

Updates from the Long-Range Planning Open Forum

About 50 people attended an Open Forum focused on work of the six task forces on Sunday, April 18. Each task force gave a summary of their work thus far, and time was allowed for comments and questions. The discussion was lively and substantive. Following are some highlights from the forum.

Small Group Ministries: The task force has drafted a set of recommendations and have sent them to the Executive Committee for initial comments. A discussion open to the congregation will be scheduled after the Executive Committee review.

Governance: The group has researched how other churches have “right-sized” their governance and plans to propose dividing the material in our current bylaws into three documents: Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, and Policies and Procedures. In these documents they are focusing on using language that is more inclusive and explicitly committed to diversity.

Senior Ministries: The task force sent out about 100 surveys to “senior” members of our congregation, of which 47 were returned. Anyone who did not receive a survey and wants to fill one out should send an email to planning@seattlefirstbaptist.org. Respondents were enthusiastic about past senior events, but don’t see themselves as a separate group from the church at large. It was suggested that there not be a separate “senior ministry,” but that it be incorporated into all ministries.

Pastoral Transition: The team began their task by interviewing 12 current and past members of the SFBC staff. They identified the following as desired skills of a new pastor: cross-cultural competence, ability to delegate, strong preaching, pastoral care, and communication skills with the ability to handle conflict. A discussion about whether SFBC is ready to call a BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) pastor brought up many comments and questions and is continuing to be discussed by the task force and SFBC leadership.

Anti-Racism: The task force began by creating a trusting environment with each other, and shared their experiences relating to micro-aggressions and other forms of racism at SFBC. Anti-Racism work needs to take place in each individual’s life, and everyone needs to commit to the ongoing work. Following the congregational meeting, the task force raised the issue that all elected leaders were White. They are working with the Executive Committee on a solution for this. Pastor Patricia Hunter is now a member of the Executive Committee.

Facilities: The group is considering three major alternatives regarding our facilities: Stand Pat with minor renovations; Redevelop at our current location; Sell and move. They plan to gather cost estimates and assemble plans for the various options and present them to the congregation for consideration and to make a decision. They have interviewed a number of people in our church, as well as organizations who share our current facility. Common issues have been raised: parking, limited transportation options, access to and inside the facility, carbon footprint, and declining membership. They talked to three other churches area who

have recently gone through this process. Next steps include engaging an engineering firm to provide a more accurate estimate on seismic retrofit and obtaining a real estate appraisal of our current facility and land.