Nehemiah 13:1-3 HCSB  At that time the book of Moses was read publicly to the people. The command was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, (2) because they did not meet the Israelites with food and water. Instead, they hired Balaam against them to curse them, but our God turned the curse into a blessing. (3) When they heard the law, they separated all those of mixed descent from Israel.

The title of the sermon today is “Lest We Forget” but the subtitle is “Vigilance vs. Declension.” You are all more than likely aware of the meaning of vigilance. To be vigilant is to be watchful. A vigilant person takes great care; exemplifies great caution. The vigilant person recognizes that a danger lurks and looks about for it. A vigilant person, like a guard on duty, cannot be a sleepy person. That must be awake and alert while on duty.

Declension is probably not a term that you hear a lot around the water cooler, so let me make sure we are all on the same page.

Declension is: an act or instance of declining; a bending, sloping, or moving downward like land with a gentle declension toward the sea; deterioration; decline; or deviation, as from a standard.

Declension is what happened to the people while Nehemiah was away. Look at:

• Nehemiah 13:6 HCSB  While all this was happening, I was not in Jerusalem, because I had returned to King Artaxerxes of Babylon in the thirty-second year of his reign. It was only later that I asked the king for a leave of absence

Once again we see the importance of godly leadership. “Everything rises and falls on leadership.” Strong, driven leaders are necessary. It is true that kings have erred; but king Mob has never been right! Go through the Bible and find a place where the people, without godly leadership, have ever followed the Way. You won’t find such an example. In chapter 13 we see why. We get a chance to see the process.

A man by the name of John Curran once said, “The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance.” The people failed to maintain the level of vigilance and as a result, in a very short period of time, they were already moving away from the purity and devotion that we saw back in the last few chapters. How quickly our passion for the Lord fades. How sadly common this is. Watch the decline.

1. They failed to choose godly leaders. They allowed a man with sinful ties and motives to profit off of the House of God. (v. 4) They were directed by politics and “common sense” rather than the Word of God.
   o Matthew 7:15-16 HCSB  *Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. (16) You'll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles?*
   o 2 Peter 2:1-3 HCSB  But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, and will bring swift destruction on themselves. (2) Many will follow their unrestrained ways, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. (3) In their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their condemnation, pronounced long ago, is not idle, and their destruction does not sleep.

1. They valued form over substance, externals over reality. They placed a man’s desire for prestige over the needs of the House of God. (vv.8-9).
o **Proverbs 3:5-8 HCSB** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; (6) think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths. (7) Don't consider yourself to be wise; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. (8) This will be healing for your body and strengthening for your bones.

2. **Giving to the House of God** took a lower priority. (vv. 10-12) Though literally surrounded by the evidence of God's gracious favor (the walls and the Temple), their gratitude failed.

3. They allowed the administration of the House of God to fail. (v. 13) Because they did not consider the Beit ha Mikdash to be valuable or important, they spent less and less time thinking about it. They were no longer trying to steadily grow the ministry or create new ways to show God they loved Him.

4. They began making provision for materialism and convenience on the days dedicated to worship. (vv.15-21)

2. **Titus 1:5-11 HCSB**

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The reason I left you in Crete was to set right what was left undone and, as I directed you, to appoint elders in every town: (6) someone who is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of wildness or rebellion. (7) For an overseer, as God's manager, must be blameless, not arrogant, not quick tempered, not addicted to wine, not a bully, not greedy for money, (8) but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, righteous, holy, self-controlled, (9) holding to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it. (10) For there are also many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those from Judaism. (11) It is necessary to silence them; they overthrow whole households by teaching for dishonest gain what they should not.
is one who hears the word, but the worries of this age and the seduction of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

- Matthew 6:24 HCSB  "No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of God and of money.

5. They started forgetting their history with God (vv. 17-18).

- Revelation 2:4-5 HCSB  But I have this against you: you have abandoned the love you had at first. (5) Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.

6. They became indistinguishable from the world around them. (v.23)

- Numbers 23:9 HCSB  I see them from the top of rocky cliffs, and I watch them from the hills. There is a people living alone; it does not consider itself among the nations.

- Hebrews 11:13-16 HCSB  These all died in faith without having received the promises, but they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth. (14) Now those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. (15) If they had been remembering that land they came from, they would have had opportunity to return. (16) But they now aspire to a better land--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

- Hebrews 11:24-27 HCSB  By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (25) and chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the short-lived pleasure of sin. (26) For he considered reproach for the sake of the Messiah to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, since his attention was on the reward. (27) By faith he left Egypt behind, not being afraid of the king's anger, for he persevered, as one who sees Him who is invisible.

7. They were losing their children to the worldly culture (v. 24).

- Genesis 18:19 HCSB  For I have chosen him so that he will command his children and his house after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. This is how the LORD will fulfill to Abraham what He promised him."

- Exodus 13:6-9 HCSB  For seven days you must eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there is to be a festival to the LORD. (7) Unleavened bread is to be eaten for those seven days. Nothing leavened may be found among you, and no yeast may be found among you in all your territory. (8) On that day explain to your son, 'This is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' (9) Let it serve as a sign for you on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead, so that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for the LORD brought you out of Egypt with a strong hand.

- Exodus 13:14-16 HCSB  "In the future, when your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' say to him, 'By the strength of His hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the place of slavery. (15) When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of man to the firstborn of livestock. That is why I sacrifice to the LORD
all the firstborn of the womb that are males, but I redeem all the firstborn of my sons.' (16) So let it be a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead, for the LORD brought us out of Egypt by the strength of His hand.

- Deuteronomy 4:9 HCSB "Only be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves, so that you don't forget the things your eyes have seen and so that they don't slip from your mind as long as you live. Teach them to your children and your grandchildren.

- Deuteronomy 11:18-21 HCSB "Impress these words of Mine on your hearts and souls, bind them as a sign on your hands, and let them be a symbol on your foreheads. (19) Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (20) Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, (21) so that as long as the heavens are above the earth, your days and those of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your fathers.

8. Even their religious leaders began to mingle with the bad guys. (v. 28)

- Galatians 2:14 HCSB But when I saw that they were deviating from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas in front of everyone, "If you, who are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Jews?"

- Exodus 32:1-4 HCSB When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt--we don't know what has happened to him!" (2) Then Aaron replied to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me." (3) So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. (4) He took the gold from their hands, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a calf. Then they said, "Israel, this is your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!"

- Exodus 32:25 HCSB Moses saw that the people were out of control, for Aaron had let them get out of control, so that they would be vulnerable to their enemies.

Derashot:
1. Only choose godly leaders.
2. Never allow form to take the place of mission.
3. Develop a culture of gratitude marked by generous giving.
4. Be very careful to maintain order and the rule of Hashem’s law.
5. Watch for “mission creep”. Mission creep is the expansion of a project or mission beyond its original goals, often after initial successes.
6. Develop a culture of gratitude marked by celebration of Yahweh’s past action.
7. Consciously develop a counter-cultural mindset.
8. Carefully build in educational experiences for the next generation.
9. Maintain high standards and expectations for our leadership. The qualifications we use to choose them, must be maintained by them to remain in leadership.
Mission Creep

Temptations and Solutions

Robert Hodge

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In 1938, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt founded the March of Dimes to help fight polio, the disease that had crippled him. The charity funded research into vaccines, and within two decades polio had largely become a relic of the past. The March of Dimes, however, persisted. In 1958, its Expanded Program covered polio, birth defects, arthritis and central nervous system diseases. Later transferring its arthritis interests to another organization, it then focused on the prevention of birth defects and infant mortality. Most recently, the March of Dimes has added the prevention of premature birth to its mission objectives.

Is this a job well done, or did the leaders fall prey to mission creep?

"Mission creep" sounds like an insidious force that changes an organization's primary focus to something less than its mission, vision, and heritage. While it may not be all that insidious, mission creep is a documented phenomenon that usually damages an organization. Here, we will consider forces that tend to incite mission creep, and preventive, detective, and corrective methods to assure that the organization does not unintentionally shift from its foundation.

Temptations That Incite Mission Creep

Completion of a mission—such as the fight against polio—is one reason for organizations to change their mission, but it is far from common. More often the causes for mission creep lie in finances, personnel, organizational structure, demographics, or philosophy. Each of these causes, in turn, comes in obvious and not-so-obvious forms.

1. **Financial Causes.** "Chasing after the money" is commonly cited as the basis for incremental if not dramatic shifts away from the core of the mission. The chase can start with financial good news or bad news.

   Say an aging donor with a great heart offers a non-profit its largest donation ever for an initiative that is of only secondary importance to its mission. Though given and received with the best intentions, the donation necessarily re-centers the organization's focus and possibly changes its character. An example of this phenomenon would be a small rescue mission receiving a renovated hotel for housing the homeless, without receiving commensurate support for ministry staff. The larger shelter, while still rescuing people from the streets, simply cannot offer the intensive personal ministry that had been the mission's hallmark.

   On the flipside, tight budgets pressure organizations to broaden their mission and values, allowing for greater reach (in terms of staff, potential donors, and persons ministered to) but often leading to a loss of the original vision. One Christian college in the early 1990s, needing more students to remain full, downplayed its denominational background. But the plan backfired, temporarily obscuring the university's distinctives. Faculty with good academic credentials but heritage-opposing doctrinal beliefs were hired and later let go with great pain. Fewer students chose to matriculate, as they did not grasp or appreciate the now hidden distinctives of the university. Recapturing the distinctives and alumni support has taken years;
yet the university has become more focused and is enjoying increased attendance, campus community, and academic quality from united faculty.

2. **Personnel-Related Causes.** Though inevitable and sometimes desirable, personnel changes can also cause an organization's vision to wander. Changes in leadership at the senior or board level will inherently bring a different perspective to the mission of the organization. Recruiting and selecting new staff will bring different thoughts about the organization. Where a mission statement is broad enough to identify the general outcomes, the specific outcomes and pathways to get there may be interpreted differently by each new person based on his previous experiences.

In our various positions—whether as a board member, new staff member, donor or executive director—we all may bring our "hobby horses" to an organization. Naturally, we want to work in our area of greatest expertise, demonstrating mastery in something, gaining some early wins. Too often, we can lose site of the core mission as we seek to make these skills known throughout the organization.

Mission creep can easily occur as the organization takes on new personnel. A staff recruiter that makes hiring decisions only on competency and character may innocently bring staff into the organization that do not grasp or appreciate the mission and values. The same issue applies to leaders, board members, and the most senior leader.

3. **Structural Causes.** The personalities and experiences of the people in an organization certainly influence its direction, but so do the structures in which those people operate. At the board level, the committee structure can shift the direction and priorities of an organization. Aligning committees along operational lines can divert the board's attention to three-month issues rather than three-year or thirty-year issues. An operations board with the executive director as an implementer of board decisions defines an environment where no group formally "owns" the mission and values. Relegating the mission statement and values to a committee begs the question of what is so important that does not allow the entire board to be fully attentive to mission and values.

An over-emphasis on evaluative metrics or poor usage of them may distract and organization from that which is intangible and subjective. Yet, these qualitative aspects often form the heart of our mission. The transformation of human lives is complex, usually inefficient, and difficult to measure. Obedience to the Word is difficult to measure and is often contraindicated by organizational or business metrics. Donors, foundations, and others increasingly base their funding decisions on quantitative data that can override or overwhelm qualitative knowledge and prayerful discernment. A "numbers guy" can easily and innocently craft a data-driven decision that promises to improve the numbers at hand, but it may in fact not be in the best interest of the vision. Some have noted that Jesus would not be fundable under the prevailing drive for efficiency as measured by emerging standards of analysis and evaluation.

An organization's place in the larger scheme of other organizations with similar goals matters, too. New organizations focusing on the same area of service as existing organizations may bring an injection of resources to the needs at hand, but may create real or perceived competition for resources. This competition can inspire an organization to healthy discussion of honing its mission, or it can cause the organization to grasp at quick solutions that may circumvent its founding goals and principles.
4. **Demographic Causes.** Like competition, demographic shifts create a temptation to mission creep with internal and external components. Internally, new generations will change the interpretation of values and worldview of the organization as the generation gains greater influence. Externally, organizations must be increasingly adaptive to remain relevant to the changing communities that they serve. Yet they must learn to adapt the "how" of ministry without unintentionally causing or allowing a change in the "what" or "why" of the organization.

Over time, the communities our organizations serve will probably change. A neighborhood church or social service ministry will most likely see a notable demographic change in the course of a generation. In context of this changing background, a mission statement focused on a narrowly defined group of people will suffer. On the other hand, a mission broader in scope, focusing on ends rather than means, will endure, possibly even becoming more successful.

Alternately, the people served might stay constant, but their real and perceived needs could change, sometimes quite rapidly. For example, church planting missions in earthquake-torn Pakistan had to adapt quickly to simply keep those served alive.

5. **Philosophical Causes.** When an organization suffers mission creep due to changes in finances, personnel, structure, or demographics, this drift often indicates a lost connection to a solid philosophical mooring. The biggest challenge in this area is secularization.

Secularization may be the single greatest cause of mission creep in Christian organizations. Some of the movement may be of our own doing. Historian George Marsden, in his 1995 book *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Non-belief*, recounts this process for one sector of the non-profit world. The people who built America's universities tended to be ardent, active Protestants. Marsden writes, "In the late nineteenth century, when American universities took their shape, the Protestantism of the major northern denominations acted as a virtual religious and cultural establishment. … As late as the 1950s it was not unusual for spokespersons of leading schools to refer to them as 'Christian' institutions." Over the next decades, however, "Many of the same forces set in motion by liberal Protestantism which rooted out traditional evangelicalism from university education, were eventually turned against the liberal Protestant establishment itself. Now, while it is the spirit of liberal Protestantism that arguably survives, normative religious teaching of any sort has been nearly eliminated from standard university education."

This dramatic shift did not take place overnight, nor did it result from any organized campaign of militant atheists. In many cases, the desire to obtain government funding has prompted educators (and leaders of other types of non-profits) to tone down the offensive "Christianese." At some point, the primary focus of their organizations shifted from "Christ proclaiming" or "Christ honoring" to providing good services often indistinguishable from secular organizations.

Accreditation plays a role in potential mission creep as well. Accreditation and certification agencies are often not government agencies, yet they exert equal influence as gatekeepers for funds, clients and a license to practice. for example, children's homes, colleges, medical clinics and social service ministries must meet strict guidelines to assure quality, yet "quality standards" increasingly pressure organizations to ease up on their "restrictive" policies and practices often tied to their faith. Who they hire, their selection criteria based on religious or sexual practices, and explanations of their faith in the service programs are influenced heavily.
by accreditors with secular agendas not defined by the actual laws.

Additionally, the mounting pressures to conform to secular notions of diversity and toleration create tensions for those responsible for maintaining the direction defined by the mission statement. This is particularly cumbersome for those with a mission and value system that tends to be exclusive. Diversity and tolerance to enjoy the breadth of God's kingdom is a wonderful and noble motivator. But watering down the mission or reducing it to a lowest common denominator statement will most assuredly broaden it, reduce its focus, and shift energy away from the organization's primary focus.

6. A Lack of Reminders. Lastly, a significant cause of mission creep is that people simply do not know what the mission is, or the problems of the day tend to become the focus of their attention. Without constant reminders to "look up" to the long term, inspiring mission and vision, people turn their head down. Daily goals focus on accomplishing tasks within the circumstances of the day. Nehemiah learned that he had to renew the vision about every four weeks or the circumstances would be sufficient for people to simply drop their hands.

Avoiding Mission Creep

Few organizations intentionally creep away from their mission. However, changes in increments become a change in kind. Assuring adaptive adherence to the mission and values of the organization requires a greater focus on culture and communication, not just a checklist of analytical tasks.

John W. Gardner, former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, has spoken well about values, goals and the balance between continuity and change as part of organizational renewal:

"Now these values and goals, at their best, don't come out of the mind of the leader. They come out of a lot of back and forth among the leadership team, which is in touch with an even broader circle in the system, and then folks in the system itself. Out of that come the values and goals. But, you've got to formulate them in understandable ways. You've got to disseminate them. … It isn't enough just to have goals and values. You've got to celebrate them. You've got to reaffirm them. You've got to say these are the things that are important to us. There's an old saying that it's a waste of time to preach to the choir or preach to the converted. But in fact, it isn't a waste of time, and time out of mind, from the dawn of history, I'm sure, people who keep their faith keep telling one another what their faith is. It's got to be done." ("Conversations with John W. Gardner," Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation 2000).

We can expand on this statement to gain a number of insights to maintain the mission while adapting to a changing environment.

Aspects of a Successful Mission Statement

Avoiding mission creep presupposes a good and well understood mission statement. The Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management suggests that a great mission statement:

- "Is short and sharply focused
- Is clear and easily understood
- Defines why we do what we do, why the organization exists
- Does not prescribe means
- Is sufficiently broad
• Provides direction for doing the right things.
• Addresses opportunities
• Matches our competence
• Inspires our commitment
• Says what, in the end, we want to be remembered for."

In short, a great mission statement proactively draws people to its broad center, preventing the organization from straying from its foundation.

Gardner makes an excellent point that the vision and mission, while possibly articulated by a small group of leaders, must contain the voices of those who are giving their lives to it. Internalization of the mission is critical to its success, possibly even more so in organizations highly dependent on volunteers. "The leader's vision," if that is all there is, can be dangerous as it is as temporary as the leader. "Our vision and mission" takes a lot more time to establish and articulate, but it will last a lot longer than "my vision." This does not discount a vision or mission given by a single person, but it requires that person to be a great communicator with the ability to inspire people to internalize the mission, in the mold of Nehemiah.

Maintaining and Realizing Mission

Who is responsible for maintaining the focus of the mission in your organization? Where it is everyone's responsibility, it is nobody's responsibility. Formal responsibility for establishing and maintaining the mission should be identified as a governing board function, with much of the activity to that end being delegated through the executive director. Focusing on the mission should be a significant part of the board's work. Quick checks of adequate focus can be made by simply reviewing the board agenda, preventing, detecting, and correcting problems of focus and attention.

With a mission that meets the Drucker criteria, it is then natural and easy to tie the strategic plan and strategic budget to the mission. In its long range/strategic plan, one organization quoted the exact portion of the mission or vision that was to be supported by each strategic element and respective budget amount. This provided a simple test to assure that the money followed the mission, rather than the other way around.

Likewise, tying grant proposals explicitly and boldly to the mission and values assures that a donor will perceive a clear relationship between the proposal and the mission. Going a little deeper into grant proposal writing, an independent internal test for continuity with the mission will prevent "hobby horse" proposals by those who may be looking primarily for an outlet for their particular interests, however praiseworthy, yet outside of the primary role of the ministry.

Leveraging Personal Voices and Assets

Anecdotes of those served will have a much greater impact on board and staff than will only data of numbers served. Great boards, when presented with stories or given experiences that demonstrate the grander value of the organization will be more fully informed to make wise strategic decisions regarding the bottom line (measured in dollars), "the other bottom line" (transformed lives), and obedience to the Word, regardless of outcomes. This can help detect inappropriate value changes not easily measured or reported in summary form.

Those served by the organization can also passionately articulate the needs of the people and the value of the mission to meet them. At one college, almost twenty years ago, a mom and dad stood in line at
the bursar's office to pay her son's tuition. Surprised at some extra fees, she expressed to her husband that she understood why she had waited to get the dishwasher repaired! After I heard this story as a cabinet member of the college, I began expressing the high cost of quality education in these new and meaningful terms. Future decisions about capital expenditures were often mentally measured and communicated in increments of "dishwashers not fixed".

"Long timers" on the board and staff assure an active organizational memory. They not only bring their stories, they bring the earlier culture into the future.

Recruiting of staff and board members must sufficiently focus on the mission, as well as the tasks at hand. Everyone, including clerical or manual workers will benefit from understanding how their role links to the achievement of the mission. As they are fully brought into the family to accomplish the mission rather than performing individual tasks, they will bring far more commitment and energy each day. While more senior leaders and board members will talk about the mission, these people will walk the walk every day as they engage those being served. Given an opportunity to express themselves, they may become some of the better detectors of incremental mission creep.

**Toward Mission Integration**

A number of simple practices will help keep the mission in the forefront of each person on a daily basis. Once enabled, people with the mission on their mind will rise above the limiting circumstances and resources of the day to find new ways to achieve according to the pattern of mission. This will prevent mission creep at the incremental level and enable each person to detect mission creep on a daily basis.

- Craft the mission statement such that it can be easily remembered apart from the founding and governing documents.
- Assure ongoing board awareness by stating the mission and values clearly in various documents. These documents include the agenda, the governance policy book, and/or placards on the desks at every meeting. Several boards recite the mission at the beginning of the meeting to assure that it remains fresh in their minds. With a story and devotional by a staff member or person served, the board is ready to fully engage the organization with head, heart, and hand.
- Impress the mission every day on staff and visitors by proudly displaying the mission and values at the entrances to the building or offices. Insert the statement and possibly an application of it in the computer screensavers.
- Directly impact each new person engaged by printing the mission statement on the back of business cards.

**Budget Analysis**

Current wisdom teaches, "If you want to know the organization's priorities, follow the money." While somewhat distasteful because of its apparent simplistic emphasis on the business of the organization, there is much truth to the statement. Ongoing ratio analysis, tying budgets to specific components of the mission, and reasonable evaluation will assure, from the corporate side, that financial resources are focused appropriately. These tools will incite dialogue during budget approval and ongoing review, assuring that the resources align with the mission.

**Transparency Builds Trust in the Mission**
Transparency assures accountability to the mission and vision. This is increasingly difficult where there are pressures to soften or deny founding values under the sometimes agenda-seeking auspices of diversity or tolerance. Indeed, there are reasons to seek diversity and tolerance, but not to the incremental detriment of the organization's foundation as articulated in the mission and values. If correction of past restrictions and offenses is needed, be transparent, intentional and bold to change.

Transparency is just good business. For example, a volunteer-based organization must rely on the good will of well-informed and motivated people; they can and will quickly detect the de-motivating gaps between what an organization is and what it says it is. Organizations can ill afford a new, self-funded volunteer, committing to a long-term engagement, yet surprised at the organization's real values and how they are lived out daily. Transparency up front will assure that the right people "get on the bus." Transparency builds trust in the mission and the people who lead. It opens the way for feedback from those who are on the frontlines every day, offering yet better approaches to achieve the mission. Those people will continually close any gaps between the mission and the tasks of the day.

**Keep the Core Focus Central**

All great causes are not your cause. Mission creep as discussed here is an organizational issue with both organizational and individual causes and influencing forces. The preventive, detective and corrective solutions, especially in faith-based organizations, are both organizational and individual. Hitting the white ring around the red bull's eye is one thing; shifting the aim to the white ring is another.

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