

FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
“Renewing Faith” Planning Report
April, 2011

Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

In the past few years, Faith Church has adopted statements of Vision and Values, and conducted a Short and Long Range Planning Study (SLRS) to confront present day realities and issues. These realities include declining membership and income as well as pastoral leadership and other staffing changes. In addition, in July, 2011, the International Spanish Language Academy (ISLA) will be moving from Faith Church to new facilities, thus freeing up space, but also significantly reducing gross income.

With this backdrop, session decided to engage a consultant to guide the building of a strategic plan, bringing together the work of SLRS and resource realities, in light of our stated Vision and Values, and called the effort “Renewing Faith”. With a Biblical foundation for planning, Dr. Mark McCloskey led session (current and incoming elders) and senior staff through a process of group discernment based on a model he developed entitled “Six Zones of Leadership”. It begins with “Directional Imperatives” (the destination), then proceeds through “Situational Analysis” (present reality), “Critical Mass” (identifying capacity), “Critical Path” (key objectives), “Resource Release” (resource alignment with objectives), and “Learning” (ongoing review, adjustment and application of gained wisdom).

The Renewing Faith planning group met for four full-day sessions and completed assigned homework between the meetings. All prior work was reviewed (including the Action Goals recommended by SLRS) and a current situational analysis was added. Then ideas were categorized by size and complexity, priorities were established and a “phase 1” strategic plan was developed.

As work progressed, the need for a “mission statement” emerged and congregational input was sought. A Mission Statement is more specific than the Vision, providing criteria for decision-making while telling people who we are and what we are committed to doing. The resulting proposed mission statement is: “Faith Church is an intergenerational, biblically-faithful family of caring people committed to following Christ by loving and glorifying God through worship, education, service and the arts. We reach out to young families, the senior population and the local community, and minister through trusted local and global partners.”

The process included an assessment of our current internal and external environments, and a situational analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They were identified as

- Strengths: our building, music/theater, “core participants”, a warm and welcoming atmosphere.
- Weaknesses: stewardship (financial resources), demographics (maturing congregation), shortage of volunteers, and disenfranchised youth.
- Opportunities: the community’s need for space, reaching the un-churched.
- Threats: denominational issues, perceived church irrelevance, bad “PR” from the past, and so called “mega-churches.”

Available resources – human and financial – had to be considered developing the plan. We can’t do what we don’t have the resources to do. The budget for the next fiscal year (July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012) is yet to be approved, but with the likelihood of reduced income in the near term, paid staff will likely decrease, and more volunteers will be needed. An identified opportunity is our building space which, with the departure of ISLA, will provide room for expanded internal programming as well as community use consistent with our mission.

Considering all of the above, the planning group established four objectives and supporting strategies for the coming fiscal year (* indicates those items that are top priority now and for which tactics/ actions plans are in the works):

1. Encourage more to become core participants, ___% by 6/30/2012 (% to be determined by session).
 - *Identify current core participants
 - Develop current core participants (facilitate growing in discipleship); grow more core participants
 - Deploy core participants
2. Increase participation ___% by 6/30/2012 (% to be determined by session).
 - *Reach out to young families
 - Reach out to seniors
 - *Grow volunteers
 - Increase worship attendance
 - *Increase youth attendance
 - *Connect/bridge new visitors/new members into the Faith family
3. Increase giving ___% by 6/30/2012 (% to be determined by session).
 - Educate regarding meaning/value of financial stewardship
 - *Pursue targeted giving opportunities (initially, if a shortfall as of 6/30/2011 is expected)
 - Pursue fund raising opportunities
4. Increase building use consistent with our mission and values.
 - Because each type of room (Nursery, Activity Center, classrooms, etc.) might have different possibilities, they will be considered separately over time
 - *Look for ways to expand use of the Activity Center and to use events to promote other Faith Church programs and events.

Tactics and action plans will support each strategy, and that's where the congregation comes in – participating in the carrying out of these plans.

These objectives and strategies are a beginning. Everything can't be done or even started at once. With limited resources, we must focus our efforts carefully, trust the Lord to guide us and work in phases. While "new" work proceeds, existing programs such as the Deacons, Stephen Ministry, Circles United, Women Together, Men's Ministry, etc. will continue. It's possible that changes in existing programming will be recommended, but that will occur over time and with due consideration.

Progress will be monitored, assessed and reported; objectives and strategies will be adjusted as needed. Session will also be assessing existing committees, programs and the proposed budget to ensure alignment with and support of the objectives. New objectives will be established as existing ones are met. This will be a "living and breathing" plan.

Although the planning group developed the objectives and strategies, implementation must be a congregational effort. Specific opportunities will be provided for all to participate. Even if physical participation is not possible, your prayerful support is critical!

We are all feeling challenged by the significant issues we face. But with challenge comes opportunity. We believe God is at work in Faith Church. As we listen and respond to His leading, we will "Renew Faith" - our own faith as well as Faith Church, to His glory and honor!

I. Introduction

Background

In February, 2009, session approved “The Vision and Values of Faith Church”, proposed from the work of a team and the congregation over a number of months.

Vision: “To follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, Be filled with His love, and Share His Abundant Grace with our communities.”

Values: Christ-centered, Biblically-based, Disciple-making, Outreach-oriented, Culturally-relevant, and Future - focused.

The vision is a church that has three interrelated rocks or pillars that provide for a ministry that is alive, sustainable and God-honoring: Worship, Discipleship, and Service.

In 2010, confronting present day realities and issues, a Short and Long Range Study (SLRS) committee used a comprehensive church survey, study and extensive discussion to develop a Strategic Plan and Action Goals with the Vision and Values as a foundation. The Plan was received by session in October, 2010, with the understanding that session had the responsibility to “own” the Plan and to carry its recommendations forward as deemed appropriate.

Already on the horizon was the departure of the International Spanish Language Academy (ISLA) charter school in the summer of 2011. While freeing up space, it will mean a significant loss of gross income – approximately \$250,000 annually. At the same time, Faith Church membership and giving have been on the decline recently adding to the financial and human resource concerns.

Session decided to engage a consultant to guide the process of building a strategic action plan for the next few years, bringing together the SLRS work and the resource realities, in light of our stated Vision and Values. During the time of searching for a consultant, our senior pastor, the Rev. Christopher Carlson, announced his decision to leave Faith Church, effective in January, 2011.

In late January, 2011, session hired Dr. Mark McCloskey, a professor at Bethel Seminary and a consultant and workshop leader in the areas of strategic planning, leadership development, and team building, to work with it in the development of a plan document using a process he has developed and used extensively. The work would be done in the February – April timeframe to allow the results to inform the budgeting process for the new fiscal year which begins July 1, 2011.

Process

Fundamental to planning in a church is its Biblical foundation. There are many references in the Bible to the need for and appropriateness of planning. This was not just a “business exercise”, rather it was a need to thoughtfully use the resources and gifts God has given us individually and collectively, here and now, to His glory and honor.

Participants in the planning effort, named “Renewing Faith”, included Pastor Day, current session members (Jim Elliott, Dean Halverson, Steve Joseph, Stacey Hurrell, Debbie Knutson, Blake Meisenheimer, Roger Miller, Rick Pavelka, Tom Radermacher, Carol Shanholtzer, Sue Studenski, Jeff Sweet, Mike Tenney and John Vogel),

incoming session members (Betty Swanson, Eric Swanson, Joe Klein, Stan Kintigh, Bob Blakesley and Cristina Earley), Steve Zehr, Gary Hemphill, and Sue Larson. This group met in four full-day sessions in addition to doing between-meeting homework.

An Executive Planning Committee, Dr. McCloskey, Pastor Day, Bob Blakesley, Cristina Earley, Debbie Knutson, Carol Shanholtzer and Sue Larson, met separately several times to plan the large group meetings, to ensure that the process stayed on track, and to identify and resolve any problems or potential roadblocks.

Dr. McCloskey used a model he developed entitled, “Six Zones of Leadership” to guide the process. It is an iterative and interactive process which begins with “Directional Imperatives” (the destination), then proceeds through “Situational Analysis” (present reality), “Critical Mass” (identifying capacity), “Critical Path” (key objectives), “Resource Release” (resource alignment with objectives), and “Learning” (ongoing review, adjustment and application of gained wisdom).

As a starting point for the planning process, the group looked at every Action Goal in the SLRS report. Because all goals are not equivalent in size, impact, required effort, etc., the first step in categorizing and ultimately prioritizing them was to determine whether each goal was “technical” (relatively straightforward, we know how to do it, just need the resources) or “adaptive” (more complex, often cultural in nature, requiring change over time). Then, each Goal was identified as a “boulder” (big, possibly costly), “rock” (tough, but doable) or “stone” (smaller in scope, more technical). Along the way, some goals were reworded, some were dropped (either already accomplished or no longer relevant), and some were added.

Early in the discussions, the need for a “mission statement” was raised. Although we have a Vision statement and Values, a mission statement says what we will do for whom and provides more specific criteria for decision-making. In a sense, it says how we will work toward achieving our vision while reflecting our values. Because the congregation was involved in determining the Vision and Values, session wanted its input in the formation of a mission statement. Three questions were posed to solicit ideas: 1) What of unique and enduring value do we have to offer, locally and to the world?, 2) What have we done well?, and 3) Where has God blessed us in unique and surprising ways? Two discussion sessions were held and written responses were received.

The group also looked at the environment within which we live and serve. What are our strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and threats that exist? The issue of available resources, both financial and human (staff, volunteer) was carefully considered.

From all of this input, several themes emerged which guided the drafting of a mission statement, the prioritization of objectives and strategies, and the formulation of a “phase 1” action plan: our facilities, music/theater, intergenerational congregation, outreach/missions, Bible faithfulness, infrastructure (committees), and stewardship (financial and human).

Although a fast-moving and somewhat complex effort, communication with the Family of Faith was important along the way. By updates in worship, input to the mission statement formation, articles in *Faith In Action*, and Committee discussions, the planning group wanted the congregation to have some sense of what was happening.

The remainder of this report gives the results of the planning work.

II. Where We're Headed ("Directional Imperatives")

Any plan needs a destination – “where we're headed”. This is reflected in our purpose (why we're here), our vision (what we strive to become), our mission (what we will do for whom in working toward our vision) and our values (what we honor on our way to the future).

Our **Purpose** is best stated in the Westminster Shorter Catechism: “Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”

Our **Vision** is: “To follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, Be filled with His love, and Share His Abundant Grace with our communities.”

Our **Mission**: “Faith Church is an intergenerational, biblically-faithful family of caring people committed to following Christ by loving and glorifying God through worship, education, service and the arts. We reach out to young families, the senior population and the local community, and minister through trusted local and global partners.”

Our **Values** are:

- Christ Centered – We honor God by lifting up Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. People find their meaning in life through a relationship with Christ. Followers of Christ will experience God in worship, in relationships, and in the ways they serve.
- Biblically Based – The Bible is our authority for life and provides our source for understanding how to live faithfully in our world. The Bible will be the base line for all our activities. Learning for application will be the norm at Faith Church.
- Disciple Making – As followers of Christ, our desire is to become more Christ-like in our thoughts, words, and actions. We will seek to use varied methods to live like Christ because everyone learns differently.
- Outreach Oriented – We reach out to those outside our church and to those outside of the faith because we seek to be faithful to Christ's call to go and make disciples and His commandment to love each other as He loves us. We will reach out by proclaiming the Good News of Jesus in words and through our service to community and world.
- Culturally Relevant – The world is ever changing, and we will seek to engage the world for Christ in ways that help people outside of faith understand Him and help followers of Christ to see how faith works in their daily lives.
- Future Focused – This requires us to purposely look to the future to discover new ways to increase Christ's influence.

III. Our Internal and External Environments ("Situational Analysis")

Planning must proceed with an awareness and understanding of the environment in which it will be implemented. “SWOT” analysis – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – is a useful way to identify critical internal and external environmental factors. For Faith Church, the planning group identified the following:

Strengths (internal, validated, sustainable competitive advantages)

- Our building. We have a large and varied facility that can be used in many ways. We are visible, accessible, and have parking.
- Music/Theater. We have a long tradition of a strong music program for all ages, expressed primarily in worship services and seasonal concerts. We also have a history of and the desire and talent to put on theatrical productions.
- “Core participants”. We are blessed with a number of people growing in their faith and willing to share their time, talents and financial resources in service within Faith Church and in our various mission causes.
- Warm and Welcoming. We often hear that new-comers feel welcomed and encouraged when visiting Faith Church.

Weaknesses (internal, validated, competitive disadvantages)

- Stewardship. With the loss of ISLA income and declining membership, our financial resources are very limited, thus also constraining programming possibilities.
- Demographics. Our congregational age is skewed to the “more mature” end. It is also true that our surrounding community is maturing.
- Shortage of volunteers. While a number of people do volunteer in the church, more are needed, especially in light of reduced staff.
- Disenfranchised youth. Recent staff changes have resulted in a significant decrease in youth involvement in programs and activities. Attractive programs at other churches have also drawn away youth.

Opportunities (external, chances to “shine,” “grow” and “win” in light of our mission)

- Community need for space. We already host some community activities, e.g., Hopkins Women’s Club, TOPS, American Heritage Girls, and of course, ISLA. We believe there are other community programs and activities, not in conflict with our programs, mission and values, that might be interested in using some of our space. Not only would this occupy unused space, but it would also bring people into the church that might not otherwise enter a church.
- Reaching the un-churched. We believe there are many people in the community who don’t know Christ or are in need of a church home, be they newly arrived families, students or seniors, for example.

Threats (external, pose an obstacle to the welfare and progress of Faith Church)

- Denominational issues. The PC(USA) is considering a number of changes that are controversial and may divide churches. How decisions made at the national level will affect Faith Church is a significant unknown.
- Perceived church irrelevance. Society, in general, often seems to marginalize the church as a positive factor or influence. Combating that image or perception and presenting Christ’s life giving message is the challenge.
- Bad PR from the past. Faith Church went through a difficult time a couple of years ago and a number of friends left the church as a result. For some, bad feelings remain.

- “Mega-churches”. In this area as well as nationally, so called mega-churches have grown and gained much influence. Their sheer size affords more programming options and tends to be attractive to youth and young families, especially.

We need to build on our strengths, shore up our weaknesses, pursue opportunities and mitigate threats!

IV. Available Resources (“Critical Mass”)

In order to fulfill our mission and achieve our objectives, we must acknowledge the resources we have. Resources are both financial, human (paid staff and volunteers), and our building. We need the right people paying attention to the right things. We know we have a strong pastor, a strong, core group of participants (volunteers, prayer warriors) and a large, flexible facility.

The budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2011 is yet to be finalized, but it is likely that:

- Our gross income for the next fiscal year will be approximately \$250,000 LESS than in the current year, unless giving increases significantly.
- Paid staff will likely decrease with the decrease in income.
- Volunteer opportunities/needs will increase.
- Building space will be available for expanded internal programming or use by the community, consistent with our mission.

If we are able to increase our available resources – especially financial and human – we will increase our ability to achieve current and new objectives, to grow!

V. Objectives (“Critical Path”) and Phase 1 Strategies (“Resource Release”)

So what are we going to do? What are our near term priorities, given our available resources? What will move us in the direction we want to go? The objectives we set should be:

- sustainable (vision and mission compatible, have sufficient resources)
- make sense (in a high priority area, leads to opportunities)
- a catalyst to bring in more leaders and resources

Given all of the above, the planning group has established four objectives and their supporting strategies for the coming fiscal year, July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012. They are the first phase of what will be an ongoing effort. Starred (*) strategies will be pursued first.

1. Encourage more to become core participants, ___% by 6/30/2012 (% to be determined by session).
 - *Identify current core participants
 - Develop current core participants (facilitate growing in discipleship); grow more core participants
 - Deploy core participants
2. Increase participation ___% by 6/30/2012 (% to be determined by session).
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 - *Look for ways to expand use of the Activity Center and to use events to promote other Faith Church programs and events.

Each strategy will be supported by a number of tactics and action plans, and that's where the congregation comes in – participating in the carrying out of these plans.

It is important to remember these objectives and strategies are a beginning. Everything can't be done or even started at once. With limited resources, we must focus our efforts carefully, trust the Lord to guide us and work in phases. Subsequent phases will build on these objectives.

While all the “new” work is moving ahead, existing programs such as the Deacons, Stephen Ministry, Circles United, Women Together, Men's Ministry, etc. will continue. Over time, it's possible that changes in existing programming will be recommended, but that will occur over time and with due consideration. A focus on new work will be critical, so it is hoped that existing ministries and programs will consider how they can embrace and serve in the new tactical action plans.

VI. Monitoring, Learning and Communication

It is important to monitor and assess progress as we work on achieving our strategic objectives and all the work that is done along the way. Session will track and report progress, help to resolve issues, and establish new objectives as existing ones are met.

We also need to learn from our efforts. What is working? What needs to be adjusted or changed? The plan must “live and breathe” in order to be effective over time. Circumstances change, unforeseen opportunities or challenges may appear, and we must be alert to and responsive to them. The next phase of objectives will build on the first phase and may be somewhat different. That will reflect learning and progress.

The planning group has defined a communication plan for the next several months, including written information to all, a reporting path from action plans to session, and a report to the congregation in September regarding progress over the summer.

VII. Session “To-Dos”

In addition to initiating and monitoring the work on the objectives and strategies, session has some specific things to do:

- Assess current committee structure and align with objectives.
- Implement the “Renewing Faith” communication plan

- Establish an ongoing process to review the status of objectives; ensure periodic consideration of items initially assigned a lower priority.
- Approve the new fiscal year budget and ensure alignment with objectives.
- Assess existing programs and events per our vision, mission, values and objectives.

VIII. Congregational Engagement

Although the planning group developed the objectives and strategies, their implementation must be a congregational effort. Specific opportunities will be provided for all to participate in the strategies, tactics and action plans. Even if physical participation is not possible, your prayerful support is critical!

We are all feeling challenged by the significant issues we face. But with challenge comes opportunity:

- Challenge – reduced or constrained paid staff ... Opportunity – greater volunteer participation, giving of talents and time.
- Challenge – attitude of “Woe is us” ... Opportunity – attitude of “What exciting new things does God have in store for us?”
- Challenge – lots of unused space ... Opportunity – expanded Faith programming, new community uses.
- Challenge – reduced income ... Opportunity – growing worship attendance, program participation, and potentially, income.

We believe God is at work in Faith Church. As we listen and respond to His leading, we will “Renew Faith” - our own faith as well as Faith Church, to His glory and honor!