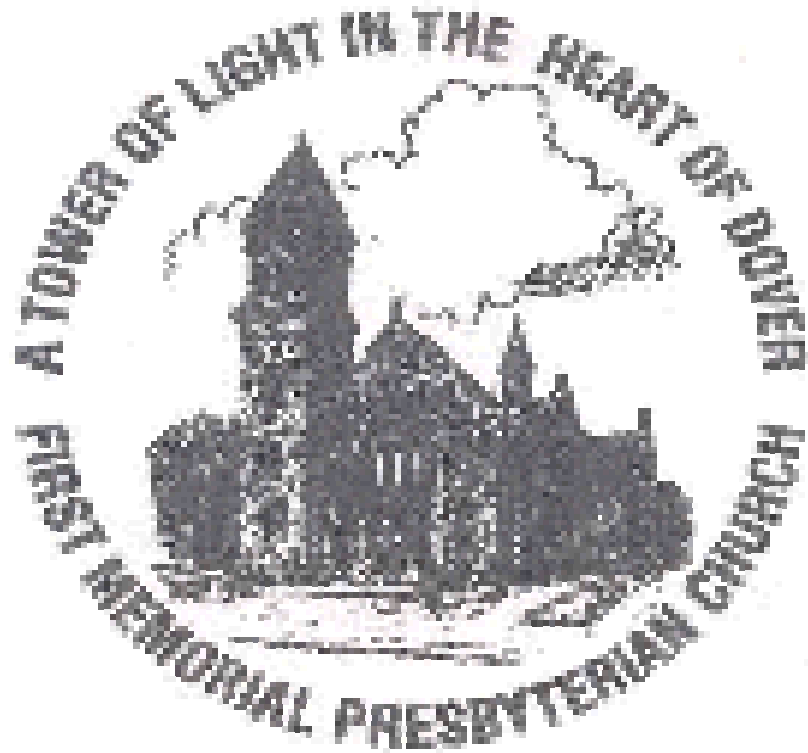


Long Range Plan 2003



First Memorial Presbyterian Church

December 10, 2002

Index

Introduction.....pg 3-6

Part I

Why we exist as a congregation
(Core Purpose)pg 7

Our Values as a congregation
(Core Values).....pg 7

Our Future as a congregation
(Vision Statements).....pg 8-9

Part II

Recommendations.....pg 10-11

Appendix.....pg 12-14

Introduction

The Declining Church System (DCS)

1. In short, the declining church assumes that Bob and Sally will find meaning and purpose in life through 'belonging' to the church; and that preserving the institutional church so that others can 'belong' to it in the future is their most important task.
 - a. Symptoms of a Declining Church
 - b. Less than 1% of adults are involved in any regular group that nurtures faith.
 - c. 20%-25% of the congregation must be recruited to fill church offices.
 - d. There is an absence of single young unmarried adults.
 - e. The participation of leaders in worship averages one Sunday in three during the winter and one Sunday in four during the summer.
 - f. Institutional maintenance replaces spirituality as the center of church life. Boards and committees replace worship as the central experience of church life.
 - g. Church management is not only hierarchical but redundant as well.
 - h. Congregation meetings are notoriously dull and poorly attended.
 - i. The boards of a DC are only interested in programmatic change. It is never interested in systemic change."
 - j. The fundamental task of lay leadership is to raise money, in order to pay somebody else to do ministry and mission.
 - k. Lay leaders are asked to do jobs that they do not feel gifted to do or called to do, leaving them feeling frustrated, unfulfilled, unrewarded and eventually burned out.
 - l. Declining churches experience Chronic Personnel Dissatisfaction (CPD)
 - m. Declining churches lack diversity in race, culture, language, economic background, formal education, and age.
 - n. In declining churches no one seems to know exactly what it is about individual faith that urgently needs to be shared; and no one has the courage or the training to risk sharing that faith.
2. How does the DCS affect Bob and Sally?
 - a. Bob and Sally are welcomed, not to address their own needs, but to address the institutional needs of the church.
 - b. Bob and Sally are nurtured, not to discover their own faith, gifts, and calling, but to understand and contribute to the organization.
 - c. Bob and Sally are encouraged, not to probe the boundaries of creativity, but to accept the friendly consensus of the bureaucracy.

- d. Bob and Sally are devoted, not to welcoming people, but to keeping people; their priority is not to care for the world, but to take care of each other.
3. Characteristics of a Thriving Church
- a. They are increasing the participation of the public in church life.
 - b. Membership statistics are irrelevant to them. They are busy designing a multitude of ways in which the spiritually yearning, institutionally unhappy public can 'connect' with some aspect of church life that helps them address their spiritual yearning.
 - c. They are deepening the spirituality of adults within the church, and in the community.
 - d. Doctrinal or dogmatic agreement is unimportant. They are busy coaching adults (and yes, youth and children) to explore their experiences of God with integrity, profundity, and self-discipline.
 - e. They are multiplying the opportunities for discipleship.
 - f. Institutional mission agendas are abandoned. They are busy helping people discern their gifts and callings, training them with necessary skills, and then releasing them into hands-on, personal mission for which they have unbounded enthusiasm.
 - g. They are maximizing the impact of the gospel on the world.
 - h. Mere philanthropy is not enough. They are busy combining justice advocacy and personal faith-sharing, through personal initiatives next door and across continents.

Our congregation is on the decline; our efforts to date to initiate a reversal of this trend have been ineffective. We need to think outside the box, we need to be aggressive and we need to transform our congregation. We need to kick our old habits.

We have learned that a system will produce what it is designed to produce and nothing else, so also an organization will accomplish only what the system allows it to accomplish and nothing else. What this indicates is the need for systematic change.

If the system of the church is all about belonging, that organization model will make it happen. It will protect a heritage, preserve an identity, initiate and mold newcomers into a common way of life and point of view. It will keep membership content. But will we be fulfilled?

A definition of insanity has been described as doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

We need to model our organization in a way to cause natural outcomes, which celebrate vision, encourage diversity, attract new-comers to a process of self-discovery and personal fulfillment.

First, I would like to review with you some of what we have learned about our congregation;

1. We spend too much time in meetings that do not generate an equivalent degree of results and rewards.
2. We are resistant to change.
3. We try to maintain the status quo at extremely high costs.
4. Our focus is frequently the institution and not our worship of God.
5. We are quick to criticize, deflating enthusiasm, and creativity.
6. We are afraid to question and test our faith.
7. There is a very low energy level.
8. We can be seen as two congregations, a worshipping community and a governing community.
9. We are a Church that is struggling financially.
10. We have many inactive, active members.

Where do we go from here?

There are many people in the congregation that are looking for answers, looking for the Long Range planning committee to come up with the solutions.

After almost two years of learning how to plan for the future, I believe we have discerned a new direction for the Church. I also believe that it's a direction some will feel will not solve all the problems. This should not be a total surprise because we have learned that the problem begins with **us!** And oddly enough, **we** are also the answer!

When we first started the long range planning process we immediately surveyed groups of people and developed lists of things that have needed to be accomplished for a long time. Things like parking, handicapped access, do we move the Church? And while all these things have merit we have learned that in order to accomplish these things we first need to understand who we are, where we want to be and what we want to accomplish as a people of God. That is our focus in this Long Range Plan, transforming our congregation from a group of followers to people to be followed, from people who consume energy with low return to those who generate energy and enthusiasm. To create a contagious environment that others will seek out. The answer lies within each of us, our ability to accept change, and to trust in God.

We need to change our focus from an institutional process as the center of our work to a process that places spiritual growth at the center. We need to ask people to become leaders and not be led. It is not what people know but how people feel. We need to access spiritual power.

We need to educate our leaders on managing stress. During this time of transformation many of us will feel uneasy about change and question our direction for the future. We need to calm these fears and place our trust in God.

Transformation will **NOT** occur overnight and we as a committee don't have all the answers. We recognize that it is important that the people who need to accomplish the transformation are those that create the plan. We as a committee feel that we need to supply direction and oversight. These are our recommendations to begin the process.

PART I

WHY WE EXIST AS A CONGREGATION

(Core Purpose)

We exist as a Christian congregation to worship and glorify God, to call all people to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and to nurture the people of God to greater faith and service so that we might more fully reflect God's love.

OUR VALUES AS A CONGREGATION

(Core Values)

We value learning more about God and God's purpose and plan for our lives.

We value worship that relates Christian faith to the challenges of contemporary life through sharing personal faith journeys, preaching that is stimulating and engaging, and music that lifts one's spirit and consoles one's heart.

We value fellowship where diversity is welcomed, joys and concerns are shared, and support is given in prayerful and practical ways.

We value helping those in need in our local community.

OUR FUTURE AS A CONGREGATION

(Vision Statements - a compelling image of a more desirable future)

1) We will be a congregation that places love of God and service to God above institutional survival.

Intent: Our members will make faith in God the focus of our decisions.

2) We will be a congregation where our worship life includes the fullest expression of various gifts that our members possess in order to more fully enrich our worship of God.

Intent: Our members will be actively involved as leaders and participants in the worship life of the congregation.

3) We will be a congregation where our members will know that as they make a positive difference in the life of others they in turn will find meaning and satisfaction.

Intent: Our members will grow in their love and care of others.

4) We will be a congregation where appreciation of one another and mutual respect for differing points of view creates an environment of support and encouragement, not criticism and judgment, so that our members are free to take faithful risks of love, ideas, and service.

Intent: Our members will support and encourage one another creating a positive environment that nurtures our individual faith and common life.

5) We will be a congregation where the expectation for each member of the church is that they will be actively nurturing their faith and committed to participating in the life of the church.

Intent: As our members grow in faith and commitment we will grow as a church.

6) We will be a congregation where flexibility and change will be accepted as a necessity for growth.

Intent: Our members will understand that as times change we must find new and faithful ways of being Christian.

7) We will be a congregation that is actively involved and working for the good of the Dover community.

Intent: Our members will acknowledge that our congregation is an important part of the local community and needs to participate in community affairs.

8) We will be a congregation that practices the hospitality of Jesus accepting people regardless of national origin, sexual orientation, race, gender, class, income, education, or religion.

Intent: Our members will see that diversity enriches our lives.

PART II

Recommendations

1. Direction and oversight of the Long Range plan will become the responsibility of Session, and will be an agenda item every other month.
 - a. Session responsibilities will now include, insuring that the Long Range Plan's Value Statements, Future statements and Goals and Strategies are continuously evaluated and improved and that they become the basis of our decision making process. We can not fall back into our old habits.
2. We need to reduce the number of meetings that we hold and increase the effectiveness and end results of our meetings. We will accomplish this by alternating Session meetings and the committee meetings every other month. With the Session meeting beginning in January.
 - a. We will educate our leaders on how to hold effective meetings.
 - b. We will develop agendas for every meeting
 - c. The Pastor will review the agendas with the committee leaders prior to each meeting
 - d. We will assign a secretary for each meeting to take minutes which will be forwarded to the Pastor for review.
 - e. We will assign a timekeeper for each meeting to keep everyone on track. Meetings will not be scheduled for more than 1.5 hours.
3. We need to streamline our governing bodies to become more effective in the way we conduct business. We suggest that we dissolve the 5 council structure that currently makes up the Session and form 3 new committees. For now we will call A,B, and C.
 - a. Committee A will focus on the financial life of the Church with its main responsibility of developing a balanced budget for 2005. Balanced budget meaning elimination of the need to draw on endowments for survival.
 - b. Committee B will focus on the spiritual life of the Church. Shifting the emphasis in worship from informing people to the expectation that people will be transformed. It will be expected that all parts of worship will come under review so as to effect change. We will develop our spiritual growth as a congregation. We will begin small group ministry where people meet for the purpose of prayer, action, learning and sharing.
 - c. Committee C will focus on our caring for one another and the world around us. We will focus on peoples needs within the parish through the formation of geographic parishes and assign a deacon and an elder to each parish.

4. We need to govern our Church as one body. Therefore, by the end of 2003 we will restructure the Session, and the Board of Trustees, so that the Trustees and Elders will sit on one Board, the Session.
 - a. All members currently on Session, and The Board of Trustees will be grand fathered onto the new Session, each member's term will expire according to current expiration dates.
 - b. The number of seats on Session will be reduced down to 15 by 2006.
 - c. Allow for flexibility in length of terms for Session of 1, 2 and 3 years options.
 - d. Offer ongoing officer training programs throughout the year.
5. Review of the Deacon's ministry to determine their role in the new governing structure.
6. Timeline for implementation
 - a. January 2003 – Session meeting – Session will begin to further define the responsibilities of each of the new committees A, B, and C and to name the committees and nominate chairpersons. Members of Session, and Trustees need to be assigned to each of the new committees. Session to request that the congregation vote on the new governing structure in February. Session will plan a meeting in early January to meet with the Trustees to begin discussion on how best to incorporate this change.
 - b. February 2003 – Initial meeting with new committee chairs.
 - c. March 2003 - Session meeting - The leaders of the 3 new committees should be determined, basic responsibilities of the committees should be presented, reviewed and approved.
 - d. April 2003 – New committees to meet, agenda should include discussion on further defining responsibilities and how to put these responsibilities into action. These recommendations are to be presented to the Session in May
 - e. May 2003 – Session to review recommendations of new committees.
7. Change the time of Sunday Services from 9am to 10am with Church school beginning at 11:30am. Consideration to be given to a second service. Time and day to be determined by Session.

Appendix

- 1) We will be a congregation that places love of God and service to God above institutional survival.
 - a. warmly welcome visitors, share information, welcome packets should always be available.
 - b. during discussion at meetings we should express two positive aspects of every idea before criticizing.
 - c. offer support to one another and respect each other's opinions.

- 2) We will be a congregation where our worship services include the fullest expression of various gifts that our members possess in order to more fully enrich our worship of God.
 - a. before each service offer a quiet time for prayer and reflection
 - b. make worship and our beliefs the main focus of all our meetings. Start and end with prayer, consider a meaningful reflection.
 - c. meetings to be held every other month. Session and council meetings to alternate months.
 - d. create a feeling of concern for people so they will come to church for their own reasons versus having people come to fulfill our reasons.
 - e. form small caring groups within the congregation "parishes" assigning an Elder and Deacon to the group. The intent is to better understand each other and each other's needs and concerns.

- 3) We will be a congregation where our members will know that their involvement makes a life giving difference and in turn brings fulfillment to the individual.
 - a. apprentice/training for liturgist. Get people involved slowly. Pair up with a veteran liturgist and only do small portions of the service.
 - b. gifts inventory
 - c. help people understand and affirm their own gifts

- 4) We will be a congregation where appreciation of one another and mutual respect for differing points of view creates an environment of support and encouragement, not criticism and judgment, so that our members are free to take faithful risks of love, ideas, and service.
 - a. shift the feeling of serving the institution to serving the people
 - b. create greater understanding and follow up when someone is not in attendance on Sunday

- 5) We will be a congregation where the expectation for each member of the church is that they will be aggressively involved in the everyday life and growth of the church.

- a. committees need to set realistic goals on an annual basis
- b. train members on how to hold effective meetings
- c. train members to be effective leaders
- d. need to become more efficient in the way we govern our church
- e. develop a process of reviewing our governing structure and develop and implement conditions for improvements

6) We will be a congregation where flexibility and change will be accepted as a necessity for growth.

- a. begin bringing in speakers to discuss change
- b. model flexibility and change using smaller low threat topics

7) We will be a congregation that is actively involved in caring for the well being of the entire Dover community so that we will be seen as “A Tower of Light in the Heart of Dover.”

- a. look at rescheduling session meetings, Tuesdays conflict with Town Council meetings
- b. ask Town Council to send an agenda for their meetings to the Church for review
- c. church should act as a conciliatory group to break down barriers between opposing groups within the community
- d. encourage individuals to become involved in a cause
- e. allow other groups to worship in our building
- f. honor individuals who have become involved in a specific cause, have a specific gift or talent or for what they do professionally

8) We will be a congregation that practices the hospitality of Jesus accepting people regardless of national origin, sexual orientation, race, gender, class, income, education, or religion.

- a. diversity training will be offered

9) Signs indicating the need for church redevelopment (See church redevelopment.org)

- a. Members are verbalizing concern over the ministry and mission of their congregation
- b. The ministry of the congregation has been stagnant in recent years.
- c. Little or no numeric growth (see chart)
- d. Declining worship attendance (see chart)
- e. The area around the church is growing but that growth is not reflected in the church
- f. There is no achievable unifying vision for the church’s future ministry
- g. Efforts concentrate on trying to maintain the status quo

- h. Pastor and program staff are unable to inspire the members to work for growth
- i. The church is experiencing difficulty in recruiting new people to its core leadership
- j. Church leadership is experiencing difficulty in
 - i. growing an outreach program
 - ii. recruiting new members
 - iii. assimilating new members
- h. Pastor and program staff consume 60% of the church's annual budget
- i. The church cannot adequately compensate current staff - or cannot attract or adequately fund new pastoral leadership.
- j. Congregation is consuming 60% of its annual budget on building maintenance - thereby limiting resources for mission and ministry.
- k. The church baptizes significant number of infants who do not go on to become a part of its church school program.