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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ASHEVILLE
**STRATEGIC
PLAN**





September 15, 2009

Dear Friends,

First Baptist Church of Asheville is entering into a new season of enthusiasm for the way of Jesus Christ and effectiveness in our attempts to live in our community as people who belong to him. Your investment in who we are and your engagement in what we are doing are crucial to our vibrancy and vitality.

Over the last couple of years, we have lived in response to a strategic plan which focused our attention and energy on *deepening relationships, enhancing communication, and developing stewardship*. As a result, the welcome we extend to one another and our guests is warmer and more open. Our members and people in the community know more about who we are, what we offer, how to get involved, and why it matters. Giving has been strong and generous, even in a tough economic climate. Over these two years, our church has been experiencing inner renewal; our hearts and spirits have grown stronger.

Now it is time for us to turn our attention and energy more decisively than we have in the recent past to the kind of difference we can make in our community and world. To that end, our new strategic plan (covering September 2009-August 2012) has three broad areas of focus: *Deepening Relationships; Inviting People to Experience Jesus and Church Involvement; and Showing Mercy and Seeking Justice (particularly in WNC)*.

As you see, we will continue to deepen our journeys with God and one another. We will also hear God's call for us to reach out to people in our own networks of friendship and relationship whose lives could be changed and enriched by a relationship with Jesus and his people. We will offer mercy, often in the form of tangible help and always in the spirit of Christ, to people in need. We will learn to challenge those realities which cause the human needs we address and which hinder the justice which leads to peace and wholeness.

You'll see a summary of the initial year and half of this plan in the material you have before you. By February of 2010, we will add goals and steps which will carry our congregation through the summer of 2012.

Please take time to review these pages carefully. Look for ways to get involved. Dream about how these ideas might lead to new directions for your own life over these next few years, and share your dreams with the staff and other leaders in the church. Pray for God's work in our lives as we move out into our community and beyond.

Grace and peace,

Guy Sayles
Pastor

David Blackmon
Coordinating Pastor

*"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness
and the world's deep hunger meet"*
(Frederick Buechner)

Our Mission and this Strategic Plan

Our mission statement describes First Baptist Church of Asheville as a “community of faith, centered on Jesus Christ and committed to his purposes in the world.” Those purposes include authentic freedom, caring friendship, and deepening faith, all of which grow from a vital connection with Jesus and his church.

To guide our becoming more fully that kind of church, the Vision Implementation Team (VIT), in partnership with the ministers, the Deacons, and other lay-leaders, has developed a strategic plan which will shape our life and ministry together from the fall of 2009 through the summer of 2012. The congregation affirmed the primary *areas of focus* on June 21, 2009, and the Deacons approved the plan on September 14, 2009

This plan is offered as a vision for a future to be claimed by our faithfulness to God and our partnership with one another. Our hope now is to engage and involve people throughout our community of faith in turning these dreams into deeds.

This *strategic plan* is organized around *three broad areas of focus*:

Deepening Relationships

We want to explore ways of knowing and loving God, one another, and our neighbors more fully; to become more deeply aware of each other's stories, hopes and dreams; to be sure newer members are quickly and meaningfully included in the life and ministry of our church; to strengthen the partnership between church members and the ministerial staff; and to ensure that we know one another across generations and differences in experience and background.

Inviting People to Experience Jesus and Church Involvement

We want to become a more intentionally outreaching, inviting and “evangelistic” church; to equip our members to share their faith in natural and relational ways; to encourage people who haven't done so to profess their faith in Jesus and commit themselves to follow him; and to demonstrate how church involvement is a vital part of a growing faith and a meaningful life.

Showing Mercy and Seeking Justice (particularly in WNC)

We want to continue and expand our ministries of mercy and compassion to people in various kinds of need—hunger, homelessness/inadequate housing, and struggling with the other *effects* of poverty. We also want to seek justice, which means dealing with the *causes* of the struggles people have. To seek justice, we will “go deep” in response to the needs of a particular group here in WNC (the group will be chosen as part of the unfolding planning process), learning about their lives and circumstances, offering concrete help, and working with other partners in the community to change the conditions which have contributed to their struggles.

Congregational Summary

This strategic plan for the First Baptist Church of Asheville outlines our commitment to the ongoing nurture of a Christ-centered community through foundational practices of worship, pastoral care, and discipleship and through investment in three broad areas of focus: *Deepening Relationships*; *Inviting People to Experience Jesus and Church Involvement*; and *Showing Mercy and Seeking Justice* (particularly in WNC).

This summary covers a year and one-half; additional goals and plans to guide our church through August 2012 will be presented to the congregation in February 2010. To see the plan in its entirety, go to www.fbca.net.

**Nurturing
Authentic
Freedom,
Caring
Friendship,
and Living
Faith**

Foundations for a Christ-Centered Community

- Continue implementation of a worship pattern that reflects the nature of God as Creator, Savior, and Spirit and the diversity of our congregation's needs and experiences.
- Ground our strategic areas of focus in meaningful theology and spiritual practices offered in worship, teaching, and small group settings.
- Educate and train our congregation for its worship life by celebrating our Christian heritage of hymn singing through the introduction and use of the Celebrating Grace Hymnal.
- Enrich pastoral care of members and prospects through improved communication between staff and those for whom care is provided.
- Enhance communication efforts focused on our commitments to freedom, friendship, and faith with the end results of connecting members and prospects with one another and opportunities for richer involvement.

**Exploring
ways of
knowing and
loving God,
one another,
and our
neighbors
more fully.**

Area of Focus: Deepening Relationships

- Exploring ways of knowing and loving God, one another, and our neighbors more fully.
- Cultivate the spiritual life of children through ongoing, intentional engagement of parents in learning skills related to the spiritual nurture of children.
- Implement a systematic process for children's faith development identifying what children need to know, experience, and do as a result of being in our children's ministry (Building Blocks of Faith Development).
- Renew life and energy of the Youth Choirs resulting in increased enrollment and participation.
- Increase participation in Bible Study and worship with persons age 25-40 by 40 persons through the creation of ongoing social, missional, and music events targeted at this group.
- Engage mid-life adults on consistent relationships of support and outreach to address the transitions inherent in that season of life.
- Engage senior adults in becoming more effective in telling their faith stories with the result that 75% express that they are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their effectiveness in sharing.
- Support senior adults in creating a personal plan for ministry resulting in greater integration and participation in church life.
- Implement a cohesive planning cycle with staff that enhances relationships, supports team growth, and results in a continual 3-Year calendar/strategic plan.
- Enhance the training of deacons/members in providing spiritual care to others.
- Enhance ongoing care to college and career students that are members of First Baptist.
- Provide an ongoing ministry of support to parents of youth through intentional programming.

Becoming an inviting, evangelistic people committed to Jesus and weekly involvement in the church.

Area of Focus: Inviting People to Experience Jesus and Church Involvement

- Implement an engagement process with members, guests, and prospects that results in increased involvement in worship, Bible study, missions, and small groups.
- Implement an “events management” process that maximizes the potential of each event in welcoming prospects into faith and involvement in the church.
- Develop a comprehensive small groups ministry to easily involve members and guests in a connection group that promotes faith development, fellowship, and missions investment.
- Support members at First Baptist in becoming effective in sharing their faith stories with fellow members, guests, and prospects.
- Increase participation to greater than 100 children in Grades 1-5 in Sunday morning Bible Study by implementing creative strategies for teaching and outreach.
- Provide a series of outreach events that result in identifying 200 new households as prospects for First Baptist.
- Engage Senior Adults in intentionally mentoring others in sharing their faith stories with those seeking faith and modeling church involvement for prospects and members.
- Engage new prospects through connecting targeted groups with ongoing offerings of Guy Sayles in Wednesday evening Bible study.
- Expand the “doorways” into the youth program at First Baptist and into deeper faith in Jesus.
- Develop a pilot local ministry with students at UNCA and local First Baptist members who are in college.
- Develop a plan for effective use of recreation and the Sherman Family ministries center as an outreach venue.

Expanding ministries to people in need and responding to the causes of those human struggles.

Area of Focus: Showing Mercy and Seeking Justice with a Focus on WNC

- Enrich the congregation’s understanding of mercy and justice through teaching and reflection before, during, and after mission experiences to Perry County.
- Engage targeted groups at First Baptist in showing mercy and seeking justice through mission experiences in Perry County Alabama.
- Provide creative points of engagement to support ongoing change in Perry County.
- Enrich and expand local focus efforts to support the homeless.
- Create collaborative relationships that support understanding and change in systems/ behaviors that contribute to injustice in preparation for expanded ministries in the fall of 2010 into 2011.
- Involve Senior Adults in addressing the effects of poverty at the local level through direct action and advocacy at governmental levels.
- Host 2011 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship meeting for North Carolina with a focus on justice and mercy.

Core Message

First Baptist Church of Asheville is a caring and compassionate church which, like Jesus, accepts everyone and is committed to serving our neighbors, community and world.

First Baptist Church of Asheville
Freedom. Friendship. Faith

Mission/Vision

At the intersection of our culture and the kingdom of God, the First Baptist Church of Asheville is a community of faith centered on Jesus Christ and committed to his purposes in the world. We are *experiencing transformation* into his image, *engaging our culture* with his will and way, and *embracing the wholeness* of life he offers.

Core Values

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

We acknowledge Christ as the foundation of our whole. Jesus is the teacher of our minds, comforter of our hearts, and Savior of our souls.

The Worship of God

In song, word, and prayer we come together in worship to acknowledge God's power, faithfulness and grace.

The Authority of the Bible

In its pages we find guidance, comfort and the stories of God. We are committed to teaching, learning and living the truths found within.

The Worth of Each Person

The uniqueness of each individual is celebrated from the newest infant to the oldest adult. We are a diverse people, gifted as individual and blessed as a whole.

The Call to Service and Missions

Committed to being "salt and light" in our world, we are the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. As a family of faith we work together, care for each other and spread the love of God throughout our city, state, nation, and world.

Maybe not to everyone, but to us, being Baptist means freedom.

Freedom for people to make up their own minds about God and faith, and to do it at their own pace.

Freedom to use the mind as a gift of God — to ask questions, to debate, and, even to doubt.

Freedom and equality between women and men, older and younger, rich and poor.

At First Baptist Church of Asheville

We celebrate your freedom to be and become all that God made you to be.

And, we believe Jesus makes it clear that God loves everyone — the whole world and each person in it. All people deserve our respect and love. So, our hearts and arms are open to everyone — young and old, rich and poor, longtime Christians and seekers after faith.