

First Baptist Church is a thriving community in Christ where we all participate in worship and are transformed by mission.

These are Our Essentials

Essential Qualities

Openness/Acceptance: broad tent, diversity of thought, ideas, race/culture and age, open to others (their opinions and experiences), to all of God's people, open-minded respect for others/engaging thought-provoking conversation, thinking and action church, value of life-long learning and questioning, creating safe space/tolerance of other ideas, ecumenical environment and outlook, welcoming environment, open to partnership with other congregations

Intergenerational Community: intergenerational/personal relationships, intergenerational worship services and study opportunities, compassion, hospitality

Worship: marked by respect of sanctity of worship, intergenerational worship leadership, centered/thoughtful worship with all parts planned, commitment to excellence and integrity, outstanding music

Essential Ministries

Mission Ministries: Our Daily Bread, IHN, Slovakia, Mercy Clinic, Food Bank, growing commitment to use of facility for mission

Music Ministries: for all ages, active adult choir, choral scholars,

Ministries for all ages/life stages: children, youth, college students, adults of all ages

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Process Overview

First meeting of entire team, October 22nd

- Big Picture and Committee Mission
- How the visioning process was completed prior and similarities to this process

Homework assigned November 9th

- identify the main questions the Next Steps team feels the Church should prayerfully consider during this process and e-mail separately to team leaders
- Starting with the Vision Statement, give us one question in each of the three following areas:
 - A Thriving Community
 - Participatory Worship
 - Transforming Mission
 - One additional question for consideration. That question may come from the Vision Statement or it may be something entirely independent.
- Questions were grouped into the four areas (Participatory Worship, Transforming Mission, Thriving Community and Additional Questions)

Second Meeting, December 4th

- Dates were set for five congregational luncheons (Naming our Essentials, Community Forum, Thriving Community, Transforming Mission, Participatory Worship)
- Team was split into three groups and facilitated by Paul (Worship), Daniel (Mission), Jeff (Community). Each group participated in a World café model using the question groupings to narrow each section into three questions each to be presented and discussed by congregation during luncheons
 - **Thriving Community**
 - A sense of community develops when people have shared experiences. How do we create opportunities for participation where experiences can be shared?
 - Are there ways we can more faithfully care for each other?

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- What actions can we take to better ensure that our thriving community is building authentic relationships? What could this mean for the future of how we enfold new members into our community of faith?
- Are there additional next steps we should consider that would help us thrive more as a community? Five years ago we decided to offer special focus to families with children and college students in order to enhance our community; are there other groups to whom we should offer such focus?
- **Transforming Mission**
 - How do we use our facilities to transform our local community?
 - How do we engage non-church members in our mission efforts?
 - What is our aim in mission?
 - Based on what we heard from our community leader forum, are there new mission endeavors we need to consider?
- **Participatory Worship**
 - What is participatory worship? How do we participate in worship?
 - How do we extend opportunities for worship participation beyond the traditional worship hour?
 - In what ways can worship become more tied to everyday experience, thinking, and relationships?

Third meeting, January 7th

- Team split into three subcommittees
 - Meal/seat set-up (make sure congregation tables remain diverse)
 - Data collection (compiles and groups congregational responses)
 - Publicity group (designs social and print media prior to each luncheon)
- Team recommended community leaders for forum breakfast and group was narrowed to:
 - Dr. Linda Bachman is the director of university experiential learning at UGA

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- Deborah Lonon is the Housing & Community Development Director Athens Clarke County Government
- Shea Post is Executive Director of Athens Area Homeless Shelter
- Xerona Thomas is the Chief of Staff for Clarke County School District
- Questions presented to community leaders
 - What do you believe is the most important change/emerging opportunity in the Athens area?
 - What do you believe is the most significant unmet need in Athens?
 - How do you believe a congregation like ours could make a difference in this community?

Data Compilation meetings, March 18th, April 9th, April 23rd

- Team split into different groups each session and assigned one of the 3-4 questions presented to the congregation from previous luncheons. Each group would narrow down/combine responses.

Goals and Action Steps meeting, May 6th

- Questions were grouped into the three goals with action steps (Participatory Worship, Transforming Mission, Thriving Community)
- Team was split into three groups and facilitated by Paul (Worship), Daniel (Mission), Jeff (Community). Each group participated in a World café model using the goals and action steps to narrow each section into one statement each (one per each group) with a total of three AND additional action steps added to other groups statements.

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THRIVING COMMUNITY

First Baptist Church of Athens thrives as a powerful, beautiful, charismatic and intergenerational community of believers who take action in building up one another in Christ and equipping one another for ministry and mission with ourselves and our neighbors.

Goals and Action Steps

Reach out to new members and connect existing members of our congregation for care and ministry with one another

- Create ongoing ways and methods to reach out to welcome, introduce, integrate and engage new and current people in our congregational life.
 - Devise ways of recognizing members
 - Visual Directory
- Mentoring programs for all ages
 - 1st graders get mentor with Bible
 - New families/members get mentor
 - Adopt a college student
 - Prayer families

Create a church community that is relevant to all demographics

- Provide or expand upon specific shared experiences for all demographics
 - Create and encourage opportunities for service and mission (service projects, mission opportunities, mission trips) involving all ages.
 - Offer more fellowship opportunities in large and small groups (community activities, volunteer for downtown events, church sporting events, BBQ and Bluegrass, summer picnics, ice cream social, movie nights, supper clubs, etc.)
 - Possible Demographics- families, children, homebound, retirees, unchurched, college, young adult, people living within two miles of FBC, and mature adults that are new to the area

NEXT STEPS

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Develop shared relational and learning experiences through small group activities

- Connect with reflective worship experiences
 - Create and encourage more opportunities for intergenerational and targeted learning experiences (could be episodic or recurring). Learning experiences could include small group Bible Studies on or off the church campus, targeted times for topical talks and presentations)
 - Wednesday night structure

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PARTICIPATORY WORSHIP

First Baptist Church believes worship pleasing to God occurs when all members of our congregation—young and old, male and female, unhindered by status, race or national origin—make regular worship participation a high priority; endeavor to discover their unique God given gifts; and offer those gifts in community to Father, Son and Holy Spirit as acts of adoration, praise and commitment

Goals and Action Steps

More proactively promote our worship services to the larger community through the use of all available technology

- Website
- Live streaming
- Social media outreach
- Podcasts

Seek deeper connection between worship and everyday life

- Reflective opportunities in and beyond worship
- Sermon series
- Discussion opportunities
- Social media
- Place in bulletin for written reflections/notes from sermon

Provide greater opportunities for the congregation in leading and engaging worship

- Continue efforts to involve more lay people in a range of worship leadership roles
- Have more testimonies about things other than stewardship
- Offer communion more frequently and in a variety of ways

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TRANSFORMING MISSION

First Baptist Church of Athens shares Jesus Christ's love by engaging in transformational ministry in relationship with its neighbors both locally and globally in the community spirit of Matthew 25:34-40. ***We will bring Christ and be the presence of Christ by sharing, helping, serving and encouraging.***

Goals and Action Steps

Reducing illiteracy in Athens-Clarke County

- Develop partnership with school district
- Develop after school program
- Seek ways to engage others in our efforts

Promoting racial and cultural understanding

- Develop and strengthen Chestnut grove partnership
- Find ways to develop cross-cultural church/faith/communities relationships

Develop ways to use our facilities more effectively for transforming ministry