

CATCHING THE WIND



CHARTING THE COURSE

Vision Discernment Team Report

October, 2017

First Baptist Church, Newport News



First Baptist Church, Newport News

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In consultation with Dr. Bill Wilson
from The Center for Healthy Churches



Recommendation

The Vision Discernment Team moves that First Baptist Church, Newport News adopt the following proposals:

1. Endorse the following six initiatives for our church from November 2017 through December 2022. (See page 17 for more in-depth examples of these initiatives.)

- **God-Centered Worship**
- **Intentional Spiritual Development**
- **Compassionate Mission Partnerships**
- **Authentic Community**
- **Investment in Next Generations**
- **Extend Good News Invitations**

2. Align our organizational structure to the above six areas of focus through the creation of a Vision Team which will replace the current Leadership Council. In addition, six Lead Teams representing each area of focus, along with an Administration Team and corresponding Action Teams, will support the Vision Team in carrying out the work of each initiative. (See pages 18-24 for more information about these teams.)



Our Story

First Baptist Church, Newport News has a rich heritage. God's Kingdom has been impacted through deeply committed individuals who love God, love his people, and love this church. The church has grown from a fledgling congregation in 1881 to a strong and vibrant presence on the Peninsula at its current location. All along the way, the church has embraced God-sized dreams in order to meet the challenges of ministry in unique and transformational ways.

From the very beginning, God was at work. With the setback of a fire destroying a beautiful, new building of just over two years old in 1906, members of the church and the community pulled together and in eighteen short months rebuilt the structure. In the 1950's, seeing the need for more congregations within the community, First Baptist dreamed of establishing five new churches. Hilton, Orcutt, Calvary, Ivy Memorial, and Riverside were started with membership and financial support



from First Baptist. In the late 1970's when concerns arose about the movement of members out of downtown, the unique dream of "One Church in Two Locations" began to materialize. Although this concept would eventually lead to a painful decision of closing the original downtown location, the church survived and began to flourish in its new home on Warwick Blvd.



Throughout its history, God has also called the church to reach out to the marginalized and to dream of a better future for them while remaining faithful to the Great Commission. As early as the nineteenth century, members created a Chinese Sunday School for immigrants working to construct the railway near the downtown waterfront. In 2002, church families sponsored five

refugees from Sudan, helping these 'lost boys' establish a household, navigate the English language, find jobs, and even learn how to drive. Through PORT, the congregation provides shelter and food to the homeless in our community during some of the coldest weeks of the year, and our food pantry distributes hundreds of bags filled with groceries each month to those in need. In 2000, First Baptist Church began a ministry to a small group of Hispanics, welcoming them into our congregation. By 2006, the church called Rev. Juan Garcia to organize and pastor this group, which was averaging 45

in weekly attendance. Eleven years later, under Rev. Garcia's leadership, this ministry has grown into a thriving congregation of over 100 members. Today, the needs of many Spanish-speaking residents in Newport News are met through health fairs, soccer tournaments, Bible studies, and access to preschool as a result of this ministry commitment.

The church has also been able to dream beyond our local community. A trip to Romania twenty-five years ago by Rev. Dennis Adams, Richard Green, and Dr. Jim White sowed the seeds of an ongoing partnership between our church and Pastor Veress Ernő. This dream has resulted in over a dozen trips to Camp Hargita by many members of our congregation and ongoing support of several Hungarian congregations pastored by Ernő. In 2015, in an attempt to rethink our giving patterns at Christmas through Advent Conspiracy and Vacation Bible School offerings, the congregation was able to fund the building of seven wells in India, bringing the dream of fresh water to isolated non-Christian communities in the name of Christ. We have also partnered in ministry with churches in Honduras, El Salvador, and Puerto Rico as we continue to dream of new and different ways to walk alongside those who need God's love.



At times, God has even called the church to step out in faith and dream when others may have found fault. In the 1970's, our church affirmed the role of women in ministry as deacons long before other churches were willing to address this issue. Women have also been ordained by the church, one of whom is currently our Associate Pastor for Preschool and Children. During a time of denominational uncertainty, God encouraged the congregation to partner with The Leland Center for Theological Studies to ensure that local students had sound theological teaching available to them.

*I am confident of this, that
the one who began a good
work among you will bring
it to completion by the day
of Jesus Christ.*

Philippians 1:6 NRSV

Our congregation has a history of accepting God's call, and so it is the prayer of the Vision Discernment Team that the work reflected in this document represents the next steps in our mission for God's Kingdom. We humbly present it to the church for discussion and review.

Thankfully, our congregational story reminds us that we have seen God act in powerful ways when we dream God-sized dreams.

Sensing God's Call

Over the last fifteen years, three different pastors have served the church. Personalities, managerial styles, and spiritual gifts were all diverse. God called each of them here for a reason and each served God's purposes and enriched the congregation. The church experienced a time of loss due to a lack of vision and an uncertain future while searching for our next pastor. From 2011-2014, over 250 regular attenders left our congregation. Consequently, the church realized that our next pastor needed to be gifted as a visionary, one who could foster growth and help us cast a long-term vision for our future.

After much prayerful consideration, Dr. Randy Shepley was called as our pastor in March of 2015 and he has helped establish a three-pronged ministry focus:

Embracing God · Equipping Christ-Followers · Engaging Our World

These three ministry goals have helped shape our vision and have helped the church realize we need a clear and targeted means of implementation. As the church has learned from Bill Wilson, there has been a shift in congregational life within the United States. Members attend with less frequency and younger generations are experiencing a disconnect from traditional church structures. Sensing God's call to meet these shifts and the needs of changing demographics within the city, the Leadership Team, the deacons, and the pastor made the decision to move forward with a visioning process. Their desire was to discern God's long-term call to faithfulness for First Baptist that would serve as the foundation upon which the next five years of ministry would be built and develop new metrics to measure our progress within this call.

*If any of you lacks wisdom,
you should ask God, who
gives generously to all
without finding fault, and
it will be given to you.*

James 1:5 NIV



The Leadership Team moved to call Dr. Bill Wilson as a consultant in late 2016 to guide the church through the visioning process. His services were provided through generous gifts to the congregation, and Bill's previous relationship with the church through the Pastor Search Committee offered him a unique perspective on the church's DNA. Through his organization, The Center for Healthy Churches, Bill has provided and continues to provide the team with a wealth of information and guidance throughout the visioning process.

Catching the Wind Charting the Course

The Leadership Team then created a Vision Discernment Team to include all ministerial staff, the chair of the Leadership Team, and nine other lay leaders within the congregation. The church voted on these names and by January 2017 the first team retreat was held.

The team started with a very basic question:

**What is God's specific and unique call for
First Baptist Church, Newport News over the next five to ten years?**

Listening to the Spirit

The team's work began with a two-day retreat. Bill Wilson mapped out the process and charged the team with a prayer of indifference modeled after Christ's prayer in Luke 22, challenging the Vision Discernment Team to remain indifferent to anything but God's will.

God's will

...Nothing More

...Nothing Else

...Nothing Less

The team also agreed to study *Sailboat Church* by Joan S. Gray. The author asserts that churches often try to grow by simply doing more - ministries just need more rowers, faster rowers, or smarter rowers to expand and become successful. The analogy throughout the book counters this argument by pointing to the importance of allowing God's Spirit to be the wind in the church's sails. Ministries are powered by God, not man. This analogy shifts the conversation. The new question becomes, "What is God's direction for us?" While the analogy of sailing into deeper water can be new and challenging, it is also exciting. God's wind may take us to somewhere we have never been before. However, before the church can sail, we must stop and listen.



Listening was an important part of the visioning process. First the team listened for the call of the Spirit through prayer. Individual team members committed to pray for God's vision throughout the process, and the team also chose to dedicate an entire meeting to targeted prayer, both individual and corporate. On February 21st, the Wednesday night prayer service was devoted to praying for the process as well. Dr. Randy Shepley guided those in attendance through prayer stations that focused on prayers for relinquishment, communion with the Holy Spirit, wisdom, and hope. On April 14, 2017, the Deacons sponsored a twenty-four-hour prayer vigil. An overwhelming number of members participated at church and at home, including our children who were provided with tangible and creative manipulatives to use at three prayer stations. The church came together to pray for God's direction within the lives of our members, within the walls of our church, and within a community in need of our love.

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.
Galatians 5:25 NIV

Listening to the Congregation



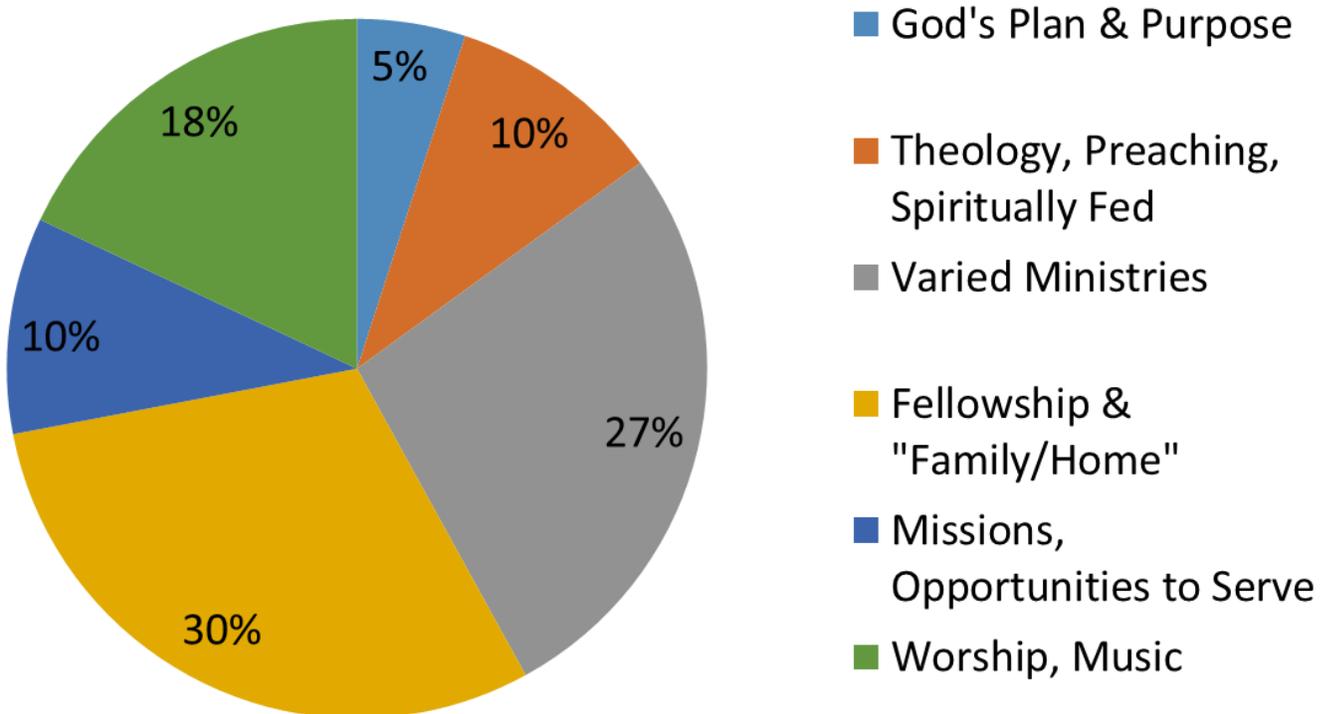
The team also needed to listen to the church. Church involvement was a necessity and a priority for the team as this process began. The vision would come from God, but God's call most often reflects the gifts, talents, and passions of his people. The Vision Discernment Team needed to take the pulse of our congregation. This was done through three congregational gatherings held in February and March of 2017. In each of these meetings, the team asked the church to reflect on our past and dream big for our future.

On February 12, over 150 people participated in the first vision conversation. It began as the church was asked three key questions:

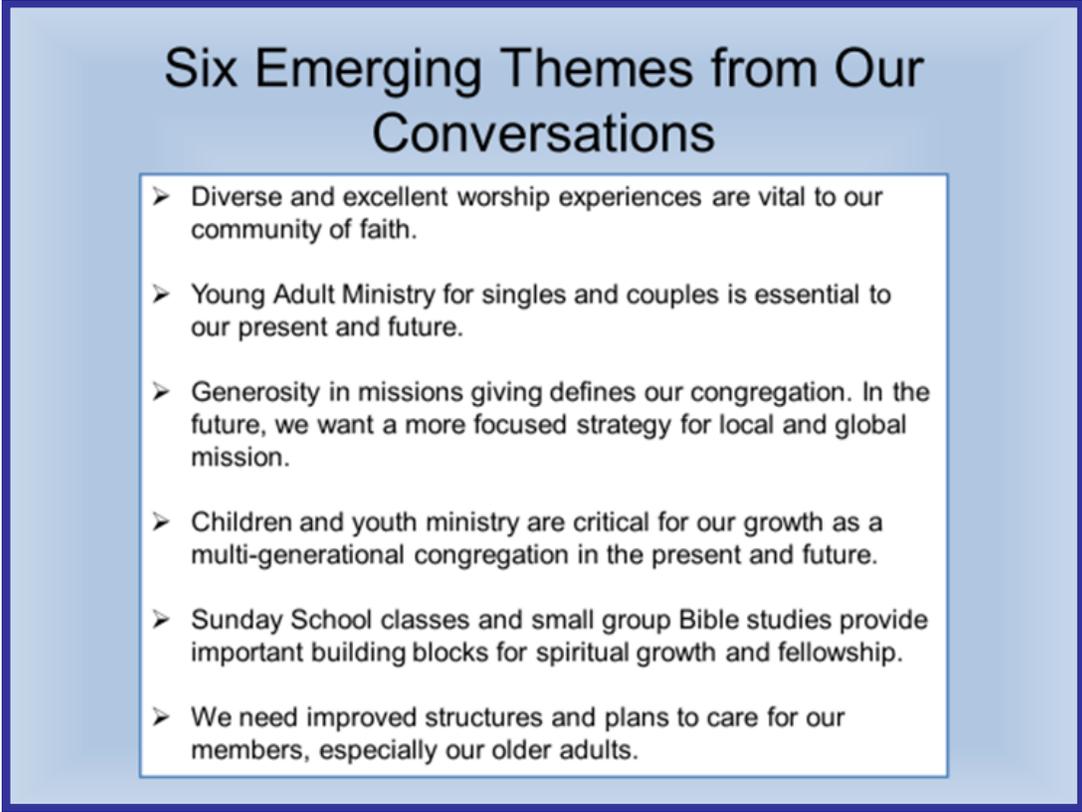
- What brought you here?
- What kept you here?
- When did the church become the body of Christ for you?

Our church family gave the team insightful responses, but we also discovered these conversations provided an opportunity for our church family to get to know one another on a deeper level. There was a great deal of excitement and sharing of God stories as these questions were answered. Many lingered after the meeting and continued to share their stories. Responses were rich, meaningful and personal.

Why We Stayed at First Baptist



On March 5, those in attendance were given the opportunity to complete a ministry assessment tool nicknamed a KoolAid sheet. Within an area like worship or missions, people were asked to identify things within that ministry that the church should keep, add, improve, and/or drop. Over 55 pages of detailed data resulted from the responses the team received that night and from those who completed the assessment at home. Responses were thoughtful and provided a wide and deep level of reflection. Results were analyzed, synthesized, and summarized (as noted below) for the next congregational gathering.

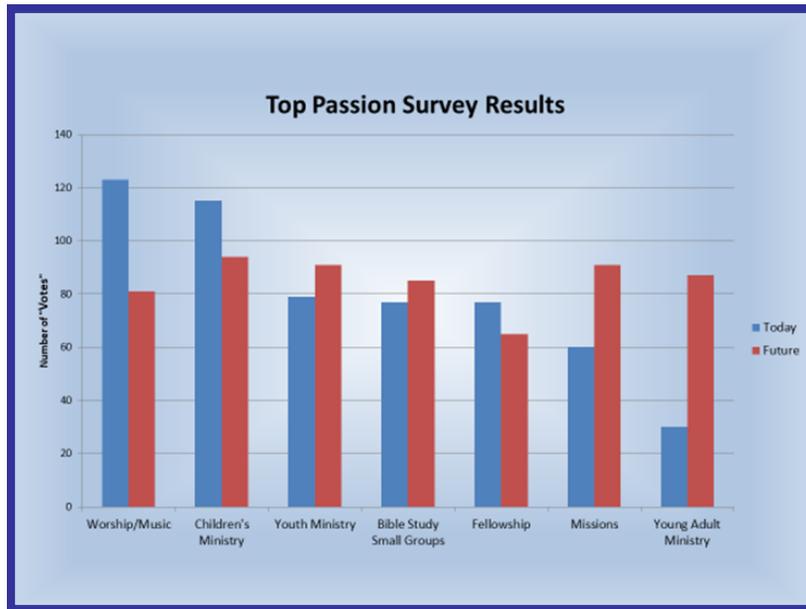


Six Emerging Themes from Our Conversations

- Diverse and excellent worship experiences are vital to our community of faith.
- Young Adult Ministry for singles and couples is essential to our present and future.
- Generosity in missions giving defines our congregation. In the future, we want a more focused strategy for local and global mission.
- Children and youth ministry are critical for our growth as a multi-generational congregation in the present and future.
- Sunday School classes and small group Bible studies provide important building blocks for spiritual growth and fellowship.
- We need improved structures and plans to care for our members, especially our older adults.

During the same gathering, participants were also challenged to rank current ministry areas based on the priority given to the area by the church. Then a second ranking was to reflect the order that the church should give to these ministry areas in the future. The graph on the following page helps illustrate some of the common responses.





On March 26, at the third gathering, attendees were asked to write down some God-sized dreams for First Baptist. Bill Wilson reminded all of us that God-sized dreams are not easy to formulate. We often put worldly parameters on our dreams and tend to dream too small for our mighty and powerful God.

God-sized dreams require the church to:

- **Listen to the Spirit**
- **Get out of God's way**
- **Push into the culture**
- **Be transformative**
- **Love the world like Jesus loves the world**



In groups, we shared some possible dreams and fleshed out how they might be manifested within the church. How would the church measure success and how do the dreams relate back to our core values as a congregation? It was exciting to see all the many ways that God could impact our church, and many of the responses became the foundations around which the Vision Discernment Team drafted this document.



Listening to the Community

Prior to the first “One City Marathon” in 2016, Dr. Randy Shepley challenged the church to pray for our ‘mile’. Focusing on businesses, schools, and housing complexes within mile 14 of the race, our church began to pray for the needs of the people who lived and worked within this mile. We were challenged to get to know them and their needs. With this mindset, the Vision Discernment Team realized that we needed to listen to the community along with our congregation before moving forward. What were the needs that existed, and how could we partner with those in the community to better meet those needs?



Several team members went to local community leaders and asked about some specific needs in the community and how First Baptist might be able to help minister to those needs. Conversations with local educators, other pastors, and leaders of community organizations like the YMCA, Thrive, and The United Way helped the team better understand some of the needs of our community.

LIVE UNITED



UNITED WAY OF THE VIRGINIA PENINSULA

During one conversation, Geoff Shumaker, Vice President for Community Impact & Operations with United Way, noted how pervasive the needs related to poverty are in our city. They include the need for adequate housing, medical care, transportation, and healthy foods. The "Pathways Out of Poverty" is a document published by the United Way that further outlines issues surrounding poverty specific to the Hampton Roads Area. We encourage you to read “Pathways Out of Poverty” at www.uwvp.org.

Kecia Taliaferro, Program Director at the Boys’ and Girls’ Club, also acknowledged that many of the children attending programs at the club were caught



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF THE VIRGINIA PENINSULA**

in a cycle of poverty. However, she noted that many were in need of emotional and social support even more than material resources. She hopes that the church can provide godly role models and co-sponsor activities for children and youth as a part of a partnership with her organization.



Dr. Windy Nichols, principal of Gildersleeve Middle School, echoed many of the same needs for her students. According to a five year U.S. Census Bureau Survey (2011-2015), 25.7% of the children in Newport News are living below the Federal Poverty Level. Many students come to her school with physical needs that include food and shelter, but extend far deeper. Many need academic supports and positive role models who provide encouragement, as well as community resources which working parents are unable to provide. She sees the church as a viable ministry partner for these students.



Angela York, Executive Director of THRIVE Peninsula, echoed the priority of poverty as a community need in her conversation with members of the Vision Discernment Team. She cautioned, however, against equating poverty with only material need. Overcoming poverty requires breaking generational cycles, investing in job training, and offering people hope and dignity. She also noted that generational and working poverty are our major poverty issues as opposed to homelessness. She pointed to the 2017 Point in Time Homeless Count, conducted by the Greater Virginia Peninsula Homelessness Consortium, which identified 223 homeless persons in Newport News and 512 across the entire Peninsula. While even one person living homeless is too many, it is important to note that homelessness is not our primary poverty issue on the Peninsula.

Finally, Chuck Harrison, Director of Missions for the Peninsula Baptist Association, addressed one of the most avoided needs in our community: racial reconciliation. In fact, Harrison noted that the church and community cannot make progress on any of our core issues without having authentic conversation, friendship, and partnership between persons of different races. The Peninsula Baptist Association has taken the lead in facilitating conversations between pastors of different races, and these conversations have led to partnerships between police forces and other government agencies. Still, there is much racial mistrust in our community, which hampers churches from working together for God's mission.

From these conversations, the team realized that poverty, education, and racial reconciliation were important themes within our community that needed to be reflected within the ministries of our church. We also realized that we cannot tackle these issues alone, which makes the need for partnerships with other churches and mission entities essential for our future. This truth connects



with a hope echoed by many of our members in our 3rd congregational gathering where people excitedly shared future dreams of ministry partnerships.



Formulating the Initiatives



As the Vision Discernment Team reviewed the data collected from the congregational gatherings along with community reflections and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the team came together for a writing retreat on Saturday, April 22. Bill Wilson joined the team that day and together the team began to identify some core values that are a part of our church's DNA. Based on the data from the congregational gatherings, fellowship, missions, children, youth, young adults, worship, music, and spiritual growth were identified as core values important to who we are as a church. With these values in mind, members of the team worked together to formulate six God-sized dreams or initiatives for the church to address in the next five years. The team discussed, debated, prayed, wrote, rewrote, and further clarified the dreams that God was revealing to them.

The chart on the next page lists the six initiatives that emerged based on our church's current culture, direction, and dreams.

In the appendix, guiding scriptures and exemplars are included as a possible roadmap for our future. These exemplars came from member comments and were discerned with prayerful deliberation by the Vision Discernment Team. They serve only as suggestions for the forthcoming implementation teams.



After many meetings and much prayer, the Vision Discernment Team was excited to present the aforementioned focus areas to the congregation. These six initiatives built upon our current foundation of Embracing God, Equipping Christ-Followers, and Engaging Our World. The focus documents were then made available to the entire church body and presented for discussion and feedback at two listening sessions on Wednesday night June 7 and Sunday afternoon of June 11. During these sessions, the team asked the church to reflect on the following:

- Are these six areas true representations of what the church sees as God's calling?
- Did the team miss any areas of focus?
- How do you see yourself fitting into these dreams? Will you commit to praying and discerning how God is calling you to join in?

The feedback from these sessions was excitement coupled with the recognition that these are God-sized initiatives. Congregants were supportive and resolute that we could not accomplish these initiatives without God's help. Many realized that motivation would be a key component as responsibilities for implementation teams (Action Teams) are extensive. Participants recognized that these dreams cannot be achieved by just the staff and a few volunteers or by doing things the way we have always done them.

Six Initiatives

GOD-CENTERED WORSHIP

We embrace God in vibrant, contagious, and Spirit-led worship through multiple contexts, styles, and locations.

INTENTIONAL SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

We develop Christ-followers of all generations through age-appropriate biblical teachings, leading to a life-long journey of obedience to Jesus guided by the Holy Spirit.

COMPASSIONATE MISSION PARTNERSHIPS

We demonstrate the compassion of Jesus by loving our neighbors on our mile, within our region, and around the world. We partner with these neighbors to transform lives, neighborhoods, and communities.

AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

We facilitate authentic connections, conversations, and care between members, participants, and neighbors. We display infectious hospitality, both inside and outside of our walls.

INVESTMENT IN NEXT GENERATIONS

We recognize the biblical responsibility to pass on the stories and practices of faith to the next generation. Therefore, we willingly devote our prayers, time, and resources to befriend, love, and mentor the children, youth, and young adults of our congregation and community into fully devoted followers of Jesus.

EXTEND GOOD NEWS INVITATIONS

We intentionally build and nurture friendships with people who are not followers of Jesus and, through listening, compassion, and prayer, invite them into relationship with Jesus.

A New Structure for Our New Initiatives

In the next section, you will read about some proposed changes to our church structure as a result of the six initiatives we identified as part of our Vision Discernment process.

Why do we need to change our structure?

In a word, the answer to this critical question is ALIGNMENT.

Alignment refers to all groups, members, teams, policies, procedures, and programs working in complete clarity with one another for the purpose of achieving the goals and objectives of the six initiatives. In a church with total alignment, confusion, disorder, and duplication are minimized as every group works under the guidance of a shared and focused vision statement.

Our new structure aligns people to our six initiatives.

We want all of our people engaged in serving through one of our six initiatives rather than having only a few of our core people doing the serving.

Our new structure aligns resources to our six initiatives.

Rather than investing time and energy in scattered directions, our new structure will focus the time, talents, and treasure of our congregation for maximum kingdom impact.

Our new structure aligns communication and accountability.

Our new Vision Team (replacing the current Leadership Council) will coordinate actions of the seven Lead Teams, allowing each Lead Team to define its purpose and develop Action Teams needed to accomplish that purpose. With this structure, gaining access to information and ways to volunteer should be easy for members and attendees.

Our new structure aligns activity with purpose.

Our new structure will ensure that all activities and programs are pursuing at least one of our six initiatives with measured effectiveness.

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. Luke 5:37-38



Our new structure is a first attempt at organizing around our six initiatives.

The Vision Discernment Team has worked to craft a structure that integrates pieces of our current model with new teams and structures for the purpose of better alignment. With this in mind, the Vision Discernment Team recommends that the following structural changes be implemented for the next two years. As the church follows the new model, we will discover and revise areas that need addressing. The new structure on the following pages will take the place of Articles 12 and 13 in the current church by-laws (revised July 24, 2013) for the next two years, beginning with the adoption of the recommendations from the Vision Discernment Team (see page 3).

Before the end of the two year period, the church will receive proposed changes to the by-laws that reflect the new structural reality of the congregation for a formal vote.

Organizational Structure

As part of our Catching the Wind Charting the Course vision discernment process, we will realign our church organization so that our structure aligns with our six initiatives. To that end, we have identified five leadership entities in our congregation and how they relate to one another in pursuit of the six initiatives established in our vision discernment plan. The five leadership entities in our congregation are (1) Ministerial Staff, (2) Vision Team, (3) Lead Teams, (4) Action Teams, and (5) Church in Conference.



Ministerial Staff

Ministerial staff members are ordained and called by God and the local church to lead the congregation in fulfilling its mission of Embracing God, Equipping Christ-Followers, and Engaging Our World.

Ministers at First Baptist:

- Possess a specific call to ministry and have an endorsement of that calling for the purpose of equipping the church community to serve God and our community.
- Are Ministerial Coaches spending most of their work hours supporting one or more of the six initiatives.
- Value their relationships with God, their families, and their other relationships in the community enough to create a space for those things and to entrust volunteers to do most of the work of the church.
- Entrust as much of the administrative function of the church as is practical to teams, volunteers, and the administrative staff.
- Work together as a team to see that goals and objectives related to all six initiatives are accomplished and celebrated.
- Are called to First Baptist under the guidance of the Vision Team and Personnel Team, and approved by the Church in Conference, in accordance with the process outlined in the church by-laws.
- Work alongside support staff members who are employed by the church and offer skills and expertise that lead to the furtherance of the church's mission and the stewarding of the church's resources for the pursuit of God's mission. Support staff members are hired by the church through the Personnel Team according to the church by-laws.

Vision Team

The Vision Team is composed of the seven individuals chairing the initiative-focused Lead Teams plus the Senior Pastor. The Vision Team is responsible for providing accountability to the Lead Teams and for ensuring that our church is regularly evaluating our progress in achieving the goals and objectives of our six initiatives.

The Vision Team and its members:

- Operate on a consensus model of decision-making.
- Shall be people who are deeply committed to prayerful decision-making, servant-leadership, and the advancement of God’s Kingdom in Newport News, Virginia.
- Shall be people who are generally recognized by the congregation as both wise and forward-looking.
- Provide accountability and guidance to the Lead Teams.
- Entrust day-to-day ministry and operations to Action Teams.
- Determine and decide priorities between the seven Lead Teams.
- Model and encourage a teamwork approach between the six initiatives.
- Provide discipleship and leadership training to others identified within the church who have potential to serve in this capacity in the future.
- Always ask the question, “How can we best execute the mission God has called us to lead?”
- Identify the time when we need to undergo the next Vision Discernment process.
- Meet once every other month or more often if needed.
- Serve a maximum of three years.



Lead Teams

Seven Lead Teams are responsible for guiding the Action Teams and providing accountability for them. Six of the Lead Teams are organized around our six initiatives. The seventh is responsible for the administrative functions of the church. Each Lead Team is a small group of people who are passionate about their mission area and who are willing to act as servant leaders for the aligned Action Teams.

Lead Teams:

- Have 4 members and one staff member who will serve as a servant leader and Ministerial Coach for the Lead Team.
- Rotate members out not more than every 3 years, with a desire to stagger entry and exit of membership.
- Recruit and disciple their new members, paying particular attention to the Action Teams they oversee.
- Operate on a consensus model of decision-making.
- Consistently review the question, “How can we best execute the mission area God has called us to lead?”
- Develop appropriate measuring criteria for assessing the effectiveness of their Action Teams in consultation with the Vision Team.
- Serve on only one Lead Team at a time.
- Be members of First Baptist who have a professed faith in Christ as their Savior.
- Provide oversight and feedback to the Action Teams within their mission area.
- Act as servant-leaders to their Action Teams.
- Be accountable to the Vision Team.
- Initial Lead Team members and chairs will be chosen according to the process outlined in the graphic on page 36.
- Provide discipleship to others identified within the church who have potential and giftedness to serve in this capacity in the future.
- Lead Teams meet once every other month or more often if needed.

Action Teams

Action Teams are made up of people who feel passionate about doing specific work that supports one (or more) of our six initiatives or the Administration Team. Each Action Team has one specific job or calling within the broader focus areas. Action Teams are as large or as small as needed to accomplish the role they are called to fulfill. They may be permanent or may last until their function is complete.

Action Teams:

- Shall be accountable to one primary Lead Team and provide them with updates on what and how they are doing.
- Have a specific purpose or administrative function.
- Have as many or as few members as necessary to suit their function, unless specifically noted by the Nominating Team, Vision Team, or church by-laws.
- End as soon as their mission is complete; adapt when it is clear that they are not accomplishing their mission.
- Primarily be members of First Baptist. However, unless specifically required for their mission, they are not exclusively First Baptist members or even regular worship attendees..
- As much as possible recruit their own membership from the congregation and the broader community.
- Be organized to suit any new activity that we do in support of our mission.
- Be passionate about whatever their specific team is called to do.
- Action Teams will include some current committees as teams, as well as additional teams necessary to accomplish the goals and objectives of our six areas of focus.
- Listen to input from outside and invite others (from the church and community) to join in their work.
- Serve on a yearly basis with an ongoing rotation except for Personnel, Nominating, Stewardship, and Deacons, which will function according to staggered three-year terms.

Church in Conference

In the new structure, the church will continue to hold regular and called conference gatherings according to the schedule and terms in our church by-laws. During regular Church Conference gatherings, the church in conference will vote on the annual budget, financial and legal matters that require church action, Nominating Team reports including the membership of the Vision and Lead Teams, and calling of ministers. All other items in between meetings will be handled by the Vision Team and appropriate Lead Teams, and will be reported to the Church in Conference. Questions or motions brought up in Church conference will be referred to the Vision Team and the appropriate Lead Teams for consideration and action. The Vision Team and appropriate Lead Teams will report on these items at the next Church in Conference gathering, and will move for a vote in compliance with the church by-laws should a vote be required. It will be up to the Vision Team, Lead Teams, Action Teams, and Ministerial Staff Coaches to provide reports to the church in conference.



Appendix

Appendix A

Six Initiatives with Sample Goals and Sample Action Teams

Appendix B

Process and Procedures for Nominating Team Members and Team Chairs

Appendix C

Excerpt from By-Laws (Articles 12 and 13)



APPENDIX A

GOD-CENTERED WORSHIP

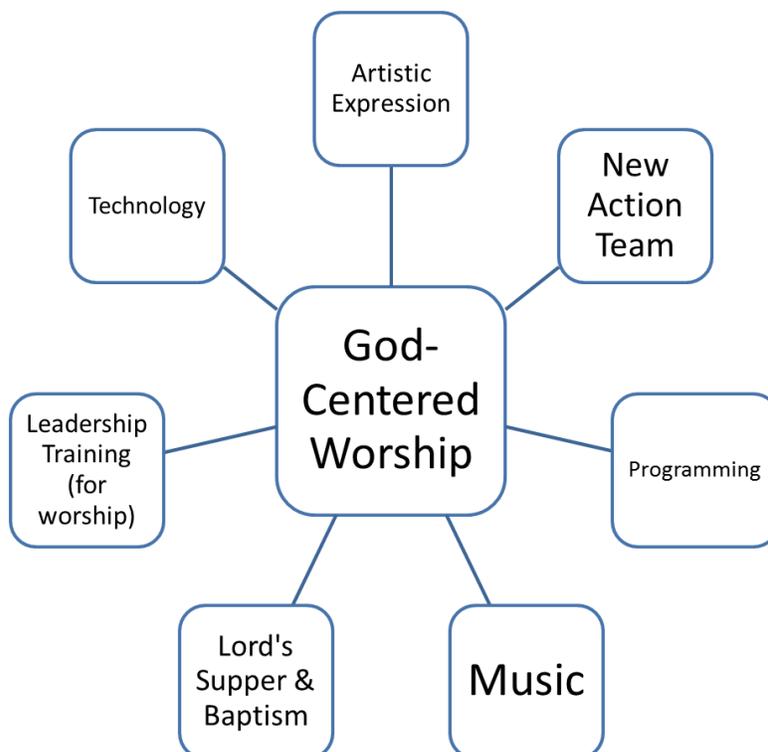
*“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.” Psalm 29:2*

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.” Romans 12:1

***We embrace God in vibrant, contagious, and Spirit-led worship
through multiple contexts, styles, and locations.***

Implementation Suggestions:

- We incorporate various methods of artistic expression (painting, photography, film, lighting, slides, stage designs, videos, banners, illustrations, etc.) in worship, which enhance the worship experience and promote ongoing personal worship during the week.
- We expand cross-cultural worship experiences, emphasizing the unique cultures within First Baptist Church.
- We have sermon series initiatives which are streamlined and expanded upon in all worship services, throughout Bible studies of all age groups and cultures, and in individual study resources across various technological avenues.
- We identify and cultivate additional worship leaders for all of the elements of our worship services. This includes investing in planning for regular worship leadership from youth and children as well as inclusion of testimony in worship.



Sample

INTENTIONAL SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

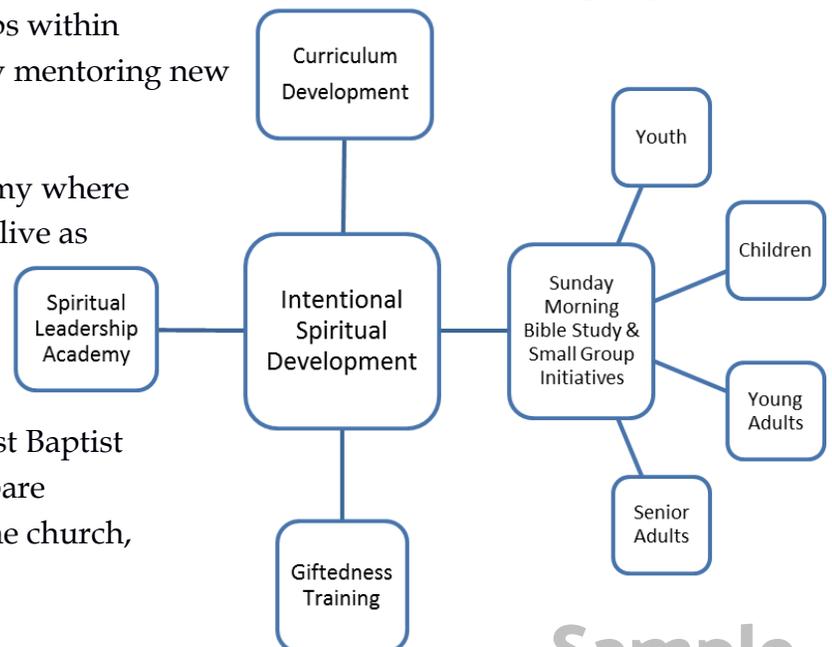
"Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path." Psalm 119:105

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." Galatians 5:24-25

We develop Christ-followers of all generations through age-appropriate biblical teachings, leading to a life-long journey of obedience to Jesus guided by the Holy Spirit.

Implementation Suggestions:

- We employ a strategy for teaching age-appropriate biblical study and practices for all age levels in our congregation, centered on our three guiding principles (Embracing God, Equipping Christ-Followers, and Engaging Our World). This overarching strategy guides all curricular resource choices and aids in directing sermon series for the congregation.
- All members and participants at First Baptist are taught and coached through drafting their own spiritual training plan. Regular renewal of spiritual training plans is the hallmark of our congregational commitment to ongoing spiritual growth and transformation and preparing them to serve the world.
- A new small group ministry plan is developed that includes Sunday morning Bible study classes and small groups that meet throughout the week in various locations. All of these groups exist to disciple others and reproduce new groups within 18-24 months, which emphasizes actively mentoring new leaders.
- We develop a spiritual leadership academy where adults, youth, and children learn how to live as spiritual leaders who mentor others in their life-long journey of obedience to Jesus.
- All new members and participants at First Baptist complete a giftedness instrument to prepare them for serving God's mission within the church, community, and world.



Sample

COMPASSIONATE MISSION PARTNERSHIPS

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” Matthew 25:40

We demonstrate the compassion of Jesus by loving our neighbors on our mile, within our region, and around the world. We partner with these neighbors to transform lives, neighborhoods, and communities.

Implementation Suggestions:

- We develop a mission cluster (team) that focuses all local and global mission efforts in our church on three fronts: education partnership, long-term Christian community development (poverty alleviation), and neighborhood missionary deployment.

Local:

- We partner with local healthcare institutions in assisting and meeting the needs of healthcare providers and first responders. We find various ways to minister to them by providing encouragement and nourishment.
- We partner with other churches for regular combined days of service by offering multiple means of servanthood to neighboring apartment complexes, local businesses, and homes.
- We partner with public schools in our city to love and serve the teachers, students, and parents. We look to the schools to share their needs and assets and find ways to engage them in partnership. This may include an after school tutoring program that offers help with homework, social skills, and guidance.
- We commission neighborhood missionaries to live in neighboring apartment complexes or housing developments for the purpose of building community and spiritual care.
- We focus on understanding poverty in our city and developing strategies that involve the church, community, and neighbors in need, addressing job training, food insecurity, and other community development poverty solutions.

Global:

- We challenge all of our regular members and participants who are willing to go on at least one cross-cultural mission immersion trip every three years, whether in Virginia, US, or international. These trips help people grow their patterns of prayer and study as well as help them encounter the realities of poverty, culture, and ministry that are different from their primary cultural experience.
- We partner with the BGAV to invest in mission partnerships around our state and world that advance the cause of Christ through education, long-term Christian community development, and long-term cross-cultural missional deployment and support.
- We develop partnerships with Christian advocacy organizations and learn to advocate for those impacted by the world’s most damaging injustices (e.g. slavery, human trafficking, hunger, refugees, immigration, religious freedom, violence against Christians, predatory financial practices).



AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.”
Acts 2:42-45

We facilitate authentic connections, conversations, and care between members, participants, and neighbors. We display infectious hospitality, both inside and outside of our walls.

Implementation Suggestions:

- The facilities are refitted with spaces for gathering, to include informative signage, so that members and guests can find space when they are on site for prayer, friendship-building, and resting with God.
- A care structure is implemented in which small groups and Bible study classes serve as the front line givers of care and compassion to members during seasons of grief, health issues, and crisis, while ensuring that those not connected with a group, including older adults, homebound participants, and widows are nurtured and cared for by the people of the congregation. This structure deploys the deacons to fulfill their mission of care and prayer, while also equipping Bible study classes and small groups to care for one another.
- We form a social media team that is tasked with sharing vibrant announcements, sermon quotes, and inspirational messages via our social media accounts.
- We create an outdoor guest/hospitality station, including a tent, balloons, and refreshments, to connect all newcomers to a point person who then leads them to a small group or into worship.
- We share our facilities generously with the community and position hosts at these community events in our space who radiate the hospitality of Christ. Policies, procedures and costs are developed to encourage community use of our facilities.



Sample

INVESTMENT IN NEXT GENERATIONS

*“Since my youth, God, you have taught me,
and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.
Even when I am old and gray,
do not forsake me, my God,
till I declare your power to the next generation
your mighty acts to all who are to come.” Psalm 71:17-18*

We recognize the biblical responsibility to pass on the stories and practices of faith to the next generation. Therefore, we willingly devote our prayers, time, and resources to befriend, love, and mentor the children, youth, and young adults of our congregation and community into fully devoted followers of Jesus.

Implementation Suggestions:

Children and Youth:

- We develop a plan for teaching age appropriate biblical stories, concepts, doctrines, themes, and discipleship practices. We encourage children and youth in the congregation to think theologically and to explore tough questions related to the Bible and how they are called to live in a complex world. This overarching teaching plan guides curricular resources, camp and retreat choices, and builds a foundation for biblical literacy, life application, and spiritual self-feeding skills. By graduation, youth are prepared to explain, practice, and grow in their faith.
- We recognize that parents and guardians are the primary spiritual formers of their children, and we train and equip them to help their children along their faith journeys.
- We develop teachers for the Children and Youth ministries who are trained, intentionally equipped, and called by God.
- A culture of mentoring is evident as all ages are respected and encouraged to mentor and support one another along their spiritual journey.

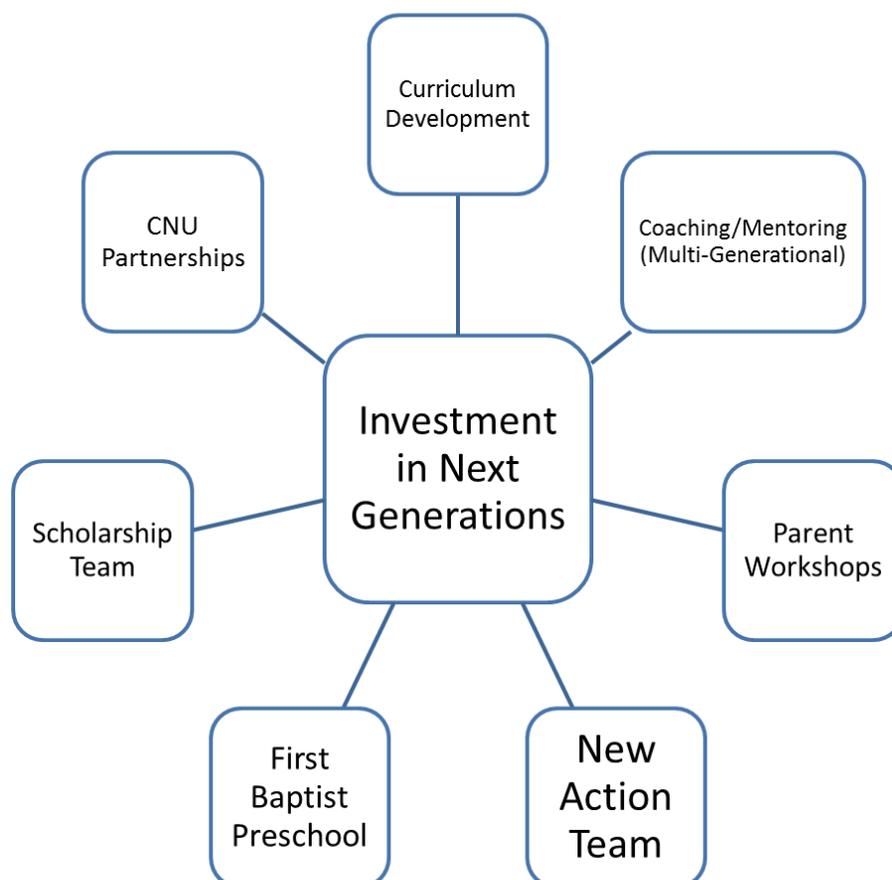
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INVESTMENT IN NEXT GENERATIONS, CONTINUED

Young Adults:

- We develop connections with student groups at CNU who are looking for leadership, service, and mentorship opportunities (i.e. BCM, IV, sports).
- As part of our small group initiative, we create multiple new, intergenerational and generation-specific small groups for young adults.
- We make use of technology tools in order to connect with young adults for worship, mentoring, and small group discipleship.
- We mentor young adults through a process of spiritual, vocational, and relational coaching.
- We commission young adults as neighborhood missionaries where they are deployed to start new small groups, build community in an apartment complex, or move to a new area to engage in a specific missionary calling.
- A new ministerial position, in partnership with the BCM at CNU, is developed to focus on young adults.



EXTEND GOOD NEWS INVITATIONS

Even though I am free of the demands and expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized - whoever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ - but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (The Message)

We intentionally build and nurture friendships with people who are not followers of Jesus and, through listening, compassion, and prayer, invite them into relationship with Jesus.

Implementation Suggestions:

- We build a strategy to reach our mile (residents and businesses) through prayer and loving acts of service using the concepts of relational evangelism.
- We develop a church-wide evangelism strategy that reflects the four quadrants of 21st century evangelism: Churched Non-Christians (biological), Churched Christians (transfer), Unchurched Non-Christians (conversion), and Unchurched Christians (dechurched renewal).
- We teach the concepts of relational evangelism (*Just Walk Across the Room*) on an annual basis in worship, Sunday morning Bible study classes, and small groups.
- We target particular neighborhoods and people groups within our mile and beyond for specific prayer, relationship, and resource outlay so that people in these communities are invited toward Jesus in a relational manner.
- We embrace new worship and small group opportunities outside the walls of our campus to connect people to Jesus who will not come onto our campus for worship or small groups.
- We develop and commission 150 neighborhood missionaries who commit to a pattern of building friendships with non-Christians, praying for their neighborhoods, and taking risks to start groups or gatherings that will lead to inviting people toward Jesus.



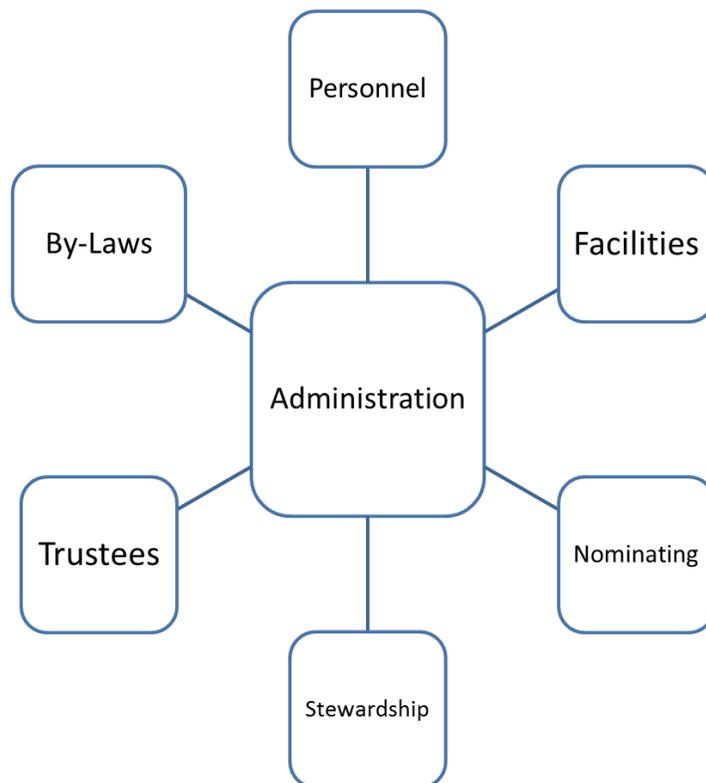
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ADMINISTRATION

What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man. 2 Corinthians 8:19-21

The Administration Team ensures all resources of our church family are invested fully in the six initiatives God has entrusted to us. Under the guidance of the Vision Team and Ministerial staff, the Administration Team maintains, develops and deploys processes, policies, resources, and people to accomplish our six initiatives. The Administration Team serves to support the full implementation and accomplishment of our six initiatives.

The Administration Team is made up of the chairs of five standing committees (Personnel, Stewardship, Trustees, Nominating and By-Laws), the chair of the Vision Team, Treasurer, and a Ministerial Coach. The Administration Team will meet quarterly (or more if needed) for communication, prayer, and strategic planning regarding how they can provide greater resources and support for the six initiatives of the congregation. As in our current structure, the Nominating Committee will nominate the members and chairs of the standing committees listed above that make up the Administration Team.



APPENDIX B

Vision Team

The Vision Team is made up of the Chair of each Lead Team and the Senior Pastor



Each Lead Team will be comprised of a Chair, 4 Members, and a Ministerial Coach

Action Teams will be a combination of new and existing groups.



Initial Lead Team Selection

- Nominating Committee provides Nomination Forms for Lead Team Members to entire congregation (similar to the current Deacon nomination process)
- Ministerial Staff and Vision Team provide recommendations for Lead Team Members to Nominating Committee
- Nominating Committee compiles all recommendations, adds (or removes) candidates, and submits list to church staff for screening
- Vision Team Chair, Senior Pastor, and Nominating Committee generate the list of Team Member and Team Chair candidates to be contacted for each Lead Team
- Nominating Committee contacts candidates and prepares recommendation for church body
- Nominating Committee recommends Lead Team Members and Chairs to church body
- Church votes on Lead Teams

Future Lead Team Chair Selection

- Nomination Forms for Lead Team Members are provided to the entire congregation (similar to the current Deacon nomination process)
- Ministerial Staff and Vision Team provide recommendations for Lead Team Members to Nominating Committee
- Nominating Committee compiles all recommendations, adds (or removes) candidates, and submits list to church staff for screening
- Vision Team Chair, Senior Pastor, and Nominating Committee generate the list of Lead Team Member candidates to be contacted
- Nominating Committee contacts candidates and prepares recommendation for church body
- Nominating Committee recommends Lead Team Members to church body
- Church votes on Lead Team Members

Future Lead Team Member Selection

- In August, Lead Teams and the Vision Team Chair recommend team members for the following year
- Nominating Committee provides Nomination Forms for Lead Team Members to entire congregation (similar to the current Deacon nomination process)
- Nominating Committee compiles all recommendations, adds (or removes) candidates, and submits list to church staff for screening
- Vision Team Chair, Senior Pastor, and Nominating Committee generate the list of Team Member candidates to be contacted for each Lead Team
- Nominating Committee contacts candidates and prepares recommendation for church body
- Nominating Committee recommends Lead Team Members to church body
- Church votes on Lead Team Members



APPENDIX C

This is an excerpt from the By-laws of First Baptist Church, Newport News, VA (revised July 24, 2013).

Article XII – Leadership Council

The Leadership Council shall, on behalf of the membership, provide leadership for the overall operations of the church in order to promote communication, encourage collaboration and ensure cooperation among the staff, officers, program directors, committee heads and other elected or appointed leaders within FBCNN. The Leadership Council shall be responsible for ensuring that mission and vision are clearly articulated, ministry plans recommended by the officers, organizations, and committees are reviewed and coordinated, and that resources are developed and applied in ways that support church mission and health.

The Leadership Council is considered a Standing Committee and changes to its purpose, make up, and scope of authority require an amendment to these bylaws in keeping with *Article XV – Amendments*.

12.1 Responsibilities

Specifically the Leadership Council will:

Promote the adoption and pursuit of a shared vision and mission as well as goals and/or objectives to support accomplishment of that vision and mission.

Set priorities for ministries, programs, services or initiatives and communicate these throughout the body of believers at FBCNN.

Lead the congregation and its leadership to work cooperatively, resolving conflicts arising from competition for limited resources (*e.g., human resources, financial resources, space and time*) in ways that are Christ-like and support church health.

Broadly oversee and evaluate the ministries, programs, services and initiatives of the church, as well as the individuals who lead them.

Provide, at least annually, a report to the church outlining the Council's assessment of where the church is in terms of accomplishing its mission and objectives, as well as the church's state as a called body of believers.

Recommend to the church, for its approval, the names of persons to serve on the Nominating Committee.

12.2 Council Membership

The Leadership Council shall consist of the following *ex officio* (*by virtue of their office, with full voting rights and privileges*) grouped according to the areas of church operations they represent:

Council Administration: Church Moderator, Church Clerk

Ministerial Representation: Pastor, Ordained Ministerial Staff

Administrative and Operational Representation: Church Administrator, Stewardship Committee Chairman, Church Treasurer, Nominating Committee Chairman, Personnel Committee Chairman

Programming Representation: Deacon Chairman, Missions Committee Chairman, Pre-school & Children Committee Chairman, Youth Committee Chairman, Sunday School Chairman

General Congregational Representation: Three (3) at-large members, elected by the church upon recommendation of the Nominating Committee

12.3 At-Large Members

The Leadership Council shall include *three (3) at-large, voting members* nominated by the Nominating Committee and elected by the church. Each shall serve a three-year term. One of these three at-large members will rotate off at the end of each church calendar year.

An at-large member of the Leadership Council, having completed a full three-year term, must rotate off for one full church calendar year before being permitted to return to the Leadership Council as an at-large member. Said individual may, however, serve on the Leadership Council continuously if elected to a post or position that is an ex-officio member of the Church Council (*i.e., by virtue of that position or office*). An at-large member who has completed an unexpired term or an abbreviated term (*less than three consecutive years*) may be re-elected to the Leadership Council to fill a full three-year term, after which he or she must rotate off for one church year, except as provided for herein.

12.4 Council Convener

The church-elected Moderator will serve as the Convener of the Leadership Council, and act as its Chair for as long as he or she is in office. In the absence of the Moderator, the Chairman of Deacons will preside over a meeting of the Leadership Council. In the absence of the Moderator and the Chairman of Deacons, the Church Clerk will call the meeting of the Leadership Council to order and preside over the nominating and election of a chairman *pro tem* for that meeting of the Leadership Council.

12.5 Recording Secretary

The Church Clerk will serve as the Recording Secretary of the Leadership Council. He/she will prepare official minutes of each meeting of the Leadership Council, to be reviewed, amended and adopted by a majority vote of the Leadership Council before becoming official. Minutes should record the procedural moves and actions taken by the Leadership Council and a synopsis of relevant discussion, though not necessarily a verbatim account. The Church Clerk will assure the proper storage and retention of the minutes of Leadership Council meetings according to the record retention policies of the church.

12.6 Quorum

One more than half of the members of the Leadership Council must be present in order for the requirements of a quorum to be met and in order for the Leadership Council to conduct business.

12.7 Meetings

The Leadership Council shall meet no less frequently than monthly, or as called to meet at the discretion of the Church Moderator. In the event that the Moderator is unable to call a meeting of the Leadership Council, the Chairman of Deacons may act to do so. In the event of the Chairman of Deacons' inability to call a meeting of the Leadership Council, the Senior Pastor may do so, in this sequence.

The Council shall publish, annually, its schedule for its regular meetings. Publication for the coming year must be made by December 31st of the preceding year. Called special meetings (*non-emergency*) of the Leadership Council shall be publicized on the church calendar no later than by noon on the Sunday prior to the meeting date. Regular meetings of the Leadership Council shall be considered open-door as provided below.

Emergency meetings of the Leadership Council may be called as provided above (*b*) but need not be publicized.

Regular meetings of the Leadership Council are generally considered open door. Members of the congregation in good standing may attend regular meetings as observers. All observers are considered guests and their names are to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. However, the Leadership Council, at its own discretion, may choose to enter Executive Session at any time, excluding all individuals who are not members of the Leadership Council. Only duly elected and ex-officio members of the Leadership Council may be present during an executive session.

Members of the congregation in good standing may request to address the Leadership Council regarding a specific matter or matters by first approaching the Chair of the Leadership Council (*the Church Moderator*) and requesting to have their matter or matters placed on the agenda. A majority of the Leadership Council may vote to amend the agenda through a properly executed motion to delay or abstain altogether from hearing any particular matter of its choosing.

The Leadership Council may enter an executive session from which staff employed by the church may be excluded. Executive Sessions are to be considered closed-door in nature.

12.8 Accountability

The Leadership Council is accountable to the governing body – the congregation of members at First Baptist Church, Newport News. It shall make a report to the church concerning its activities at each quarterly business conference, and at special called meetings as specifically requested. Such reports should at least confirm the dates on which the Leadership Council has met since its last report to the church and the major topics on which it deliberated or act-

ed.

The Council shall publish, annually, its schedule for its regular meetings. Publication for the coming year must be made by December 31st of the preceding year. Additionally, the Council will provide, at least annually, a report to the church outlining the Council's assessment of where the church is in terms of accomplishing its mission and objectives, as well as the church's state as a called body of believers.

The Council need not report on any matter which it deems to be of a confidential or sensitive nature, the discussion of which would serve no useful purpose or would, in the Council's judgment, likely serve to harm the body of believers at FBCNN. This is not to say that topics discussed or actions taken by the Leadership Council and that may prove to be controversial are not to be reported to the church in conference. However, the Leadership Council is vested with the discretion to make this decision, in the best interests of the church.

12.9 Authority

To fulfill its purpose, the Leadership Council may:

Hear or take action on matters not expressly reserved for other agents, officers, bodies or committees of the church by the bylaws, policies or other governing documents of the church;

Hear or take action on any matters referred to it by other agents, officers, bodies or committees of the church;

Hear or take action on any matters referred to it by a member or members of the church;

Choose to delegate matters to other agents, officers, bodies or committees of the church, as it deems appropriate;

Act to approve the utilization of the property of the church, in order to best fulfill its mission and pursue its best interests,

Work with the Personnel Committee in making recommendations to the church concerning the employment or engagement of ministerial and non-ministerial staff, professionals, consultants, and/or contractor organizations in order to best fulfill the mission of the church, pursue the church's best interests, or protect the church.

Develop and implement a church-wide system of assessment to provide information to enable church growth and health.

Take other action(s) approved by the majority of the Leadership Council to best fulfill the mission of the church, pursue the church's best interests, and/or protect the church, except where expressly prohibited by the bylaws, policies or governing documents of the church.

Article XIII - Committees

13.1 *General*

All committee members shall be selected by the Nominating Committee and elected by the church unless otherwise indicated in these bylaws. Each Committee shall be directly responsible to the church and shall serve to assist the church in meeting its stated objectives. Committees shall be designed as either Standing or Special Committees.

13.2 *Standing Committees*

Definition – Standing Committees are those committees which function on a continuing basis in order that the church shall obtain its stated objectives.

Duties – The duties of each committee shall be as described in the Policy Procedure Manual.

Meetings – The duties of each standing committee shall hold regular meetings and submit a written report to the church at each regular business conference.

13.3 *Special Committees*

Special Committees are those committees needed from time to time to assist the church in completing certain special projects. These committees shall serve until their assignment is completed and their final report is presented to the church. During the time of their work, the chairman shall hold regular meetings of the committee and shall submit written reports to the church at each regular business conference.

13.4 *Nominating Committee*

The Nominating Committee shall consist of nine members, nominated by the Leadership Council and elected by the church, who shall serve on a three-year rotating basis with one-third of the committee being appointed each year. This committee shall nominate all officers, program leaders, church moderator and church committee members as well as a chairman for each committee with the exception of Baptist Women.

Executive Session – An executive session is any meeting of a deliberative assembly, or a portion of a meeting, at which the proceedings are held in confidence by those participating. The minutes, or record of proceedings, of an executive session must be read and acted upon only in executive session, unless that which would be reported in the minutes (*that is, the action taken, as distinct from that which was said in debate*) was not confidential, or confidentiality has been lifted by the assembly.

Agents are individuals or groups authorized by the church to act on specific matters. The term may include such people as trustees, attorneys, accountants, staff members, or even individual church members.



What Do We Do Now?

1. Pray

The Vision Discernment Report and recommendations have come out of months of prayer from the Vision Discernment Team and church. Let's continue to pray as this report is just the beginning.

2. Read the Report and Share the Excitement

This report, along with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, charts our course for the next five years. Read each word prayerfully and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with hope and excitement for our future as a church family.

3. Come Ask Questions on October 8 at 4:30 pm

You can ask questions any time, of course, but the Vision Discernment Team is hosting a congregational conversation Sunday, October 8 at 4:30 pm in Payne Hall. Come share your thoughts and questions regarding the Vision Discernment Report.

4. Pray in Small Groups

Spend time in your Sunday morning Bible study classes, small groups, committee meetings, and gatherings of friends praying over this report and our future.

5. Worship and Vote on October 22

Join us as we worship together at 10:00 am on Sunday, October 22. We will vote on the Vision Discernment Team recommendations at the close of the service.

6. Decide how will you serve

The Vision Discernment Team plan has six initiatives that will guide First Baptist for the next five years. If we are going to accomplish these God-sized dreams, it will take all of us.

Which of our six initiatives connects with your gifts and passions?

How will you step forward and serve?

