

## **Preface**

The approach of this book is a simple and practical one, building on common-sense tools used by many people as they make plans in their day-to-day life. A variety of creative options are offered, enabling you to customize a planning process for your setting. You are invited to develop skills to fully engage your congregation in the process of discerning God's vision for mission and implementing a strategic plan.

One essential aspect underlies all strategic planning in the church: keeping God part of the process. This sounds obvious, yet we sometimes look to the future and make our plans relying only on our human wisdom. We would do well to turn to the words of Paul to the people of Corinth: "For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Corinthians 1:25).

We simply cannot fully grasp all that God has in store, but we can rejoice in God's call for the church to be partners in furthering the mission of Jesus on this earth.

This book affirms the calling of God for the church—a calling to ponder, pray, and listen for God's vision. The majority of the biblical texts are taken from the book of Acts, a book that begins with the mission mandate of Jesus: "You will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

We ask for the Holy Spirit's inspiration, courage, and insight, so that we might discern God's vision for the future and how our own congregation might have the sacred privilege and awesome responsibility of participating in that vision.

Thanks be to God, who invites and includes us in the vision for the future.