

# STRATEGY PLANNING TEAM REPORT

A church is the body of Christ. A church is a living organism. Practically speaking, a church is also an organization. A church has a spiritual, a physical and an organizational dimension.

Each of these dimensions interact and mesh in order to accomplish the calling of God upon our lives as a church and as members of the church. The strategy planning team wants to help the church carry out its mission:

*The mission of First Baptist Church is to lead people to become followers of Jesus and to nurture them as Christ like servant-leaders working together to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.*

Fulfilling this mission requires obedience to the Great Commission:

*And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age" (Mt. 28:18-20, NASB).*

It also requires obedience to the Great Commands:

*And he said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Mt. 19:37-39, NASB).*

In the last three years the strategy planning team has:

1. Visited other churches before bringing a recommendation to the church to elect a building committee to lead the church in considering a family life center.
2. Conducted the Natural Church Development assessment twice. Both times, the result revealed passionate spirituality as our lowest quality characteristic.
3. Some of those strategies to address this need have been:
  - sermon series on spiritual life
  - formation of small groups for spiritual growth
  - more emphasis on prayer, Bible study and Bible reading
4. In order to provide better information to our congregation we started and maintain a new website. More information is in the weekly bulletin along with "pray through the Scriptures" references, daily Bible readings and "Read through the Bible" references.
5. We have looked at what we call "contemporary realities" as they relate to FBC and to our community. The statistics unfortunately reveal a decline in attendance and in membership at our church: this in spite of the growth of the community and the area.

We have identified some external reasons for this. An important reason is that there are more churches in the community than there were 25 years ago. Indeed, we released a significant number of members along with a much-loved staff member in order to start a new church in

Farmington. The growth and the effectiveness of New Heights Church confirm for us that we were following the will of God in starting a new church.

Still, even with more churches, we estimate that at least half of the people in the community do not attend church.

First Baptist Church is, and always has been, a great church. We are a leader in mission support, in cooperation, in ministries, in providing leadership. Still, the contemporary realities reveal a need for change which enables us to honor the Great Commission and the Great Commands.

No living thing is static. No church can remain the same. Our commitment is to seek and to follow the Lord's leading. Our conviction is that he wants the church to grow. In that growth, lives are changed.

Growing out of our concern with the contemporary realities of our church and our community, we sought the assistance of Dr. Jim Hill. Dr. Hill is executive director of the BGCM and is a noted authority on strategy planning. Since our desire is "not more but better," we believed he could help us narrow our focus in order to begin some things that would help us.

Dr. Hill met three times with our team. Initially, we discussed the following topics and critical needs at FBC:

- Evangelism: Leading people to Christ and growing in worship and Bible study
- Missions: Expansion of volunteer opportunities
- Facilities: Renovation of present buildings and consideration of a family life center
- Worship: Transitions which help to "open the front door of the church."
- Discipleship: Personal spiritual growth
- Ministry: Keeping track of and caring for members
- Organization: Developing functional structures

In meeting with Dr. Hill, the team narrowed the focus further. The building committee is working on facilities and the BOW team is working on a missions strategy so we removed both from this list. Still, we had to narrow the focus further to what we believed we must address right now. Since we believe this kind of planning will be an on-going process at FBC, the first question is "Where do we start?"

Because evangelism is crucial to carrying out the Great Commission and to the work of the church, and because today, worship is the "front door" that is the first exposure most people have to a church, we believe this is where we should begin. Again, "not more, but better," is our goal.

# EVANGELISM

***We believe that for the church to carry out the Great Commission, it must make disciples. We further believe that every member must participate.***

## **Possible Strategic Initiatives, Goals or Actions to Take**

1. Create opportunities for evangelism, through courses, seminars, and non-threatening larger events which might have an appeal to both the congregation and members of the community.
  - a. Examples might include topics such as “Heaven and Hell;” “What have you heard about being a Christian (or Baptist);” or special interest, need-based groups dealing with marriage, parenting, aging etc.
  - b. Facilitators for these groups would stress the importance of walking with Christ. They would also emphasize participation in the local church.
  - c. The effectiveness of such events is dependent upon church members inviting and encouraging the participation of others.
2. Continue to refine the data base (prospect file) of interested persons.
  - a. Identify all worship service guests-possibly through all attendees registering.
  - b. Record names, addresses and phone numbers of people attending Bible study and small groups for inclusion in the file.
  - c. Include other names of interested people as they become available.
3. Providing teaching and training in evangelism for church members.
  - a. Ministers and experienced leaders may enlist one or two people to mentor in evangelistic conversations.
  - b. Help and encourage church members to approach and greet people in worship services and at other activities so our services are even more “guest friendly.”
  - c. Provide periodic larger group teaching for relational evangelism using resources such as *Making Friends for Christ* or *Sharing Christ Without Fear*.
  - d. Develop an emphasis that encourages every adult and student to lead someone to Christ and to bring someone to church this year.
4. Explore, with the leadership of the BOW team, opportunities to do targeted evangelism in specific groups. Examples include apartment and student ministries.
5. Make the expectations and responsibilities for a Christian and a member of FBC clear.
  - a. For present church members.
  - b. For new members.
  - c. For interested persons.

Bible and doctrinal studies, preaching, and small groups could assist in this. Effective new member training is also a need.

5. With all the voices calling for people’s attention, effective publicity that is simple, repeated and effective is more important than ever.
  - a. Greater utilization of newspaper and radio.
  - b. Regardless of the amount of media publicity, nothing substitutes for personal interest and invitations by our members. It is the personal invitation that will make use of mass media effective.
  - c. Communicate with and provide information for worship, and other events with guests. These people are the most interested.
  - d. Continue to upgrade and utilize our web site.

# WORSHIP

**Worship in Spirit and in Truth honors God and exalts the Savior. Worship is frequently the first exposure new people have to our church. It is important that we always strive for excellence in all aspects of our worship.**

## Possible Strategic Initiative, Goals or Actions to Take

1. Preaching the gospel is central to worship in a Baptist Church.
  - a. Personal growth in effective communication of the gospel.
  - b. Effective use of video.
  - c. More specific invitations.
  - d. Use of commitment counselors when needed.
2. Enhance and broaden the experience of worship.
  - a. Enlist more people for the choir.
  - b. Involve more laypeople in worship according to their gifts and interests.
  - c. Refine and enhance the use of video.
  - d. Change and variety in music and in the order of worship.
3. Connect with people in worship.
  - a. More time for gathering and connecting.
  - b. Church members use greeting time to genuinely welcome others, especially guests.
  - c. Use "friendship pads" for all in attendance.
  - d. Provide opportunities to "meet the ministers."
  - e. Provide information packets for guests.
  - f. Plan occasional times for spiritual reflection in worship.
  - g. Periodic testimonies.

# TIME

Upon adoption of this report, we will begin immediately to implement or refine the recommendations. This will be our road map to the immediate future. Strategy planning is an on-going adventure. The recommendations herein should be implemented by September 2, 2011.

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