part.