

STRATEGIC PLAN

Executive Summary

In September of 2002, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) set out on a journey to reform, reorganize, and restructure the AME Church of the 21st century. This process called *Strategic Church Planning* was a two-year effort to develop a vibrant, growing denomination that accomplishes the Great Commission. The next phase, Implementation Phase is expected to span at least two additional quadrennials (eight plus years). Success Results Consulting, Inc. (SRC), an organization development firm located in Germantown, Maryland, facilitated this process using a research-based, five-phase strategic planning process. The 90- member Strategic Planning Core Team (SPCT) consisted of a “diagonal slice” (microcosm) of the AMEC membership and included Bishops, General Officers, Presiding Elders, Elders, Pastors, Lay Persons, and Youth. The SPCT conducted two surveys of the Church membership. The first survey, from which 10,500 responses were collected, was intended to give the populace an opportunity to voice their honest opinions of the existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) in AMEC. The second survey of the Church’s membership, more in-depth demographically and psychographically, produced 15,058 responses.

The Environmental Imperative

To understand the current state of the AMEC, the SPCT gathered, evaluated, and identified Extensive data including: AMEC’s existing wake-up calls, SWOT analyses, data on the current organizational culture, “What’s Working and What’s Not in AMEC,” Convo reports and reporting structure, mission implementation, critical success factors, and gap analyses. Additional data was collected from *Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, Annual Departmental Reports, and the *Minutes of the 46th Quadrennial Session of the Annual Conference*.

AMEC’s Wake-Up Calls

From this data, the SPCT identified 13 issues as the most pressing wake-up calls for the AMEC. Wake up calls are circumstances, events, and trends in the environment that indicate that something has changed or is changing.

1. Declining membership
2. Legal problems
3. Exiting youth & young adults
4. Exit of ministers
5. Absence of men in membership
6. Loss of institutions
7. Not enough programs for senior citizens
8. “What used to be first has now become last” (Church Priorities)
9. Shortage of finance/resources
10. The lack of pride
11. Impact of world events in our lives
12. Failure to follow the AMEC Discipline and order of the Church
13. Anti-denominational sentiment

SWOT Analysis

The SPCT examined the Church's strengths and challenges while uncovering its opportunities and evaluating its threats. The SPCT found the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the AME Church:

Strengths

- Organization Structure
- Church's long History
- Educational Institutions
- Worship and Spirituality
- Inclusion
- Communication
- Youth Involvement
- Leadership Community Outreach
- Real Property Ownership

Weaknesses

- Lack of Clergy Management, Training, & Skills
- Lack of Finance & Economic Development
- Polity
- Lack of Evangelistic Fervor
- Lack of Communications
- Lack of Youth & Young Adult Inclusion
- Lack of Church Expansion/Combination

Opportunities

- Increase Spirituality
- Outreach Ministries
- Training/Education
- Organizational changes
- Inclusion
- Technology
- Finance
- Youth Economic Development
- Church Growth

Threats

- Lack of Finance/Accountability
- Leadership-Education/Training & Moral Issues
- Lack of Youth & Young Adult Retention & Inclusion
- Loss of Members
- Tradition/Ritual/Loss of History
- Too Many Small Churches
- Legal Issues

The results of these extensive examinations are eight (8) strategic thrusts, 49 recommendations, and 34 legislative bills that focus on preparing the AMEC for growth and prosperity in the 21st century.

Presented below are the strategic thrusts and the recommendations which enable positive outcomes:

1. Enhance Church Growth

- a. Increase Church growth
- b. Enforce accurate and truthful reporting of Church membership
- c. Increase the resource pool for Evangelistic activities
- d. Reconfigure Episcopal Districts
- e. Incorporate Annual Conferences as IRS 501 (c)(3) corporations
- f. Revisit the roles and relationship of laity and clergy
- g. Continue to embrace and instill in the membership of the Church, the history, traditions, and principles of African Methodism, while being open to the changes and challenges of contemporary society.

2. Improve Leadership & Management

- a. Create an Office of the Chief Administrator
- b. File Annual Episcopal District Reports with the General Secretary
- c. Write clear job descriptions and definitions for all positions and agencies
- d. Develop performance evaluation system
- e. Strictly enforce enrollment in the Ministerial Annuities Plan
- f. Require all employees to receive annual educational & training concerning employee security
- g. Institute measures and procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of elected/appointed leaders of the Church.

3. Support Christian Character

- a. Ensure that children, youth, and young adults are not exposed to criminal sex offenders and/or criminal child abusers by qualifying children, youth & young adult workers.
- b. Require individual leader accountability for operating in integrity beginning with Bishops, Presiding Elders, and leaders of all levels of the Church.
- c. Develop a course requirement and/or focused study of Church administration concepts for all pastors.
- d. Implement a measure that protects laypersons and ministers from being outcast when requesting financial disclosure information on all levels.
- e. Bishops, Presiding Elders, and congregations support the efforts of the annual membership canvas and report its results accurately.
- f. Pastors, Presiding Elders, and Bishops educate their congregation on the distributions of funds and other assessments to the Connectional Church, Episcopal District, and Annual Conference.
- g. All Episcopal Districts enforce the creation of a budgetary committee on both the Episcopal District and Annual Conference levels
- h. Request accurate number of members of all Churches in each Episcopal District after two Annual Conferences to be given by 2006
- i. Convene a committee of the stakeholders to address the issue of culture vs. truth in reporting

4. Enhance Spiritual Growth & Development

- a. Design and produce relevant and developmentally effective Sunday School Curricula
- b. Develop a marketing strategy for AME Publications

5. Ensure Economic Growth & Fiduciary Accountability

- a. Submit Connectional assessments
- b. Submit charges quarterly
- c. Require unqualified opinions on all audits
- d. Establish minimum educational requirements for Chief Financial Officer
- e. Institute quarterly reports
- f. Increase the volume of publishing
- g. Sustain global economic growth opportunities and initiatives in the AMEC by exploring and preparing specific action plans

6. Embrace Diversity

- a. Create & develop a nurturing environment of mentorship at all levels of ministry for WIM
- b. Create visible symbols of unity within the Life of the Church through worship experiences, study groups, and workshops
- c. Incorporate inclusive language & involvement in the total Life of the Church
- d. Identify, develop & promote other models of ministries including Pastoral Ministry
- e. Constitute a delegated body that is representative of our diverse membership, i.e. culture, geography, language, age, gender, and function and is conducive to dialogue, debate, discussions and decisions in appropriate venue with adequate resources

7. Improve Education, Growth & Development

- a. Establish Department of Educational Institutions
- b. Elect the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees for each institution's governance
- c. Provide training for Board members of Higher Education Institutions
- d. Increase funding for theological schools
- e. Develop comprehensive & competitive written resources
- f. Create an editorial board to ensure biblically sound & theologically relevant material that is in adherence with AME polity
- g. Conduct a feasibility study, to review the purpose, operational, and editorial functions, roles, structure, efficiency, and staffing for all departments that publish and or print publications for the AMEC

8. Enhance Global Ministry & Missions

- a. Establish global missionary emergency response teams
- b. Provide a caring supportive presence where the need is in the Connection and beyond
- c. Establish internal and external partnerships for Global Ministry