

Thy Kingdom Come Final Report

Thy Kingdom Come (TKC)

Thy Kingdom Come is a process developed by the South Carolina Baptist Convention (SCBC) to facilitate churches in discovering God's vision and long-range plan for their church. This process is a spiritual process, rather than a strategic one, which involves six ministry areas of the church: worship, evangelism, mission, spiritual growth, ministry development and congregational life.

Administration

The responsibility of administering this process has been given to the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC). This committee is comprised of the following members: John Jones (Chairman), Tillman Cuttino, Jr. (Vice-Chair), Jule Eldridge (Secretary), Dan Lyles, Randy Twitty, and Miriam Moore.

For the information-gathering phase of this process, four ad-hoc members were added for diversity in age and perspectives on ministry functions and needs. These four ad-hoc members were Renee Graham, Ray High, Carolyn McCoy, and Jim McMillan. This larger committee was referred to as the Futuring Group.

Process

The TKC approach to Long Range Planning involves three phases. During the first phase information and evaluations are gathered. During the second phase, this information is prayerfully reviewed and discussed to determine where God may be leading FBC in the different areas of church life and ministry. The third phase is to develop an action plan and recommendations based on findings discovered in phases one and two, and to assign responsibility and accountability for the implementation of these recommendations.

Phase I (Mid-October 2007 – February 2008)

The information and evaluations gathered for TKC came from two main sources.

First was a church-wide survey completed primarily on October 21, 2007. Multiple times and locations were made available to church members to complete these surveys in order to facilitate wide spread participation. 318 church members participated. The summary results of this survey are available upon request.

The second source for evaluation and information was six sub-committees formed to consider each of the six areas referenced above. Each of these committees consisted of two members of the Futuring Group, one to two staff members, and other members of the congregation asked to serve based on their service experience and spiritual gifts. Approximately 75 members participated in this step. These sub-committees were guided through scenarios and questions formulated through the TKC program. Their findings were then submitted to the Futuring Group.

Phase 2 (March 9, 2008 – April 27, 2008)

During this time, the ad-hoc committee along with our ministerial staff reviewed each of the six areas of ministry under review by looking at the results of the congregational surveys and the report of that sub-committees independent review. The purpose was to identify where God is leading FBC in each area of ministry and church life.

Phase 3 (May 14, 2008 – August, 2008)

During these months, the LRPC has taken the information and review from phases 1 and 2 and prayerfully considered the recommendations necessary to accomplish the vision God is planting in our congregation. Each recommendation is assigned to a committee or staff person who is responsible for implementation. A timeframe for implementation is also provided.

The report that follows is the culmination of this process. The real work, however, is just beginning.

Introduction

At the time of preparing this report, we find ourselves as a church family in a different place than where we were a year ago when we began the process of Thy Kingdom Come. We have gone from a church that is fully staffed and on board with its leadership to being without a Senior Pastor. Because we know that God is in control of all things, that His timing is perfect, and that all things work together for good, we must step back and ask ourselves what has been His purpose for our walking through this intensive process.

We believe that we stand at a crossroad where we can look at who we are through the information gathered, compare it to what we believe God would have us be, create an action plan to move from where we are to where God is calling us, and with that action plan in hand find the leader God is calling to go with us.

As we stand at this crossroad, our greatest blessing will also be our greatest challenge. The result that is clear from all of our research is that we at First Baptist of Sumter love our church. We feel loved and cared for and that we are growing in our walk with Christ. We are a congregation that is active and, according to the surveys completed, willing to serve. What we are forced to ask ourselves, though, is have we become comfortable and content. Based on a review of our church profile over the past 3 years, we have to consider that we are at risk of becoming a stagnant church. (Attachment I)

A comment shared with us by Roger Orman, Director of the Communications and Ministry Development Team of the SCBC, was quite profound. He stated, “In a world that is so cruddy we would like our church to be comfortable, but we have to always be changing.” So we must ask ourselves, are we willing to change? Are we willing to hold on to all that is good about FBC while opening ourselves to considering some new ways of doing ministry that will reach and develop more followers of Christ? We believe

coming out of this process that the membership is ready and willing. However, as with any growth, we can expect growing pains along the way. As we consider and work through the recommendations that follow, we must commit ourselves to being “brought to complete unity” (John 17:23) with one another in Christ.

RECOMMENDATIONS: GENERAL

The following recommendations are derived from questions or concerns or needs that surfaced in several ministry areas. As such, we believe they should be addressed by senior level leadership.

1. Church Structure

A recurring theme from our ministry sub-committees was a desire for more accountability, job descriptions, training, and evaluation (for staff, committees, leadership, and volunteers). We believe this indicates that much of our membership either doesn't understand our church structure or finds it inefficient or incomplete. Research undertaken by John Jones of our committee and John McCoy (Chairman of the Deacons) has indicated that a study of our present committee structure could help our church transition to a more efficient, accountable and manageable decision-making process.

Accordingly, the Long Range Planning Committee recommends that FBC form a leadership team to (1) meet with Roger Orman of the SCBC and review successful models for a congregation led church that will facilitate growth beyond 600 active members; and (2) recommend to the church either changes needed to our current structure or the adoption of a new structure for the purpose of doing ministry more efficiently and effectively. It would be preferable that this be done before hiring a new Senior Pastor.

Implementation to be by whom: Deacon Chairman to appoint committee
Implementation date to begin by: As soon as committee can be appointed

2. Church Member Handbook

In our extensive review of the results of the Congregation Survey, we noted a relatively large number of “undecided” responses to questions. We believe this reflects a need for more awareness amongst our members of ministries provided at FBC.

As such, the LRPC recommends that a Church Member Handbook be developed that communicates in a simple manner (1) who we (FBC) are; (2) what we believe; (3) how we are structured; and (4) what ministries are offered.

The team charged with this task should (1) ensure the handbook is supported by our by-laws; (2) be careful to consult with all staff members, the men's ministry, the

women's ministry and church council when gathering information; and (3) consider a format which could be kept by members with their church directories and another format suitable for prospects.

Implementation to be by whom: Vice-Chairman of Deacons to work with staff to form committee

Implementation date to begin by: Committee formed by January 2009

3. Leadership

Mr. Orman of the SCBC pointed out that statistically the typical church member is willing to give about three hours a week to church related activities. With that in mind, the Long Range Planning Committee recommends that our leadership consider (1) how every single hour is best spent for both the individual and the congregation; (2) where do we compete with ourselves for those hours, thus reducing overall effectiveness; and (3) how do we lead members to prioritize their time at church and understand the shared responsibility of our staff and members to do the ministry of our church. A clue to these questions as presented by Mr. Orman is as spiritual growth takes place in the lives of a congregation, the other ministry areas will naturally grow.

Implementation to be by whom: Church Staff and Church Council

Implementation date to begin by: Ongoing Focus

RECOMMENDATIONS: WORSHIP

The results of our Congregational Surveys and the feedback from the Worship Subcommittee clearly indicate that the worship ministry at First Baptist is our greatest strength. Overall, the church is very happy with the blend of music and worship styles as well as the facilities and technology available. While this assessment is good, it is important that we not become comfortable and stop growing both in maturity and numbers. The following recommendations have surfaced from our study and are steps we believe God would have us take toward this growth.

4. Second Sunday Morning Service

Church research historically supports the premise that a facility's functional capacity is reached at approximately 80% of actual maximum seating capacity. Beyond that level some begin to feel uncomfortable or "crowded out". As such, much consideration has been given to the possibility of beginning a second worship service on Sunday mornings. Overall, we find that the congregation is open to pursuing a two-service format at FBC. While we believe we can begin to mentally and spiritually prepare ourselves to move toward a two-service format, we do not believe we should begin a second service until a Senior Pastor has been hired.

The recommendation of the LRPC is that the pastor search committee look for a pastor who is experienced in leading a church with multiple services or who

possesses the skills to lead FBC through such a transition successfully. This expectation should be communicated to a candidate as a priority.

Secondly, the LRPC recommends a special team be formed to assist a new Senior Pastor and the Pastor of Worship and Music, in planning and implementing a second worship service once a senior pastor has been hired. This team should take into consideration the report of the Worship sub-committee of the Futuring Group.

Implementation to be by whom: Senior Pastor and Minister of Music to appoint committee

Implementation date to begin by: Committee to be formed within 90 days of new Pastor start date

5. A Very, Very, Friendly Church

One of the strengths of FBC is that we are a friendly church. For us to continue to grow, we must become “a very, very friendly church”. The following areas have been identified areas that could be improved to make our church more approachable and user friendly.

A. Greeting /Arrival

The LRPC recommends that a Greeting/Hospitality Team be formed to consider how to make arriving at the FBC campus an easier and more pleasant experience for everyone, but especially for our Senior age group, our families with young children, and our guests. A comprehensive plan should include parking, drop-off sites, greeters both inside and outside of buildings, signage, campus maps, and directions. This team should reference the Worship Sub-committee report for more information.

Implementation to be by whom: Deacon Greeting Committee Chairman

Implementation date to begin by: Ongoing Focus

B. Facilities

1. The LRPC recommends a Decorating Team be formed to work with the property committee to formulate a plan to make the narthex more warm and inviting and to update and enlarge the restrooms in the narthex.
2. The LRPC recommends that a “meet and greet” area be established for guests and ministers after worship. This recommendation should be considered with the above changes to the narthex if possible. If not, another site should be chosen.
3. The LRPC recognizes that the capacity of the Fellowship Hall and adjacent kitchen is inadequate for the future and recommends that a study be performed to explore options for updating and expanding of these facilities.

Implementation to be by whom: Property Committee with Representative from the Finance Committee

Implementation date to begin by: Committee formed by January 2009

4. The observation was made numerous times during our study that the Family Life Center needs to be better utilized as a non-traditional tool for ministry.

Implementation to be by whom: Church staff, Randy Twitty, Representatives from the (1) Recreation and Fellowship Committee, (2) the Risk Management Committee, and (3) the Insurance Committee.

Implementation date to begin by: Ongoing focus

C. Advertising

The LRPC recommends extending the invitation to be a part of FBC to our community through cable television spots on visible, non-traditional channels (ESPN was mentioned several times) and the continued development of a visitor friendly website with a backdoor for church members for “operating” information. Radio advertisements were also suggested.

Implementation to be by whom: Staff and Advertising Committee and Representative from Finance Committee

Implementation date to begin by: Begin by the first of the year.

6. General Observation

The observation was made that staff and church leadership should remain cognizant of planning all services and programs to start and end as scheduled and be helpful in minimizing distractions.

Implementation to be by whom: Church Staff and Church Council

Implementation date to begin by :Ongoing focus

RECOMMENDATIONS: SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The results of our congregational survey and the feedback from the Spiritual Growth sub-committee both support the conclusion that we at FBC have many strengths in the area of discipleship and that most of our congregation believes they have grown spiritually during their time at FBC. The results also suggest the importance and the need for continuous emphasis and focus in this area to maximize our potential. Some of our greatest areas of strength are our children’s programs, our Sunday School hour, and the growing men’s and women’s ministries.

The greatest challenge that the church at large (not just at FBC) faces, is that statistically the lives of believers in the church look the same as the lives of people outside of the church. Additionally, many young people are leaving the church when

they go away to college and often do not return until they begin their own families. These are indicators that members sitting in our pews may find God's word irrelevant to their daily lives because they have not learned to study it on their own and integrate it into daily living. Mr. Orman noted to the LRPC that as our members begin to experience more spiritual growth, our other areas of ministry (especially evangelism and missions) will also grow because people naturally share with others what they are excited about.

As such, we believe that teaching people to study God's Word and to integrate its principles into their daily lives is the basis upon which we reach and develop fully devoted followers of Christ. This is the foundation for the following recommendations.

7. Spiritual Growth Team

The LRPC recommends that a ministry team be formed to work with the Pastor of Discipleship to establish and maintain a spiritual growth plan that includes the areas of (1) Sunday School, (2) Wednesday Night Bible Study, (3) Small Groups, and (4) mentoring. This plan should include a specific and intentional approach to encourage adults in their growth toward spiritual maturity and equip our young people to defend their faith and walk with Christ when they go out on their own. This team should refer to the Spiritual Growth Sub-committee report for additional guidance.

Implementation to be by whom: Pastor of Discipleship and Evangelism
Implementation date to begin by: As soon as committee can be appointed

8. Testimonies That Celebrate Transformed Lives

In order to encourage and challenge one another in the area of spiritual growth, the LRPC recommends that the staff develop a plan to systematically integrate the testimonies of church members into all areas of church life. These testimonies should celebrate the decisions of new believers, but also celebrate what God is currently doing in the lives of our members. Our congregation needs to hear testimonies of the power of prayer, of God's faithfulness to stewardship, the fruit of applying God's Word to our lives, etc.

Implementation to be by whom: Church Staff and Church Council
Implementation date to begin by: Ongoing Focus

9. Classroom Space

In order to accommodate additional growth, based on current attendance levels, the LRPC recommend that the church begin to plan for more classroom space. This additional space could come from (1) making better use of the space we already have (especially the family life center), (2) reconfiguring existing classroom space into a more functional and efficient layout, and/or (3) adding additional square footage. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of new or different facility

requirements for Sunday School classes brought about in the future by a second Sunday Morning Worship Service. When considering additional space, all areas (nursery, preschool, children, youth, adults) should be included.

Implementation to be by whom: Pastor of Discipleship and Evangelism, Sunday School Director, Property Committee

Implementation date to begin by: Committee to begin meeting by January 2009

RECOMMENDATIONS: MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

10. Spiritual Gifts

In addition to the recommendations on church structure and ministry communication addressed above, the LRPC believes that the most important emphasis for ministry development at FBC should be to encourage members to identify their talents and gifts and match them with the appropriate place of ministry.

The results of our congregational survey and ministry development subcommittee indicate that a strong 94% of our church is willing to serve in the church. It also indicated that over half of our congregation is uncertain of their spiritual giftedness, despite the efforts of our staff to provide P.L.A.C.E. classes to help members identify these gifts. Our challenge is to encourage members (who do not know their spiritual gifts) to participate in the P.L.A.C.E. class, which probably relates to the “3 hour a week” limitation discussed in Recommendation #3 (on page 4).

As such, the LRPC recommends the staff, with the support of other church leadership, place an emphasis on our church members identifying their spiritual gifts and talents through the P.L.A.C.E. study by offering it during peak attendance hours. One suggested time is during the Sunday School hour (working in conjunction with the S.S. Director and teachers) and possibly as part of the Sunday School class curriculum of younger adults who are less likely to have done such a study before. We also recommend that all of the deacons and their spouses take some form of the P.L.A.C.E. course during a deacons’ retreat. Such an emphasis should continue until a large number of our members have completed the P.L.A.C.E. course or are serving in accordance with their spiritual gifts.

Implementation to be by whom: Staff

Implementation date to begin by: Ongoing focus

11. Needs-Driven Ministries

The LRPC recommends that the pastoral staff along with other church leadership consider developing a strategy and structure for “Needs Based” ministries to minister to both our church members and members of the Sumter community. These ministries would provide Biblical encouragement and support for families experiencing the loss of a loved one, serious illness, divorce, etc., The ministry

support offered would be determined by the passions, and giftedness and experiences of church members and staff.

The LRPC also recognizes the MOPS ministry and Men's Fraternity as examples of successful endeavors by our church to provide needs based ministries.

Implementation to be by whom: Church Staff and Church Council

Implementation date to begin by: Ongoing Focus

RECOMMENDATIONS: CONGREGATIONAL LIFE/FELLOWSHIP

Consistent with the findings throughout the TKC process, our study in the area of Congregational Life/Fellowship revealed that the overwhelming majority of the FBC congregation is "excited to be a part of this church", "believes FBC has a good reputation in the community, and "feel like they belong in this church". At the same time, there were several areas identified for improvement

12. Very, Very Friendly Church

Our previous Recommendation #5 (on page 5) regarding steps to ensure FBC is a very friendly church addressed creating an environment that is approachable and welcoming from the perspective of facilities, logistics, and advertising. Under the category of congregational life and fellowship, we revisit this issue on a relational level. Some of the findings in our study indicate that we as a church family need to be sure that not only are our facilities approachable, but that we are opening up ourselves and our small groups to other church members and visitors.

- i. This means stepping outside of our comfort zones and established relationships to welcome someone new and help ensure they feel at home.
- ii. This also means ensuring all of our members are connected to a small group where they can receive church information and give and receive care and support as needed.

Implementation to be by whom: Every Member with periodic encouragement of church staff and Sunday school leadership.

Implementation date to begin by: Ongoing focus

13. A Place to be Heard

Another opportunity for improvement identified in the area of congregational life is in the area of communication. A notable portion of the members participating in the congregational survey indicated that they do not feel their voice is heard in our church. The LRPC is not exactly sure what this is indicating in light of the overall positive feeling our church members have about being a part of the FBC family. However, we do believe that every member of a family should have the opportunity to make suggestions and ask questions of the appropriate people at an appropriate

time. Part of this concern will be addressed with Recommendations #1 and #2. In addition, we recommend that staff members and church leaders remain approachable and available to listen and provide necessary follow up on any concerns or questions or suggestions that church members might have.

Implementation to be by whom: Church Staff and Church Council
Implementation date to begin by: Ongoing Effort

14. New Member Orientation

It was emphasized by our Congregational Life sub-committee and supported by the congregational survey that we need to be consistent in our programs to orient and integrate new members into FBC. The LRPC recommends this be accomplished through regular adult and youth new member classes, activities and fellowships (receptions or dinners) followed by an intentional effort to help each new member get connected with a Sunday school class or other small group.

Implementation to be by whom: Plan developed by Senior Pastor, Staff, and Sunday School Director
Implementation date to begin by: Committee formed and working on a plan within 90 days of New Senior Pastor start date.

15. Communication Through Technology

The LRPC also recommends that the staff continue to pursue enhanced communication with church members through new technologies to include (1) an e-mail version of the church newsletter; (2) continued development of our church website, with areas available only to church members; and (3) exploring emerging technologies, including ministry blogs and podcasts as deemed secure and appropriate.

Implementation to be by whom: Pastor of Worship and Music and TV/Sound Committee
Implementation date to begin by: Committee formed and working on a plan by January 2009

RECOMMENDATIONS: MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

Missions - Sharing God's love with others by meeting the human needs for those who are poor, disadvantaged, or victimized.

Evangelism – Sharing God's love with others through sharing the gospel of Christ.

The Southern Baptist Convention International Missions Board through a covenant that is effective to the year 2010 recognized FBC in 2000 as a Global Priority Church.

We have been faithful to that covenant and in our commitment to the Soninke people through both financial giving and service. In addition to our missions service to the Soninke, FBC has been working to support a church plant in Romania again through both financial giving and service.

On a local level, however, the LRPC has recognized that FBC does not have a known church-wide plan to intentionally reach out in our community. We recognize that we provide financial support to some local ministries, but there is much opportunity to increase that support through additional manpower. We believe this is one of the greatest opportunities before us to grow in maturity and to share the love of Christ outside of our campus.

The overall conclusion of our review of missions at FBC is that we are much stronger in our emphasis of foreign missions than we are in our attention to local missions. As such, we are making the following recommendations based opportunities we have identified to become better rounded in our approach to missions and evangelism.

16. Local Missions

In response to the above findings, the LRPC recommends that FBC challenge the Missions Committee to help develop a church strategy and methodology to increase our outreach to our community, just as they have done so effectively for international missions. This strategy should include a plan to provide manpower to local ministries.

Implementation to be by whom: Missions Committee and Pastor of Discipleship and Evangelism

Implementation date to begin by: Begin by January 2009

17. Church Plants

During the course of our study, the LRPC has recognized that there are groups in our community that despite our best efforts may not be drawn to attend services on our campus. It is our recommendation that our church leadership and missions committee intentionally seek opportunities for FBC to participate in church plants through financial support, manpower, and/or leadership. We recommend that we be prayerfully aware of church members or pastors/leaders in our community who have the calling, passion, and giftedness to begin such churches and that we come along side them and support them. The most immediate opportunity identified by our committee is for a partnership with a local pastor ready to start a Spanish Speaking church for Mexican immigrants.

Implementation to be by whom: Senior Pastor, An elder, Missions Committee Appointees, Deacon Chairman Appointees

Implementation date to begin by: Begin 6 months after new Senior Pastor start date

18. Staff Leadership

The LRPC recognizes that the workload of managing International Missions, Local Missions, Church Plants, Evangelism and Discipleship will probably be more than one staff person and a committee of volunteers can reasonably manage. Accordingly, we recommend that FBC consider hiring or appointing a part-time local missions coordinator who will work with the missions committee and serve as a point person between the church and the community. This position would build relationships with existing and new local ministries, determine how FBC can best come along beside them in support, and communicate these opportunities to our church membership. This position would ensure an ongoing, concerted emphasis on local missions at FBC.

Regarding timing, we note that the hiring of a Senior Pastor should remain our top priority. Once that position is filled, the Senior Pastor would be a part of this process.

Implementation to be by whom: Senior Pastor, Administrative Committee,
Missions Committee

Implementation date to begin by: Consider for the 2010 budget year unless
a qualified volunteer is identified sooner.

Final thoughts on Missions and Evangelism

The results of the congregational survey indicated that evangelism is believed to be our churches greatest area of weakness. The LRPC believes that the overflow of implementing the above recommendations will be increased opportunities and enthusiasm for sharing the gospel of Christ. In taking steps to become a “very, very friendly church”, by intentionally become more active in our community and by working to provide non-traditional services both on campus and through church plants, we believe we will earn the opportunity to share Christ with others. In taking steps to ensure our members are growing in their walk with Christ, are plugged into a small group where they are heard, cared for and caring for others, and have identified their spiritual giftedness, we believe our members will naturally want to share with others what God is doing in their lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PRAYER

Isaiah 56: 7b

“.. for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations”

II Chronicles 7: 14

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

Throughout the course of our review of all ministry areas the need for FBC to be a church saturated in prayer came up many times. The following observations were noted. (1) We have members of our congregation with mature prayer lives. We also have many members of our congregation without active prayer lives. (2) A structured prayer program in a church is difficult to maintain. Most successful attempts come from a group passionate about prayer forming small units for this purpose. (3) A mature prayer life can be modeled, but is difficult to teach. However, the biblical principles and models of prayers can be taught.

19. Prayer

Based on these observations and the feedback from the Congregations Survey and Sub-committee ministry teams, the LRPC makes the following recommendations with regard to prayer.

- i. FBC church staff and church leadership need to ensure that prayer is modeled throughout our church in large and small group settings.
- ii. The Pastor of Discipleship and the recommended Spiritual Growth Team (Recommendation #7) should work to ensure that biblical models and principles and promises regarding prayer are integrated into the ongoing teaching in Sunday School classes and other small groups.
- iii. As referenced in Recommendation #8 (on page 7), our congregation needs to hear testimonies of the power of prayer in the lives of other believer in our congregation.
- iv. The prayer chapel in our church should (1) always be attractive, (2) always be open to any member during the times the church doors are open, and (3) never be used for any purpose other than prayer, meditation, and worship.
- v. The overlap that exists between the dinner hour on Wednesday nights and the prayer meeting due to the distractions of ongoing conversation and latecomers is disruptive to an attitude of prayer. As such, we recommend the church staff and leaders consider ways to minimize distractions and promote meaningful prayer. (Two separate locations for the two different purposes may be necessary.)

Implementation to be by whom: Senior Pastor, Church Staff and Church Council
Implementation date to begin by: Ongoing Effort

CONCLUSION

It has been both an honor and a privilege for each of us on the Long Range Planning Committee to walk through the Thy Kingdom Come process with our church over the last year. We did not know when we began the changes that would take place during

the process. We believe, however, that these changes are part of why this process has been so important. God is always good and his timing is always perfect.

As such, we are excited about the action plan that we believe God has placed before us. We know that God has called us as a church family “to reach and develop fully devoted followers of Christ”. Through much prayer, evaluation, and review, we have identified an action plan to help us accomplish our calling both effectively and efficiently. With this vision and mission in hand, we know that God will show us the Senior Pastor He has chosen to lead us.

As we stated at the beginning, our greatest challenge will be our willingness to change. We as a church family must be willing to hold on to all that we love about FBC, while being willing to pursue new ways of doing ministry that will more effectively and efficiently “reach and develop fully devoted followers of Christ.” As we move through these days of discussion and transition, let us commit ourselves to walking in complete unity with one another in Christ.