

Long-Range Planning Yields Fruit during 2021

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More than two years ago a team began working on what would become SFBC's Long-Range Plan. As part of that work, they expressed their personal hopes for our collective future. We started with questions such as: How can we follow the Way of Jesus without getting bogged down by the church named for him? How can we best use our assets to meet our mission statement?

Everyone on the team believed that SFBC had to make adjustments in order to survive and thrive going forward. COVID came along and put an exclamation point on that sentence. It underlined the sentiment: We cannot choose our time, but we can choose how we live in it. As we worked we formulated goals for our church, including:

- Build a future that brings people back to life
- Move from an attitude of "historic preservation" to "evolutionary change"
- Outline new opportunities to do Church differently yet focus on faith and tradition.
- Shift focus from "How do we help the church have a good death?" to "How can we be relevant for the immediate future?"
- Be different, be bold, and be better

The plan was published in the fall of 2020, and during 2021 more than 40 people on six task forces have been working hard to move forward with certain aspects of the LRP recommendations. Teams worked online using Zoom. Some met as often as weekly. A project office was formed to manage the effort. Monthly updates were provided to the congregation, and three open forums were hosted to dig into specific topics. A unified schedule of all proposed changes for the next two years was produced so leaders could understand what needed to happen when. We had some missteps and bumps, but all task forces made progress, and all our established goals for the year were met.

Following is a list of our collective accomplishments:

Recommendations were completed to revitalize our ministry to Seniors, to be implemented in 2022.

A new Small Groups Ministry has been defined to provide diverse opportunities to "do church" beyond Sunday worship. The groups will be targeted at members of the SFBC community and as a way to connect with people in the broader community. Current plans are to implement this ministry in 2022.

We prepared for Pastor Tim Phillips' retirement by completing foundational work including a recommended pastoral model and job description to be used for the search for a new permanent pastor to replace Pastor Tim.

We took important steps in our journey to

anti-racism, including representation in leadership for BIPOC members, support for BIPOC members of our community, and "Brave Space" for our white members and friends to learn together.

A team has rewritten bylaws that update language and give us a streamlined governance model in order to be more flexible. These will be voted on by the congregation at the Annual Meeting on January 23.

A team began a thorough analysis of our facilities, focusing on how they can be best used to meet our mission statement. The group plans to make recommendations later in 2022.

A set of Key Ministries for SFBC was defined.

This work has been difficult, at times painful., and we learned a lot. Working together online is HARD, especially with large groups, but it is possible. We learned that even when we do our best we can and do hurt others. We all need hearts of mutual support, grace, and forgiveness to make it through together. We know that our diversity really is our strength. Working with people we did not know well is a blessing and produces better results. And above all, many people care deeply about the future of SFBC.

Thank you to everyone who helped make 2021 such a fruitful year for our church as we look to the future.