

**Approved by the General Board, April 25, 2011
“Financing Our Hopes” section approved by the Special Congregational
Meeting of May 22, 2011**

**A MINISTRY PLAN FOR FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
2010-2013**

Our Vision

*(from the “Philosophy of Ministry & Vision” statement
approved by the congregation, June 2008)*

Because...

We seek to be a congregation where spiritual growth is the norm, where growing in faith is expected, and that expects and respects a diversity of opinion; and,

We will be a community of faith, radical in hospitality, outrageous in generosity and joyful in service to God and neighbor,

We therefore commit to

- Growth in spirit - our emotional connectedness to God through Christ.
- Growth in faith - a deeper understanding and knowledge of Christ.
- Growth in knowledge of the traditions and practices of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- Growth in service and mission
- Growth in worship attendance and participation

Our Context

- Huge cultural changes around us since the church has 600+ in worship attendance in the '60s
- A *wonderful* building that is usable, attractive, traditional, and has a high degree of public visibility compared to many churches' buildings.
- A *challenging* building that is costly to maintain in dollars and staff/volunteer time and hvac costs, and which has only a very small portion handicap accessible.
- Too much "governance structure" (bylaws, committees, etc.) for both the current size of the congregation and the kind and size of congregation we want to again become. Many people are carrying too many roles and this can lead and has led to either burnout or things simply not being done because of lack of time.
- A trend of declining worship attendance for 25 years; at the same time, it was only a decade ago that we had 300+ in average worship attendance.
- The congregation will find it hard to continue to grow in numbers beyond the current levels because of the dynamics involved in currently having only one ordained/licensed ministry staff position. (Cf. Alice Mann's work on "Raising the Roof/Size Transitions in Congregations" which documents how solo-minister-staffed churches almost inevitably shrink to about 150 in worship)
- A high desire for spiritual and theological study and growth among members.
- Fewer small groups than is optimum for either current size or hoped-for size.
- A readiness and shared desire to move beyond the tensions that occurred during the long 30 month interim time between called senior pastors.
- A degree of expectations of staff (support, program, and ministerial) that were formed in an era when there were double the number of staff.
- A number of extraordinarily generous folks who are always ready to give financially to special projects.
- As with most mainline Protestant congregations as the "World War II generation" passes from the scene, a declining interest in giving to "unified budgets" and an increasing interest in giving to "projects" that are **tangible, nearby, associated with people they trust, and which make them 'feel good' about having met a specific need through their giving.**
- A strong "culture of mission," evidenced in the church's significant budgetary financial commitments to outreach, a history of mission trips, and ongoing support in both money and people for efforts like IHN, ESM, CROP Walk, Tennyson Center, etc.
- A strong, caring, and committed Eldership
- A Board that increasingly functions as a "permission-giving" and "policy-making" body, instead of a "committee of the whole" (the latter leads to feelings of frustration and dis-empowerment of committees and individuals tasked with doing various ministries and jobs)
- A longstanding commitment to high quality music
- A desire to have a strong Children's Ministry allied with the challenge of finding enough volunteers to fully carry out that desire.
- Our specific community context means that there are a large number of folks who are "turned off" by an experience of more judgmental and narrow

understandings of the Christian faith and who are therefore skeptical that the notion of “church” can include the kind of witness we wish to have – to a God of unconditional love who welcomes all.

- A desire to grow and become once again a “program sized” (again, cf. Alice Mann’s work for further description) of 300+ average worship attendance, and at the same time a number of “small church” or “pastoral sized church” habits and expectations have crept into our life.

Specific Implications – Where our Context Meets our Vision

- In a “program-sized church” it is not possible for everyone to have a “personal relationship” with the pastor. Rather, people will have their **relationship needs** for connection to the church met through small groups and will have their **identification with the church** through their experience in worship and the vision as chiefly articulated by the pastor(s).
Implication: We need more small groups of a variety of kinds, short-term and longer-term, educational and “fun,” etc.
- As the congregation ages, there will be more and more folks in nursing home and other shut-in situations. Even now, it is not possible for the senior pastor to have a consistent calling ministry on our shut-ins. Even with the wonderful efforts of our Pastoral Visitor and the dedicated service of the Elders, it would be good to be able to call on these saints more.
Implication: Another staff minister, a portion of whose time is dedicated to such calling (as well as training and equipping others for such calling), **is needed**. *This will also help free up even more of the Senior Pastor’s time to do another utterly essential role in the “program-sized church” – to spend more time doing strategic visioning, leadership development, training, and encouraging of those with spiritual gifts to take on much of the “pastoral” care roles. This is a ubiquitous characteristic of larger churches. As one person has put it, the job of a senior pastor in a “program-sized congregation” is “more rancher than shepherd.”*
- Assuming our rate of Sunday visitors continues to increase, we need a much better system for following up with those folks, and current staff does not have time to do so in anything approaching an optimal way. **Implication: We need a staff member** – and preferably a minister – **who can give a high degree of focus to visitor/prospective member follow-up** (again, this means not simply being the one designated to do such calling and follow-up, but the one who will help identify those with that spiritual gift, train and equip them for such a ministry)
- Without an elevator, we will seriously limit our growth potential. This is not just an issue for the elderly mobility-impaired. Young parents need such assistance too and without it the reality is that much of our education wing is de facto inaccessible. Whether we agree with this cultural change or not, younger folks these days expect a professional outfit (whether it is a church or whatever) to have an elevator. **Implication:** We need, in the next several years, to consider **a capital campaign for an elevator** and other related needs: new carpeting in several areas, new hvac systems that will save the church money in the long run, better lighting on the parking lot, a better security system, a new telephone and internet system (perhaps to be combined with a security system), re-modeled nursery, video monitor system (especially to offer the opportunity for a “video ‘cry room’” for parents of young ones).
- As more and more our newer members and participants have little church

background (and thus, of course, no Disciples background either), we need to have ongoing approaches in place for faith formation and Disciples identity (e.g., New Member/Prospective Member classes, etc.) **Implication: New member/prospective member faith formation/Disciples identity classes** to be put in place in an ongoing way.

- Hands-on mission opportunities are both what the Lord asks of us and they are absolutely key to deepening spirituality and identification with the faith. The congregation has a strong history of mission trips that is to be celebrated and learned from. Without an ongoing program of mission trips (with a variety of options ranging from a few hours across town to a few weeks in another country, and everything in between) we will both miss an opportunity to care for the “least of these” and to deepen our faith. **Implication: With appreciation for past mission trip efforts, we need to revamp, reinvigorate and renew our mission trip efforts** under the guidance of someone (staff or quasi-staff) who has the gifts and time to give major ongoing attention to this.
- In a growing church a very high degree of coordination and mutual “calendar” is needed. **Implication: Creation of a “Coordinating Council” that would meet at least quarterly with all the players and leaders of ministries**, whether de facto or Bylaws-provided, for **mutual calendaring and visioning** under the leadership of the pastor. At the same time, **change the frequency of the Board meetings to bi-monthly or quarterly** (this would be a return to a previous practice.)

Financing Our Hopes

In general...

- A commitment: All permanent full-time or half-time-or-greater staff positions will be eligible for medical and pension benefits. This is a moral imperative.
- Commitment: make staff and leadership continuing education concerning new ways of doing stewardship and exploring new “income and giving streams” a priority. Churches that insist on financing their ministry almost solely from “unified budget giving” will decline according to every expert on stewardship on non-profit philanthropy.
- Commitment: Transparently, routinely, and mission-mindedly share financial information with the congregation without appeals to fear. As one leader in philanthropy education puts it, we need to always in our fund raising “replace an attitude of apology with an attitude of pride about how we are helping people make a difference!”

Specifically...

- Currently 5% of all giving is designated for allocation by the Missions and Outreach Committee for outreach efforts. **For three years following the approval of this plan, to use 20% of that 5% (= approximately \$4000/year based on 2010 budget) to pay a stipend for a staff “Lay Minister of Missions” or “Mission Trips Director” and other associated costs.**
- **Change the congregation’s fiscal year to end on 10/31.** Undertaking an annual stewardship campaign (which is a must) and doing associated budgetary matters does not fit well with the spiritual themes (and opportunity for new members/participants) that comes at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Likewise, a mid-year 7/1-6/30 fiscal year would generally mean an early summer stewardship campaign at a time when attendance is historically lowest. Since fall is in many ways our “cultural new year” (due to long-standing associations with back-to-school, etc.), a stewardship campaign in September would likely be a very good fit.
- **As they have done in the past, continue to have the Trustees regularly look at the Endowment Policy** (in consultation with staff from the Christian Church Foundation) and assess whether the current policy is the most optimal one for both long-term growth of assets as well as support for ongoing ministries/budget. **Even more importantly, assertively publicize and offer opportunities for church members to give deferred gifts or make bequests to the Endowment or “cause” of their choice.**
- Use the entirety of the refinanced Tejon property mortgage interest payments to support the general budget. (Approximately \$3600/month in 2011 - roughly equal to the portion of the previous mortgage’s interest payments that the Trustees were allocating to the general budget).

- There is currently approximately \$251,000 in what has been informally called the “Tejon Fund” (These monies represent a) principal payments from the Tejon mortgage; b) interest payments from the Tejon mortgage in excess of the interest that was allocated by the Trustees to the general operating budget (as of February 2011 this amount is only \$857); c) the \$200,000 lump payment made by Richard Skorman at the time of the December 2010 refinance.

There is currently no policy about how these funds shall be used. The only stipulation regarding their use is the congregational action that specified that any policy concerning these funds would seek to protect the principal.

In order to finance our ministry hopes as indicated above, **the Trustees will ask the congregation to amend that earlier action** as follows in regards to these funds:

- A. \$25,000 will be used for urgent non-routine, necessary maintenance and minor capital items under the advice of the Facilities Committee and with the approval of the Board.
- B. \$150,000 will be placed in a “Ministry Staff Support Fund” which will be used under the expenditure authority of the Board upon the advice of the Senior Pastor to be used for “staffing for growth” or other staff-related items which have a direct impact on our ability to grow. (See “Timetable and Benchmarks” section, below, for some specific proposals). These monies, until debited to the operating budget for such staff support, will be in a separate interest-bearing account and the interest from that account will be added to the monies that can be spent for these purposes.
- C. \$25,000 will be designated for a “Contingency and Possibilities Fund” which be available for the Trustees to spend on unanticipated opportunities and needs that may unexpectedly arise in connection with the emphases of this “Ministry Plan”
- D. Remaining monies in the the Tejon Fund and future monies coming from the Tejon sale may be used for capital or special ministry projects with congregational approval and upon the recommendation of the Trustees, Senior Pastor, and General Board. A significant portion of the current Tejon Fund will be moved from the Bank of the Broadmoor to at “Tejon Endowment” at the Christian Church Foundation in order to grow those funds. Future receipts to the Tejon Fund may be moved to the Tejon Fund Endowment at the Christian Church Foundation by Trustees action.

Timetable and Benchmarks

2010

- ACTION: Engage a “Coordinator of Small Group Ministries” to work with the Senior Pastor and Missions and Outreach Committee to create more small group opportunities. **DONE**
- BENCHMARK: Add two new small group opportunities by the close 2010 **DONE**

2011

- ACTION: Engage a “Lay Minister for Missions” or “Mission Trips Director” (as described and funded above)
- BENCHMARK: Have three local or nearby mission trips each year.
- ACTION: Call a half-time “Associate Minister for Membership Development and Spiritual Growth” who will have a primary portfolio as described above (a financial package of approximately \$45,000/year - including salary, pension, health care [if needed], professional expenses for three years). The hope is that after three years the regular giving to the congregation will have grown to the point that this position can be supported by the general budget.
- BENCHMARK: Twelve new families/couples/individuals in membership or active participation and giving by the end of 2011.
- ACTION: Engage for three years a stipended very part time “Minister of Stewardship” (approximately 1/5 time, and approximately \$500/month) who will have primary responsibility for directing a concerted emphasis on deferred gifts/bequests
- BENCHMARK: Have five couples/individuals add First Christian as a bequest, or make a significant deferred gift in another manner.
- ACTION/BENCHMARK: During the course of the year, have at least five new “growing in spiritual depth” opportunities (e.g., prayer groups, bible studies, discipleship groups, etc., short term or long term) with at least 30 participants.

2012

- BENCHMARK: Twenty new families/couples/individuals in membership or active participation/giving by the end of 2012
- BENCHMARK: Have five couples/individuals add First Christian as a bequest, or make a significant deferred gift in another manner by the close of 2012
- BENCHMARK: Have three local or regional mission trips plus one significant national trip.