

Strategic Plan for First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Montgomery, Alabama

2009-2016

Draft March, 2009

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The purpose of this strategic plan is to aid in the implementation of the Future Story. There is more detail in the first two years or so of the plan because the unfolding of the later years will depend a great deal upon what is accomplished in the first two years and upon regular evaluation of progress and the plan itself. This plan should be reviewed every 6 months in order to make adjustments as needed and to celebrate that which has been accomplished since the last review. Changes and celebrations should be shared with the congregation in a public way and, preferably, in a context of worship.

The primary factor in the rate of forward movement is the congregation's *capacity* in terms of time, energy, and money. As the congregation grows, new time, energy and money will become available and a greater rate of movement will be achievable. Thus, for example, what might seem to be impossible in the fifth year of the plan (when seen from the perspective of the current day) will become quite do-able as the congregation steadily grows over the next seven years.

First Christian Church currently has 216 participating resident members and 140 in worship on average. Drawing on the Future Story itself (see Appendix A), this plan aims to make FCC a congregation of 550 participating members and 320 in worship by mid-2016. **Rather than**

merely assimilating new members into the *institution*, FCC will seek to assimilate people into the *faith* and into *faithful lives of discipleship*. This will be accomplished in part through the following key strategies:

1. Expanding the scope and number of small groups offered (in which participation is emotionally significant). Small groups will be designed to appeal to the needs of both current members and the un-churched and de-churched who we are seeking to reach. (“De-churched” people are those who were connected to a church at one time but left or were pushed out by negative experiences.)

2. To continue developing as a “safe” community in which faith is central and diversity is welcome. Some things appeal to all generations and can thus be *inter-generational*, but many programs are *generation specific* and thus contribute to a multi-generational approach.

3. Intentionally developing spiritual and programmatic leaders for the congregation.

4. Maintaining and building on our strong commitment to local and global outreach.

5. Maintaining and deepening our commitment to the Disciples of Christ.

6. Expanding the opportunities for worship and education, especially on days other than Sundays.

7. Continuing to develop the physical facilities needed to support worship, nurture, and mission.

8. Adding staff as able to provide the necessary support for these programs and initiatives.

9. Increasing invested funds (endowment) significantly by 2016.

10. Increase the number of pledging “units” to 180 by 2016.

It is important to note that the congregation will not achieve the realization of the future story in a year! Rather, the plan seeks to help the congregation grow into this vision over the course of the next seven years.

The Strategic Plan

July, 2009 – December, 2009

Overall Goals for July, 2009 – December, 2009:

1. To present a strategic plan based on the Future Story to the board of the congregation for review, amendment (if needed), and affirmation.
2. To begin implementing the plan, with special emphasis on development of some of the basic systemic needs of the church including program planning. As part of this emphasis, to begin using effectively an Annual Planning Event to: (a) develop a reshaped program (in line with the Vision) and, (b) begin reducing the amount of time and energy spent in governance and program committees in order to free up members' time and energy for spiritual nurture and mission activity.
3. To secure a "pastoral resident" (this has been in process and it is hoped that such a person will begin in fall, '09).
4. To stabilize (a) average worship attendance at 140, (b) participating membership of 220, and (c) 17 small groups in which participation is emotionally significant.
5. To begin development of an in-depth leadership development program.

July, 2009

1. The Visioning Team presents the Strategic Plan to the church board for reflection and affirmation and/or amendment.
2. The "affirmed" plan is shared with the congregation in order to inform and to gain ownership of the plan.
3. The pastor and elders begin designing a "Fellowship of Twelve" lay leader development program. This program teaches: the history and polity of the Disciples of Christ; the ministry of the Disciples of Christ in Regions, in the US and Canada, and globally; public speaking and presentation in worship and other settings; conflict resolution; the content and meaning of our worship services; active listening; both the use of Roberts Rules and consensus building; such other skills and knowledge as the pastor and elders shall determine is helpful. The purpose is to develop a pool of well prepared leaders, both men and women.
4. The "pastoral resident" begins work, with special emphasis on children and youth. A "pastoral relations" type committee will be established for this person immediately both to facilitate learning and to help the person interface effectively with the congregation.

August, 2009

1. Preparation for Annual Planning Event: Staff, officers and program chairs review the Strategic Plan, evaluate the current and previous year's programming and prepare any relevant recommendations for the consideration of those participating in the Annual Planning Event ("Which programs and events are thriving?" "Which programs are declining and should either be renewed or terminated?", etc.).

2. A "small groups task force" meets to consider what small groups need to be added in the coming years. There are currently 17 small groups for adults in which participation is emotionally significant (see Contextual Analysis for listing). This is a sufficient number of small groups for the number of participating members (the "rule of thumb" is 7 per 100 participating adult members), but the composition and themes of these small groups need to be reviewed with the needs of both members and non-members in mind. Also, there needs to be generational balance in the small group offerings (some for each of the various adult age groups).

As small groups are further developed over the next several years, possible themes/subjects could include: Bible studies (including short term studies on themes such as "Survey of the Old and New Testaments," "The Life and Times of Jesus," etc.; forms and styles of worship (helping people better understand the elements of various styles); Church history; Christian ethics; Centering Prayer; Care groups built around grief, single parenting, life transitions, caring for aging parents; other themes around Scripture, the spiritual disciplines, life issues, etc.; other groups will focus on praying together. Some groups will be aimed at specific generations, others will be aimed at multiple generations.

The task force will work three years out, remembering that not every needed or desired small group can be added immediately without exceeding capacity. But a three year plan for development of small groups will provide intentionality. This task force will meet annually to review the plans already made and to extend the plans to the third year.

This plan for small group development will be shared with the APE (Annual Planning Event) in November and may be altered or enhanced in conversation with APE planners.

September, 2009

1. A "Communication Task Force" begins meeting bi-monthly to address the following: a) the need for marketing and visibility (working with other committees as appropriate and needed): appoint and support a publicity person to communicate weekly with the newspaper; develop flyers/door hangers; possible direct mailings to the zip code, etc. (these plans may be partially developed at APE); consider possibilities for greater visibility in the city and neighborhood. b) development of a common "look" to published and posted materials as a means of "branding"; c) input from those who do not use electronic media to determine and meet their communication needs; d) prominent display of website address on street front and in all communication.

2. The pastor and the trustees of the permanent fund develop a year-round emphasis on the stewardship of accumulated resources (S.O.A.R.) in order to begin to significantly build the congregation's invested funds during the period from 2009 thru

2016. The trustees will utilize the services of the Christian Church Foundation in developing this emphasis and the funds.

October, 2009

1. The staff and key lay leadership plan a monthly 90 minute “visitors orientation seminar” (with refreshments) to provide an overview of Disciples history and beliefs and the history and current offerings of First Christian Church. This event should provide interaction between visitors/prospective members and 3 or 4 key lay leaders as well as the pastoral staff. The seminars will be offered monthly. There may be months in which there are no or only one or two visitors who attend this seminar, but offering it regularly will begin to build attendance as new people feel welcomed.

2. The staff and key leadership begin offering a continuous membership class that repeats in content after every six sessions (so people can begin and end when they wish/are able). This curriculum should offer an overview of the history of the Disciples and First Christian Church, orient to all of the worship services (with particular attention paid to the origin and meaning of the structure and language of each service, since traditional and/or contemporary worship forms may be new to some or all participants), address the other offerings of FCC and the expectations of members (Christian growth, worship attendance, mission engagement based on their gifts, stewardship, etc.).

3. The Pastor and the Elders develop ways to accomplish the following on an ongoing basis: (1) helping FCC continue to become a “safe” place/community without making the most “different” among us feel uncomfortable (this may require workshops or other approaches that address both the knowledge and skills of members in regard to diversity and that address the “ethos” or atmosphere of FCC); (2) keep the mission statement “front and center” with regular affirmation of it in worship and make it a part of FCC’s discipling efforts.

4. During this month, the stewardship campaign will be built around the Future Story and will encourage members to increase their giving by 1% of their income.

5. The pastor and the elders select 12 persons to participate in the “Fellowship of Twelve” lay leadership development group. This is a year-long program that meets once per month and is led by the pastor and elders who have been prepared for the purpose. The “Fellowship of Twelve” begins meeting in January.

November, 2009

1. Annual Planning Event (APE): This will help provide better program coordination and lessen dependence upon monthly program committee meetings during the course of the year, thus releasing some time and energy for other projects. It will also help develop wider ownership of the church’s program by the congregation. This event may result in some expansion of programming, yet care must be taken to plan within capacity while also involving new members and longer term members in the planning and execution of the programs. This will help alleviate burn-out among those who have “always been the workers” and will intentionally seek to involve more people. The primary focus of the APE will be the 2010 program year, though some planning may be

done for the remainder of 2009 as needed and some attention will be given to 2011 and 2012.

The Vision Team asks that within the 2010 program year: (1) Worship Division maintain various prayer group opportunities: prayer chain, centering prayer, Walk to Emmaus, etc. (2) Evangelism Division develop a way to help members learn how to share their faith stories, including their experience as Disciples of Christ. (3) Nurture Division develop a program that provides mentors for old and new members as Disciples and as members of FCC and that teaches people how to be such mentors. (4) Christian Education Division utilize Ron Diamond to continue a program that identifies spiritual gifts and equips people to utilize them. (5) Mission Division develop an “outreach study group” that will equip persons for all kinds of outreach; develop a pastoral care program that engages adults, youth and children in calling in nursing homes; develop a joint team with United Christian Church to explore the establishment of a West Montgomery Ministry Campus next to E. D. Nixon Elementary School; continue team visits to other congregations to encourage develop of the “Love Your Neighbor Outreach center”; (6) Stewardship Division develop a list of the skills possessed by the individual members of the church so that these may be shared with members who have need of assistance from those with such skills and to encourage members to offer and use their skills on behalf of the congregation as a whole. Note that such a skills list will best be obtained by individual interviews with members rather than expecting people to fill out forms themselves (this is because it feels arrogant to identify your own skills unless you are asked by an interviewer). These personal interviews will be a significant personal contact with members and thus have value beyond even identifying and cataloging skills. These lists will need to be updated through interviews with new members and participants.

2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

December, 2009

2010

Overall Goals for 2010:

1. To increase average worship attendance to 155 (15 persons over the 2009 average of 140) and to add 30 *net* new members (by baptism and/or transfer) to boost participating membership from 220 to 250.
2. To add 3 adult small groups *net* in which participation is emotionally significant in order to continue growth in membership and worship attendance (from 17 groups minimum in 2009 to 20 minimum in 2010).
3. To begin a lay leadership development program (The Fellowship of 12), which will prepare people to lead effectively at FCC in various roles in the life of the church.
4. To begin annual mid-year “consultations” in various areas of the church’s life to extend planning to three years and to provide working frameworks for the APE planning. (It is anticipated that the bulk of the planning will eventually be carried by these mid-year consultations together with APE, thus making monthly division meetings

less and less needed in most program areas. Consultations provide a way for those who have responsibility for various areas of the church's life (together with others who have interest) to have extended time to think in "big picture" long-range terms. Such consultations will ordinarily last 4-6 hours as needed. The results will be fed into the following November's APE event.

5. To review the congregation's governance to see if streamlining is possible in order to consume less time and energy in governance and to make more time available for people to engage in nurture and mission.

6. To continue the "pastoral resident" program.

7. To begin serving meals to individuals with HIV/AIDS.

January, 2010

1. A task force composed of ministers, officers and three at large members of the congregation review the organizational and governance structures of the congregation with an eye to streamlining and bringing greater effectiveness. The recommendations of this group will be taken to the board for consideration. However, it is recommended that *the by-laws be suspended for a time* as we live into any new system *rather than beginning by revising the by-laws*.

2. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration in February of what has been achieved to date.

3. Celebration in public worship and otherwise of what has been accomplished in the past six months through the strategic plan.

4. The "Fellowship of Twelve" lay leader development group begins meeting and meets monthly throughout the year.

5. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

February, 2010

1. Develop and mass mail a flyer advertising the church and its Lenten offerings. Direct mail is one of the most efficient methods of advertizing. It not only alerts potential participants to the presence and nature of the congregation, but also develops a sense of pride in those members who receive the mailings in the targeted neighborhoods. It may take two years for direct mailings to bring results.

March, 2010

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

April, 2010

May, 2010

1. A flyer is prepared to advertise Vacation Bible School for all ages to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

June, 2010

1. A “Worship Consultation” is convened to review the current worship offerings and any needed change, expansion, timing, etc. The consultation would include the ministerial staff, the music staff, those serving as the Worship Division, and 3 or 4 additional lay people chosen to be representative of the diversity of the congregation generationally, etc. This group will devise a three year plan for (a) current worship services to be enhanced and (b) any additional services to be offered in a way that does not “cannibalize” current services but addresses identified needs as effectively as possible. New services of worship would likely be different in character from the present services: there might be a kind of contemplative service (such as Taize) – depending on perceived needs of the target audience. Alternative services may be offered at a time other than Sunday. This plan will be reviewed by a similarly comprised group each June or July, extending and maintaining a three year plan. These plans will be shared with the APE (Annual Planning Event) in September so those interested in helping implement the new services can be identified from among APE participants.

2. A “Mission Consultation” is convened to review the current mission involvements of FCC locally and globally and to develop a three year plan for mission work locally and beyond. This consultation would address all aspects including contacting other Disciples congregations in the area to develop ways to work together in local mission and in domestic and/or overseas mission trips this year and beyond. The consultation would include the ministerial staff, those serving on the Mission Division and 3 or 4 additional lay people chosen to be representative of the diversity of the congregation. A three year plan will be developed and reviewed annually by a similarly comprised group each June or July, extending and maintaining a three year plan. These plans will be shared with the APE (Annual Planning Event) in November and may be altered or enhanced in conversation with APE planners.

Among the programs that it is hoped will be developed is the serving of meals to people with HIV/Aids.

3. An “Evangelism Consultation” is convened with members of the Evangelism Division plus 3 or 4 additional lay people chosen to be representative of the diversity of the congregation. A three year plan will be developed and reviewed annually by a similarly comprised group each June or July, extending and maintaining a three year plan. These plans will be shared with the APE (Annual Planning Event) in November and may be altered or enhanced in conversation with APE planners. This consultation will consider not only how to draw new people into FCC but also how to integrate them into the life of the congregation.

4. A “Fellowship Consultation” is convened with 6-8 members representative of the various adult age groups to explore possible ways to enhance fellowship among the members. Recommendations may be made to the Annual Planning Event.

5. A “Children’s Christian Education Consultation” is convened to review the current offerings in children’s educational ministries and to develop plans for expansion of this area of programming. The consultation will include appropriate staff, those serving on the Christian Education Division and 3 or 4 additional lay people chosen to be representative of the diversity of the congregation. A three year plan will be developed and reviewed annually by a similarly comprised group each June or July, extending and maintaining a three year plan. These plans will be shared with the APE (Annual Planning Event) in November and may be altered or enhanced in conversation with APE planners.

6. A “Youth and Young Adult Consultation” will be convened and led by the “pastoral resident” to develop programming and ministry for youth and young adults in the years ahead. 6-8 youth and young adults will be asked to serve in this consultation, in addition to the chair of Christian education and 2-3 others the “pastoral resident” and pastor may deem helpful. These plans will be shared with the Annual Planning Event (APE) in November for coordination. Programming will provide for mutual support and fun and may include seminars for the young adults featuring themes such as parenting, sexuality, finances, and marriage, being Christian and single, etc. The community wedding ministry may also be enhanced.

July

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
2. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration of what has been achieved to date.

August

1. Preparation for Annual Planning Event: Staff, officers and program chairs review the Strategic Plan, evaluate the current and previous year’s programming and prepare any relevant recommendations for the consideration of those participating in the Annual Planning Event.

2. A “small groups task force” meets to consider what small groups need to be added in the coming years. The task force will work three years out, remembering that not every needed or desired small group can be added immediately without exceeding capacity. But a three year plan for development of small groups will provide intentionality. This task force will meet annually to review the plans already made and to extend to the third year.

This plan for small group development will be shared with the APE (Annual Planning Event) in November and may be altered or enhanced in conversation with APE planners. (See August 2009, #2, for fuller statement of purpose for this group.)

September

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

October

1. The pastor and the elders select 12 persons to participate in the “Fellowship of Twelve” lay leadership development group which begins meeting in January.
2. During this month, the stewardship campaign will be built around the Future Story and will encourage members to increase their giving by 1% of their income.

November

1. The Annual Planning Event.
2. A flyer is developed to advertise Advent worship opportunities to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.
3. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

December

2011

Overall Goals for 2011:

1. To increase average worship attendance to 175 (20 persons over the 2010 average of 155) and to add 30 *net* new members (by baptism and/or transfer) to boost participating membership from 250 to 280.
2. To add 3 adult small groups *net* in which participation is emotionally significant in order to continue growth in membership and worship attendance (from 20 groups minimum in 2010 to 23 minimum in 2011).
3. To continue the “pastoral resident” program.
4. To add a half-time minister (this person may be an associate or a specific program minister as need is determined, they may be licensed or ordained).

January

1. The “Fellowship of Twelve” lay leader development group begins meeting and meets monthly throughout the year.
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
3. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration of what has been achieved to date.
4. The pastor and elders begin developing a recommendation (including process, job description, and financing) to be considered by the board regarding the adding of a half-time minister during 2011.

February

1. Develop and mass mail a flyer advertising the church and its Lenten offerings.

March

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

April**May**

1. A flyer is prepared to advertise Vacation Bible School for all ages to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

June

1. Annual mid-year “consultations” in various areas of the church’s life to extend planning to the next three years and to provide working frameworks for the APE planning. Consultations provide a way for those who have responsibility for various areas of the church’s life (together with others who have interest) to have extended time to think in “big picture” long-range terms. Such consultations will ordinarily last 4-6 hours as needed. The results will be fed into the following APE event.

(See June, 2010 for more information about these program consultations.)

July

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
2. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration of what has been achieved to date.

August

1. Preparation for Annual Planning Event: Staff, officers and program chairs review the Strategic Plan, evaluate the current and previous year’s programming and prepare any relevant recommendations for the consideration of those participating in the Annual Planning Event.

2. A “small groups task force” meets to consider what small groups need to be added in the coming years. The task force will work three years out, remembering that not every needed or desired small group can be added immediately without exceeding capacity. But a three year plan for development of small groups will provide intentionality. This task force will meet annually to review the plans already made and to extend to the third year.

This plan for small group development will be shared with the APE (Annual Planning Event) in November and may be altered or enhanced in conversation with APE planners. (See August 2009, #2, for fuller statement of purpose for this group.)

September

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

October

1. The pastor and the elders select 12 persons to participate in the “Fellowship of Twelve” lay leadership development group which begins meeting in January.
2. During this month, the stewardship campaign will be built around the Future Story and will encourage members to increase their giving by 1% of their income.

November

1. Annual Planning Event (APE).
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
3. A flyer is developed to advertise Advent worship opportunities to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.

December**2012****Overall Goals for 2012:**

1. To increase average worship attendance to 200 (25 persons over the 2011 average of 175) and to add 40 *net* new members (by baptism and/or transfer) to boost participating membership from 280 to 320.
2. To add 2 adult small groups *net* in which participation is emotionally significant in order to continue growth in membership and worship attendance (from 23 groups minimum in 2011 to 25 minimum in 2012).
3. To continue the “pastoral resident” program.
4. To conduct a feasibility study with Disciples Church Extension for new construction that will begin in late 2013.

January

1. The “Fellowship of Twelve” lay leader development group begins meeting and meets monthly throughout the year.
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
3. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration of what has been achieved to date.

February

1. Develop and mass mail a flyer advertising the church and its Lenten offerings.

March

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

April

May

1. A flyer is prepared to advertise Vacation Bible School for all ages to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

June

1. Annual mid-year “consultations” in various areas of the church’s life to extend planning to the next three years and to provide working frameworks for the APE planning. Consultations provide a way for those who have responsibility for various areas of the church’s life (together with others who have interest) to have extended time to think in “big picture” long-range terms. Such consultations will ordinarily last 4-6 hours as needed. The results will be fed into the following APE event.

(See June, 2010 for more information about these program consultations.)

July

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
2. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration of what has been achieved to date.

August

1. Preparation for Annual Planning Event: Staff, officers and program chairs review the Strategic Plan, evaluate the current and previous year’s programming and prepare any relevant recommendations for the consideration of those participating in the Annual Planning Event.

2. A “small groups task force” meets to consider what small groups need to be added in the coming years. The task force will work three years out, remembering that not every needed or desired small group can be added immediately without exceeding capacity. But a three year plan for development of small groups will provide intentionality. This task force will meet annually to review the plans already made and to extend to the third year.

This plan for small group development will be shared with the APE (Annual Planning Event) in November and may be altered or enhanced in conversation with APE planners. (See August 2009, #2, for fuller statement of purpose for this group.)

September

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

October

1. The pastor and the elders select 12 persons to participate in the “Fellowship of Twelve” lay leadership development group which begins meeting in January.
2. During this month, the stewardship campaign will be built around the Future Story and will encourage members to increase their giving by 1% of their income.

November

1. Annual Planning Event (APE).
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
3. A flyer is developed to advertise Advent worship opportunities to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.

December

2013

Overall Goals for 2013:

1. To increase average worship attendance to 230 (30 persons over the 2012 average of 200) and to add 50 *net* new members (by baptism and/or transfer) to boost participating membership from 320 to 370.
2. To add 2 adult small groups *net* in which participation is emotionally significant in order to continue growth in membership and worship attendance (from 25 groups minimum in 2012 to 27 minimum in 2013).
3. To continue the “pastoral resident” program.
4. To conduct a capital campaign for renovation and expansion of facilities.
5. To begin renovation of current buildings and construction of new facilities that will provide adequate space for: Christian education, preschool for 60 children, elder day care, sanctuary, choir room, etc. To be completed by Easter 2014.
6. To add a half-time minister (this person may be an associate or a specific program minister as need is determined, they may be licensed or ordained; this person may be half-time or the current half time person may be increased to full-time as the need is determined).

January

1. The “Fellowship of Twelve” lay leader development group begins meeting and meets monthly throughout the year.
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
3. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration of what has been achieved to date.
4. The pastor and elders begin developing a recommendation (including process, job description, and financing) to be considered by the board regarding the adding of a half-time minister during 2013.

February

1. Develop and mass mail a flyer advertising the church and its Lenten offerings.

March

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

April**May**

1. A flyer is prepared to advertise Vacation Bible School for all ages to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

June

1. Annual mid-year “consultations” in various areas of the church’s life to extend planning to the next three years and to provide working frameworks for the APE planning. Consultations provide a way for those who have responsibility for various areas of the church’s life (together with others who have interest) to have extended time to think in “big picture” long-range terms. Such consultations will ordinarily last 4-6 hours as needed. The results will be fed into the following APE event.

(See June, 2010 for more information about these program consultations.)

July

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
2. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration of what has been achieved to date.

August

1. Preparation for Annual Planning Event: Staff, officers and program chairs review the Strategic Plan, evaluate the current and previous year's programming and prepare any relevant recommendations for the consideration of those participating in the Annual Planning Event.

2. A "small groups task force" meets to consider what small groups need to be added in the coming years. The task force will work three years out, remembering that not every needed or desired small group can be added immediately without exceeding capacity. But a three year plan for development of small groups will provide intentionality. This task force will meet annually to review the plans already made and to extend to the third year.

This plan for small group development will be shared with the APE (Annual Planning Event) in November and may be altered or enhanced in conversation with APE planners. (See August 2009, #2, for fuller statement of purpose for this group.)

September

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

October

1. The pastor and the elders select 12 persons to participate in the "Fellowship of Twelve" lay leadership development group which begins meeting in January.

2. During this month, the stewardship campaign will be built around the Future Story and will encourage members to increase their giving by 1% of their income.

November

1. Annual Planning Event (APE).

2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

3. A flyer is developed to advertise Advent worship opportunities to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.

December

2014

Overall Goals for 2014:

1. To increase average worship attendance to 260 (30 persons over the 2013 average of 230) and to add 50 *net* new members (by baptism and/or transfer) to boost participating membership from 370 to 420.

2. To add 3 adult small groups *net* in which participation is emotionally significant in order to continue growth in membership and worship attendance (from 27 groups minimum in 2013 to 30 minimum in 2014).

3. To continue the “pastoral resident” program.

January

1. The “Fellowship of Twelve” lay leader development group begins meeting and meets monthly throughout the year.

2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

3. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration of what has been achieved to date.

February

1. Develop and mass mail a flyer advertising the church and its Lenten offerings.

March

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

April

May

1. A flyer is prepared to advertise Vacation Bible School for all ages to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.

2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

June

1. Annual mid-year “consultations” in various areas of the church’s life to extend planning to the next three years and to provide working frameworks for the APE planning. Consultations provide a way for those who have responsibility for various areas of the church’s life (together with others who have interest) to have extended time to think in “big picture” long-range terms. Such consultations will ordinarily last 4-6 hours as needed. The results will be fed into the following APE event.

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September

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

October

1. The pastor and the elders select 12 persons to participate in the "Fellowship of Twelve" lay leadership development group which begins meeting in January.

2. During this month, the stewardship campaign will be built around the Future Story and will encourage members to increase their giving by 1% of their income.

November

1. Annual Planning Event (APE).

2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

3. A flyer is developed to advertise Advent worship opportunities to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.

December

2015

Overall Goals for 2015:

1. To increase average worship attendance to 290 (30 persons over the 2014 average of 260) and to add 60 *net* new members (by baptism and/or transfer) to boost participating membership from 420 to 480.

2. To add 3 adult small groups *net* in which participation is emotionally significant in order to continue growth in membership and worship attendance (from 30 groups minimum in 2014 to 33 minimum in 2015).

3. To continue the “pastoral resident” program.

4. To add a half-time minister (this person may be an associate or a specific program minister as need is determined, they may be licensed or ordained; this person may be half-time or a current half time minister may be increased to full-time as the need is determined).

January

1. The “Fellowship of Twelve” lay leader development group begins meeting and meets monthly throughout the year.

2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

3. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration of what has been achieved to date.

4. The pastor and elders begin developing a recommendation (including process, job description, and financing) to be considered by the board regarding the adding of a half-time minister during 2015.

February

1. Develop and mass mail a flyer advertising the church and its Lenten offerings.

March

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

April

May

1. A flyer is prepared to advertise Vacation Bible School for all ages to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.

2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

June

1. Annual mid-year “consultations” in various areas of the church’s life to extend planning to the next three years and to provide working frameworks for the APE planning. Consultations provide a way for those who have responsibility for various areas of the church’s life (together with others who have interest) to have extended time to think in “big picture” long-range terms. Such consultations will ordinarily last 4-6 hours as needed. The results will be fed into the following APE event.

(See June, 2010 for more information about these program consultations.)

July

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
2. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration of what has been achieved to date.

August

1. Preparation for Annual Planning Event: Staff, officers and program chairs review the Strategic Plan, evaluate the current and previous year's programming and prepare any relevant recommendations for the consideration of those participating in the Annual Planning Event.
2. A "small groups task force" meets to consider what small groups need to be added in the coming years. The task force will work three years out, remembering that not every needed or desired small group can be added immediately without exceeding capacity. But a three year plan for development of small groups will provide intentionality. This task force will meet annually to review the plans already made and to extend to the third year.

This plan for small group development will be shared with the APE (Annual Planning Event) in November and may be altered or enhanced in conversation with APE planners. (See August 2009, #2, for fuller statement of purpose for this group.)

September

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

October

1. The pastor and the elders select 12 persons to participate in the "Fellowship of Twelve" lay leadership development group which begins meeting in January.
2. During this month, the stewardship campaign will be built around the Future Story and will encourage members to increase their giving by 1% of their income.

November

1. Annual Planning Event (APE).
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
3. A flyer is developed to advertise Advent worship opportunities to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.

December

2016

Overall Goals for 2016:

1. To increase average worship attendance to 320 (30 persons over the 2015 average of 290) and to add 70 *net* new members (by baptism and/or transfer) to boost participating membership from 480 to 550.
2. To add 5 adult small groups *net* in which participation is emotionally significant in order to continue growth in membership and worship attendance (from 33 groups minimum in 2015 to 38 minimum in 2016).
3. To continue the “pastoral resident” program.
4. To conduct a feasibility study (in partnership with the Region and the New Congregation Establishment program of Church Extension) to for a new Disciples congregation in the Rivers region north of Montgomery.

January

1. The “Fellowship of Twelve” lay leader development group begins meeting and meets monthly throughout the year.
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.
3. The Visioning Team meets to review the Strategic Plan to determine any needed amendments and to plan for public celebration of what has been achieved to date.
4. A small task force is created to meet with representatives of the region to discuss feasibility, location and process of development of a new Disciples congregation in the Rivers region.

February

1. Develop and mass mail a flyer advertising the church and its Lenten offerings.

March

1. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

April

May

1. A flyer is prepared to advertise Vacation Bible School for all ages to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

June

1. Annual mid-year “consultations” in various areas of the church’s life to extend planning to the next three years and to provide working frameworks for the APE planning. Consultations provide a way for those who have responsibility for various areas of the church’s life (together with others who have interest) to have extended time to think in “big picture” long-range terms. Such consultations will ordinary last 4-6 hours as needed. The results will be fed into the following APE event.

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November

1. Annual Planning Event (APE).
2. The Communications Task Force bi-monthly meeting.

3. A flyer is developed to advertise Advent worship opportunities to be bulk mailed to the surrounding neighborhoods.

December

Some questions:

1. Do new want to build in annual or biannual domestic and foreign mission trips (alternately) to be undertaken by FCC. If so, would you also want to invite non-church members (and perhaps Disciples of other congregations) to participate?

Domestic mission trips might be near Montgomery or somewhere else in the country. Foreign mission trips would be coordinated with the denomination. Non-members (including prospective members) would be welcome to take part in these trips (this would be very attractive to some in the community who might thus be drawn into association and membership). Preparation would need to be provided in each case for participants so that individuals learn about the deeper social-economic, political, cultural and theological issues inherent in each domestic or foreign mission setting.

Some Assumptions and notes:

1. More small groups are added with each Annual Planning Event. It may be best to over-plan a bit as two out of three will take hold and continue, while one of three will likely be unsuccessful or will succeed but end after running their course in a year or a few years.

2. Ministerial staff positions are added occasionally. The assumption is that growth requires additional staff both to maintain and to increase. Adding a one-half staff person could mean increasing a one-half-time person to full-time or adding any such combination as seems most helpful and appropriate. These could be added by thirds or fourths rather than halves, depending upon need and financial capacity.

3. As the plan unfolds, it may be found that the designated months for specific events are not the best. As experience is gained, the dates of specific events in the plan may be changed to reflect optimum times, rates of change, etc. (This is one reason there are two designated times during the year for the Visioning Team to review the plan and how things are going – so that adjustments may be made as needed.)

4. The congregation will regularly pray for what it needs in the way of visitors, new members, leadership, and other resources. (God *does* answer prayer!)

5. Many of the year to year details of these plans will be developed in the yearly APE (Annual Planning Event). This is to say that this document is a *strategic plan* not a *program plan*.

6. The Stewardship Campaign may be planned during the Annual Planning Event. In any case, it should be planned by those interested in stewardship and not by those charged with maintaining a balanced budget (those charged with maintaining a balanced budget will nearly always look for ways to cut the budget rather than increasing the giving, since most of us feel more comfortable with cutting budgets than we do asking people to increase their giving).

7. If a financial plan for the future is developed, I suggest including the following assumptions: a) build in 5% inflation annually; b) assume new members will begin by contributing 50% of what long term members are contributing, but will increase their giving by about 10% (of their previous pledge) a year so that they will become “average” givers by the fifth year; c) assume that the outreach budget needs to grow at the same rate as the operating budget.

8. Though we usually think of “capital” campaigns as being for “bricks and mortar”, a capital campaign can also be for the purpose of funding new programs and ministries. It may at some point be necessary to conduct a capital campaign to fund the new programs, staff, etc. needed to make the jump to the realization of this strategic plan.

Other strategic ideas to keep before planners:

1. Up-grading of technologies periodically.
2. Co-mentoring of young and old by each other.
3. Consider holding some small groups in homes rather than all small groups meeting in the building. This may make it easier for members to invite new people to small groups.

Other programs/ideas to consider:

1. Establish an “In-house Book Store” to sell books regarding the Disciples, church history, good Bible study resources, etc.
2. Hold a “Film Festival” that invites provocative discussion and reflection on movies.
3. An occasional off-site worship service open to the community.
4. Billboard advertising (highly efficient).

Appendix A:

Future Story—First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Vision: something that most people have. Vision for the future: an ability that most people do not have, unless we purposely go to God in prayer for direction, God's plan, God's vision for us. That is exactly what the congregation of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) did back in 2008. It is now 2015, and my how we have grown in service to God since we began our Strategic Spiritual Journey. During that summer of 2008, with members divided into 23 prayer triads, we studied, talked and prayed for God to give us a vision for our church for the next seven years. During those 100 days, many over-arching themes were realized. But the one that presented itself time and again and spoke to our hearts was the importance of FCC's Mission Statement. We felt, without a doubt, that God was directing us to grow as a mission-driven congregation, continuing to demonstrate and proclaim God's joyful, unconditional love in an inclusive environment that provides spiritual growth and nurture for God's children.

Many prayer triads felt that God was directing us to teach the core values of that Mission Statement to current and future members alike. As encouraged by the triads, we provided opportunities to learn how to share our individual faith stories, as well as our church's story. We have workshops that focus on what it means to be a truly diverse faith community while finding commonality in Christ among all our differences. Our congregation is growing in relationship with God through our prayer and Bible study groups. And we have built a spiritual mentoring program that trains those who wish to serve as mentors to new members and believers. We were also strongly encouraged to continue the Spiritual Gifts classes as a means of equipping our congregation to identify and utilize their spiritual gifts in the life and ministry of our congregation.

First Christian Church now has 550 members and an average worship attendance of 320. We are receiving 180 stewardship pledges yearly. A photo of new members along with their biographies is printed in the monthly Messenger, and a directory of each member's occupation, skills and spiritual gifts is available. During that remarkable summer at the beginning of our Strategic Spiritual Journey, the prayer groups shared with us their desire to reach out to others (especially to children) and encompass them with God's love and care. We now partner with other congregations and faith groups to reach out and help the most vulnerable and forgotten people in Montgomery. Our Food ministry has evolved into the Love Your Neighbor Outreach Center, which provides food, clothing and other services to over 200 families each month. FCC has been instrumental in assisting other churches and communities start similar outreach ministries in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region. We also formed an Agape Outreach Study Group that not only educates our congregation, but also helps provide interfaith volunteers with the proper tools to lovingly serve the HIV/AIDS community. We are now regarded as the leading source in the Greater Montgomery Area for educating spiritually and Agape-led volunteers not only for the HIV/AIDS community, but also for the neglected and under-served in our city. We are currently contemplating the feasibility of initiating a bi-monthly Agape meal for those with HIV/AIDS.

Three years ago, we completed a major building and renovation project to expand our ministries to children and youth on our main campus. We renovated and expanded our old facilities and added new space to accommodate our growing congregation's ministry and worship needs. The buildings now provide adequate space for Christian Education for all ages, an after-school program and a weekday preschool that accommodates 60 children. In addition, we have recently added an elder adult daycare program. These wonderful seniors, many without families, have the opportunity to interact with our children. It is a mutual blessing to both generations! Their smiles, laughs and "thank you's" are music to our ears, and a symphony to God.

A larger sanctuary was completed for our growing congregation. Attention was given to aesthetics as well as appropriate sound, lighting and media requirements to make the 350-seat worship space both inviting and functional. Our nursery and choir room were enlarged and the former youth wing was renovated to house a Spiritual Life Center. This includes a room for Yoga classes, a state-of-the-art prayer chapel (with computer-linked prayer stations), and a reading room—expanded library.

The completion of our building/renovation project was a mission of love. We are definitely being led by God's plan for FCC to provide space to live out our mission to love and nurture God's children. We have willing and faithful hearts, so we began that journey while we placed our trust in God's ability to provide the necessary resources.

Romans 8:28 tells us that "all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose." We have been awed and blessed by God's plan to be established by us—the family of Christians working together at First Christian Church. We are providing a "safe" place for people to worship the Lord—a place where people who may not feel welcomed in other congregations can come and feel at home from the minute they walk through the doors. This shared diversity is making us a stronger community of faith, willing to continue to reach out and share God's love.

We have established our West Montgomery Ministry Campus in partnership with United Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This building houses the Love Your Neighbor After School Program at United and benefits the children who attend E.D. Nixon Elementary School, which is next door to United. State-of-the-art computer stations, tutors and recreation are provided by paid staff and volunteers from both congregations. In addition, we continue to support United's food ministry to families in need who live around the church. This is an ongoing witness of our Disciples' commitment to reconciliation and justice ministry.

As you know, several years ago FCC's Permanent Fund was established to receive bequests to be used to fund mission. What a blessing this has become! To date, we are three-quarters of the way to achieving our goal of raising \$1,000,000 for the Permanent Fund, and are receiving \$40,000 a year for outreach ministry as we continue to grow the fund! How did we do it with just \$30,000 in initial investment in 2008? We shared a God-sized vision with faithful members, who, like Moses, knew that while they may not get to see it in their lifetimes, believed that God could do amazing things with the gifts they shared. You just never know who might wish to leave a bequest to our wonderful church! Think of all the possibilities for future mission this could provide! Truly, "with God all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26)

After the presentation of the Future Story, our church family did not linger or drag our feet to begin transforming into immediate changes or programs that didn't

require extra funding. The need for more small groups within the church came through loud and clear from our prayer triads. A young women's group was formed to meet monthly, as was a support group for those dealing with and caring for elderly parents; a monthly intergenerational group was formed with our children and members of the Keystone class. The children love to present these fabulous seniors with songs, skits and gifts of love. They share and learn so much from each other. A weekly soup and Bible study group was formed for seniors who live near FCC but have no family or few people with whom to interact. We reached out in love and said, "You are welcome here." And they came!

With the establishment of our Pastoral Resident program in 2009, we have been able to more fully live out our mission to meet the spiritual and practical needs of our members and those in our community who are seeking to be connected with God. Of course, Pastor Diamond has a great responsibility directing and leading these young pastors, but she and all the members of FCC are greatly blessed by their presence and devotion to God and to us. Our children and youth are especially thrilled with the time our Pastoral Resident is able to spend with them.

First Christian Church is a church of faith as has been demonstrated many, many times. So, as we are looking into the coming year, 2016, we are finalizing preparations to seed a new Disciples congregation in the Prattville-Millbrook area. Partnering with Church Extension, the Regional Church Development Committee and a Pastoral Advisory Team, we will commission a group from FCC to assist in nurturing this ministry with prayer and evangelistic fervor as we expand our mission and witness in the River Region.

In the New Testament, Paul wrote to the saints in Ephesus to live a life worthy of their calling. He reminded those Christians that God had given each one a different ability... "so that the body of Christ may be built up until they all reached unity in the faith...and become mature." By being humble, gentle, patient and "bearing one another in love," they would attain unity in the Body of Christ. May this also always be our goal: to reach out to others in love as the "Body of Christ."

Appendix B:

A CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

OF

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Disciples of Christ)

Montgomery, Alabama

Prepared in consultation with Richard L. Hamm
Church Consultant/Coach

April 9, 2008

This study is a starting place to help us together as a congregation to discern what God is calling us to be and do in the years ahead. This is a “living document” because it is still open to change, correction and refinement as the process of discernment unfolds.

A consultant/coach is an “outsider” and can thus be helpful in asking the right questions. However, it is ultimately the congregation and its leadership that must embrace the analysis, correctly discern God’s desires for this congregation, and take responsibility for the various recommendations and actions that will grow out of the process.

Jeremiah 29:11-13

“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart.”

Introduction

April, 2008

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is enjoying strength and growth in recent years. The leadership believes that the time is right to undertake a process of self-examination and discernment that will help the congregation build on its strengths and move into the future with renewed purpose and vision.

To assist in this, Dr. Richard L. Hamm has been enlisted to lead us in such a process of re-visioning. The process follows five basic steps:

- 1) Development of a “contextual analysis” that will help us understand who we are as a congregation and the community in which we are located.
- 2) A time of discernment in which the entire congregation will be invited to join in a program of prayerful dialogue about what God is calling us to become. This period of “discernment,” which is seeking to understand the will of God, is different from mere “democracy,” which seeks only to understand the will of the people. Eventually, the congregation will be asked to make a democratic decision regarding the resulting vision, but we want to make certain that God is a partner in the process of discerning a vision.
- 3) The development and affirmation (by the congregation) of a vision coming out of the time of dialogue and discernment.
- 4) The development and affirmation (by the congregation) of a strategic plan designed to help the congregation implement the vision which we have discerned and affirmed.
- 5) A period of coaching by Dr. Hamm, to help us stay on course and remain accountable to the vision.

The congregational meeting that has been called to discuss this document is part of the first step: the development of a contextual analysis of the congregation and community. The Visioning Committee and Dr. Hamm together gathered information about our history and our community and that has been drawn together in this document. The Visioning Committee believes this is a reasonably accurate account of where we stand today and how we got here. However, this document may still be altered as relevant information is developed or discovered by the committee and from the feedback of our church members.

Once the congregation affirms the “contextual analysis” as reasonably accurate, we will move to the second step: a time of discernment in which the entire congregation will be invited to participate. This step, which might be called “holy conversations,” will involve the formation of small groups of three members each that will be asked to meet 10 times for 100 minutes each time over the course of 100 days. These groups will be provided an agenda for each of their ten sessions and the insights and discernments discovered in these small groups of three will be gathered by the Visioning Committee for use in the next step. It is hoped that a large proportion of the congregation will choose to participate in these small groups.

Once the small groups have completed their 100 days of prayer, dialogue and discernment, we will move to the third step: the writing of a vision that reflects what was discerned in the small groups. This work will be done by the Visioning Committee and brought back to the congregation for critique and affirmation.

After the Vision is approved by the congregation, the Visioning Committee will lead in the development of a strategic plan to assist in the implementation of the vision. The congregation will be involved in the development of this plan and it, too, will ultimately require the affirmation of the congregation.

Finally, Dr. Hamm will remain in contact with us for at least six months to assist our staff and lay leaders in realizing the plan.

The Visioning Committee is pleased to bring the following “contextual analysis” forward for the congregation’s consideration to begin the process of re-visioning.

General Background

Alabama, admitted as a state in 1819, is named after the Alibamu Indian tribe, one of the tribes that occupied the area before white settlers began arriving and permanently settled beginning around 1800. Montgomery was named after a Revolutionary War general Richard Montgomery. It became capital of the state in 1846 and was the original capital of the Confederacy. In 1861, Jefferson Davis took the oath of office on the steps of the state capitol. The capital of the Confederacy was moved later that year to Richmond, Virginia in order to keep the fighting to the north. After the Civil War, Montgomery focused on textiles and agricultural technology. The Wright Brothers established the nation’s first civilian flying school in Montgomery and they frequented the city. The first recorded night flights were made in Montgomery. A repair and engine depot was established in 1918 for airplanes used for training in WWI. Maxwell AFB is the direct descendent of “Wright Field.”

The city has a rich Civil Rights history. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church from 1954-1960, during which time he became the leader

of the modern Civil Rights Movement. Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus on December 1, 1955 and the resulting Montgomery Bus Boycott led to the desegregation of the transit system in 1956. In March 1965, as part of the struggle to obtain voting rights for African-Americans, the Selma-to-Montgomery March was held with protection of National Guard troops.

In the 1990's, Montgomery public schools were the first to be wired for the Internet and connected with fiber optic cable. The downtown has undergone extensive revitalization. Hyundai Motor Company built its first U.S. factory in Montgomery. Because of the presence of state government, federal military facilities, and colleges, the economy of Montgomery generally stays very stable.

Although the city has a history of racial division, this is less true today and the divisions tend to be as much or more economic than racial. These tend to be expressed in the differences between East Montgomery and West Montgomery. Most of the development has been occurring in recent decades in East Montgomery, while West Montgomery remains rather stagnant and of lower socio-economic condition overall. The public schools are nearly 80% African American (though only 50% of the population is), while many white and other children who are well to do attend the many private schools in the area. Most churches in Montgomery are conservative to fundamentalist (various Baptist, Churches of Christ, and United Methodist being predominant) 11:00 AM Sunday morning continues to be the most segregated hour in the city.

Though there are tensions and contradictions between being the "Cradle of the Confederacy" and the "Birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement", Montgomery is a warm and friendly Southern city. Race relations have been improving. There are a number of cultural attractions including several colleges and universities, a large Fine Arts Museum, a city zoo, and the Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

Demographics

Montgomery proper	2000 - 201,568	2006 - 201,998		
Metropolitan Area	2000 - 469,268			
Study Area (36109, 36116, 36,117)				
	1990 – 81,290	2000 – 101,398	2008 – 109,375	2013 - 113626

Note: The information provided below is aggregate numbers for zip codes 36109, 36116 and 36117. As we develop a more defined "target area," we will obtain information for that specific area.

Life style diversity:

	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>US average</u>
Affluent	28%	15%
Mid Am. Family	24%	31%
Young & Coming	20%	15%
Rural	2%	13%

Senior life	5%	7%
Ethnic & Urban Diversity	21%	18%

Race & Ethnicity

	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>US average</u>
Anglo	52%	66%
Af-Am	43%	12%
Hispanic	2%	15%
Asian	2%	4%
Other	1%	3%

Generations

	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>US average</u>
Gen Z (0-8)	10%	9%
Millenials (9-26)	28%	29%
Survivors 27-43	30%	29%
Boomers (43-62)	22%	21%
Silents (63-78)	9%	10%
Builders (79 up)	2%	2%

Marital Status

	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>US average</u>
Single (never mar)	27%	27%
Div or Widow	17%	16%
Married	56%	57%

With Children

	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>US average</u>
Single mothers	30%	23%
Single fathers	5%	7%
Married couples	65%	69%

Education (over 25)

	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>US average</u>
< High School	11%	20%
High School	22%	29%
Some College	31%	27%
College grad	22%	16%
Post-grad	13%	9%

Below Poverty Level	11%	13%
Average Age	36.6 years	37.3 years
Average HH Income	\$65,652	\$66,670

Faith Involvement

	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>US average</u>
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Not involved	26%	35%
Somewhat	29%	30%
Strongly	44%	35%

Church Style Preferences

	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>US average</u>
Worship Trad	24%	20%
Music Trad	28%	24%
Architecture Trad	29%	27%
Worship Cont	26%	26%
Music Cont	18%	20%
Architecture Cont	14%	16%

Church Program Preferences

	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>US average</u>
Spiritual Dev	30%	25%
Personal Dev	8%	10%
Comm/Social Serv	18%	20%
Recreation	35%	38%

Religious Affiliation Preference

	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>US average</u>
No preference	10%	15%
Non-Historic Gps.	4%	8%
Historic Gps.	86%	77%

First Christian Church Demographics

Male	64	34%
Female	124	66%

The high percentage of females reflects the very large proportion of female children in this congregation, longevity of woman compared to men, the number of female heads of households, and a tendency for more women to be involved in church than men.

Age	f	m	total	%	S	M/C	D	W	Hisp	Af-Am	Asian	Iran	Eur
0-4	5	2	7	3.7%	7				1	-	-	-	6
5-9	7	0	8	4.2%	8				1	-	2	-	5
10-14	9	4	14	7.4%	14				1	-	-	-	13
15-19	9	3	12	6.3%	12	3	-	-	-	1	-	1	10
20-29	5	2	7	3.7%	4	13	-	-	1	-	-	1	6
30-39	13	4	17	9.0%	4	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	17
40-49	19	11	30	15.9%	3	26	1	-	-	-	-	-	30
50-59	15	7	22	11.6%	4	13	4	1	-	1	-	1	20
60-69	22	18	40	21.2%	2	32	3	3	-	4	1	-	35
70-79	5	5	10	5.3%	-	9	-	1	-	-	-	-	10

80-89	13	6	19	10.1%	-	10	-	9	-	-	-	-	19
90+	2	1	3	1.6%	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	3
			189										92%

The demographic chart (representing 189 participants) reveals a good balance of generations present and participating in church life. The “20 something” generation is small in presence, but this is typical nationally.

Education

	<u>Study Area</u>	<u>US average</u>	<u>FCC</u>
< High School	11%	20%	-
High School	22%	29%	19%
Some College	31%	27%	20%
College grad	22%	16%	28%
Post-Grad	13%	9%	34%

As this chart shows, the education level of the congregation is well above average both nationally and in the study area. This is an important clue about to whom the congregation will be most attractive.

Employment

Trades and Service Providers	23
Homemaker	13
Teachers/education/library services	12
Clerical	10
Health Care professionals	9
Military active/retired	8
Retail/sales	6
Financial services	5
Management	4
Attorney	3
Business	3
Non-profit	2
Retired	46

This sampling represents 188 participating members and indicates a broad range of occupations.

History of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)¹

First Christian began as Central Christian Church on March 29, 1908 with 22 members resulting from a revival. The first building was built at Jeff Davis Ave and Sayre St in 1914. In 1921, the congregation moved to the corner of High and South Perry Sts. The name was changed to First Christian Church in 1939. In 1988, the congregation moved to the Taylor Rd. site.

¹ Primary source is “Beginning, Striving, Serving, Continuing...” by Rickie Louise Brunner, 2004.

The congregation was assisted in its earliest days by the forerunners of the Region of Alabama-Northwest Florida and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada. They also received assistance from Broadway Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky. In its first decades, hospitality was extended to the congregation on many occasions by area churches of other denominations. FCC struggled during the Great Depression, but maintained its ministry, with the women working particularly hard to pay off the mortgage and local mission work continued in spite of, and in the face of, hard times for the church and the whole city and country. During and immediately after WWII, the congregation especially sought to minister to military families.

The church experienced strong growth during the years of 1950-1976 (as was typical of mainline congregations in that era). The neighborhood shifted to business as people began moving to the suburbs (typical of the post-War era) and so the congregation moved East to the current site, where the first building (multi-purpose) was dedicated in 1988.

The congregation has been strongly committed to mission, both locally and globally (through the Disciples Mission Fund, to which it tithes). Providing food to the poor has long been a local mission priority for the congregation, beginning downtown and continuing in the new location. In recent years, ministry to children and youth have become particularly important to the congregation (the "Rotation Model" is in use in Sunday School).

Pastors

1908	S.P. Spiegel	1955	William Lineback
1908-10	J.M. Hacker	1962	Lynn Matlack
1911	O.P. Spiegel	1977	James Ward
1925	D.M. Joiner	1983	Mike Welch
1930	Victor M. Hovis	1986	Lee Parker
1936	T. Boyd Clayton	1994	Tom Reeder
1942	Emmett Moore	1998	Brian S. Gerard
1950	William Campbell	2003	Susan Diamond

Susan Diamond became pastor in 2003 after a very successful ministry in Naples, Florida, and has been well received by the congregation.

Staffing

Ministers have tended to stay for full-term ministries of five years or more, with a number serving more than ten years. The support staff and music staff has been even more stable in recent years.

DISCIPLES YEARBOOK CHART: Statistics for 1995-2006

	Total Memb	Participating	Baptisms	Transfers	Worship Attend	SS Attend	CWF Memb	Local Ops	Local Cap	Total Outreach
1985	313	213	4	11	100	50	35	88,241	11,868	14,008
1986	300	203	1	14	94	52	36	96,553	15,776	14,134
1987	300	207	4	14	97	61	42	96,723	56,285	14,048
1988	308	214	0	12	103	58	45	99,702	104,200	15,196

1989	308	214	2	7	105	58	45	103,992	69,550	15,796
1990	309	215	1	13	102	56	45	106,374	89,000	15,964
1991	298	204	2	12	98	50	45	93,097	72,030	14,327
1992	225	175	1	9	85	42	45	103,629	61,552	16,145
1993	235	185	1	15	87	43	45	105,968	61,276	17,172
1994	250	200	3	19	110	46	45	107,970	34,703	19,492
1995	255	205	1	8	101	39	45	112,844	38,431	22,742
1996	257	207	0	7	101	43	47	124,590	15,925	18,409
1997	250	207	2	12	100	42	27	144,247	4,517	19,129
1998	177	146	5	10	105	52	-	133,885	35,329	24,473
1999	182	147	1	5	104	54	30	135,464	75,400	28,329
2000	157	147	4	12	105	48	20	135,946	125,207	31,141
2001	183	176	3	26	111	48	20	175,325	84,543	30,716
2002	190	178	5	7	113	43	20	165,360	58,098	24,535
2003	190	160	0	7	100	40	20	179,370	38,022	32,034
2004	216	176	8	21	107	45	-	201,001	60,137	26,955
2005	242	204	9	19	126	-	-	219,008	63,753	43,017
2006	256	216	3	14	140	-	-	250,446	54,823	44,416

The most reliable figures in the Yearbook are those for average worship attendance, baptisms, transfers, and contributions. Total membership and participating membership numbers are quite subjective, depending upon the definitions used by the pastor or other person reporting to the Yearbook. The Yearbook, unfortunately, stopped asking for the number of members in women's groups and Sunday School attendance as of 2004.

Based upon average worship attendance, the participation at FCC has been quite steady for the last 20 years, showing a notable increase since Susan's arrival. In the last two years. In addition, the church has remained a strong contributor to outreach generally and to Disciples outreach in particular. Since 2004, and for the first time in 20 years, the congregation is adding enough new members to go beyond maintenance to growth.

Tenure of members

Year joined:	2002-2007:	108	57%
	1996-2001:	20	11%
	1986-1995:	22	12%
	Before 1986:	38	20%

These statistics indicate that more than half the members responding to the survey have become professing members within the past 5 years. This is healthy. Also, however, because there are such significant differences between those generations born before and after 1975, there is likely to be some generational tensions in regard to priorities and methodologies.

Map

The map with pins where the various households of the church are located show:
a) Because there is an industrial area on the west side of the core of the city and rivers flowing along the north and south, new development has tended to move east from downtown.

- b) There are members of FCC who live over almost the entire metropolitan area and in several outlying towns including Wetumpka, Prattville, and the Pike Rd area.
- c) People unconsciously tend to drive toward a core city to go to church rather than away from a core city. Thus FCC is especially well located to draw people from the east.

Small Groups in Which Participation Is Emotionally Significant

For Adults

Adult Sunday School classes (4)	60
Disciples Men	22
Disciples Women groups (2)	22
Adult Choir	25
Emmaus Walk reunion groups (3)	15
Supper Club groups (4)	35
Wednesday evening study	20
Young Adult class & fellowship	12
17 groups serving approximately 211 total	

Children & Youth

Youth group	12
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There are a total of 17 small groups for adult participants (in which participation is emotionally significant). Since there is considerable overlap in these groups, we estimate perhaps 100 actual adult participants in such groups. The rule of thumb is 7 groups per 100 adult participating members. That would suggest a total of perhaps 11 for 216 participating. So there are enough small groups in number. The question is, are these small groups inviting to potential new members and others in the wider community? It is much easier to become involved in a small group and gradually become a part of the larger congregation than it is to start out meeting with the congregation as a whole.

Visioning Committee Descriptions of First Christian Church

The following represent the Visioning Committee's perceptions of the congregation, its strengths, weaknesses, etc.

Reasons why members first came to participate in First Christian Church, in order:

- 1) Pastor (6 votes)
- 1) Preaching (6 votes)
- 1) Love (6 votes)
- 2) Open minded spirit and welcoming to all (5 votes)
- 3) Diversity (socio-economic, political, racial, orientation) (4 votes)
- 3) Worship (4 votes)
- 4) Freedom of thought (4 votes)
- 5) Strong Wednesday night programs
- 6) Spirituality

Signs of renewal (as named by the Visioning Committee) include:

- 1) Annual spiritual gifts class

- 2) Increasing interest in the Walk to Emmaus
- 3) Thriving outreach to community with food ministry and Family Promise
- 4) Steadily increasing worship attendance
- 5) Steadily increasing budget over last five years
- 6) Increase in Sunday School participation
- 7) The commitment level of congregants – people are doing, not just consuming
- 8) An overall interest in spiritual growth and things spiritual
- 9) Increased attendance at Wednesday night Bible studies

Things this congregation does well

1. Strives to live out vision and mission statements. We welcome everyone.
2. Care provided to our shut-ins, hospitalized, bereaved, etc.
3. Elders very strong as spiritual leaders and in pastoral care and support.
4. Doing and supporting mission locally and beyond with time and money.

Things this congregation doesn't do so well

1. Reaching young adults
2. Sometimes do too much “busy” work.
3. We are outgrowing our facilities and tend to be a bit “messy”.

Signs of decline identified:

They couldn't come up with any!

Self-Image

We see ourselves as very friendly, welcoming and open to all who walk through the doors. We are a loving, caring, happy and grateful group. We see ourselves as a small congregation that is capable of doing big things.

Women's and Men's Groups

For women, there are two groups: one that is primarily women under 65 and one primarily of women over 65. These are primarily fellowship groups that do not participate in the Regional women's activities.

The Disciples Men group ranges from 45 to 80+ years and meets monthly for breakfast. The group does fund raising through Boston Butts, pancake breakfasts and chili supper to assist local projects. They also sponsor families at Christmas through the Sunshine Center.

Youth Group

The youth group is very active with lots of engagement in outreach locally and beyond: FCC puppet ministry; Christmas Shoebox drive; Ronald McDonald House; Week of Compassion; Family Promise; working with the younger children in nursery, VBS, Worship and Wonder, Sunday School; the Katrina work trip; refurbishing an apartment for refugees; participating in Youth Sunday twice a year. They have a Youth Creed: *follow the example set by Jesus through showing love to everyone they encounter*

and emulating the qualities of loyalty, honesty, kindness, respectfulness, dependability, peacefulness, humor, inclusiveness, harmony, friendliness, and cleanliness in every aspect of their lives.

Finances

There is not currently an identified list of capital needs.

The congregation has mortgage debt of about 322,600.00 as of April, 2008 and is making payments of about 4000.00 per month (about 2500 of which is principle).

There are a number of small invested funds for various designated purposes. Endowment totals about 33,000.00.

Evangelism

The Visioning Committee identifies the primary target area for evangelism as 36064, 36116 and 36117 and parts of 36109 and 36111 zip codes primarily.

Outreach

The Visioning Committee identifies 36109, 36116 and 36117 zip codes as the primary target area for local mission as well, though the church is beginning to be involved beyond this area (e.g. assisting two other Disciples congregations with establishing food ministries).

The congregation does outreach in numerous ways (an impressive list!):

1. Nearly \$45,000 was spent on outreach last year (local and global)
2. Food ministry/clothes closet (serves more than 120 families). Legal advice is also provided to clients pro bono.
3. Rebuilding Together (repairs a low-income family's home each spring)
4. Miracle Day
5. Family Promise (provides overnight shelter for homeless families one week every quarter, meals, help with children's homework)
6. Adullum House (provides money and volunteers from time to time for children of inmate mothers)
7. Katrina Relief (have supported financially and sent youth group to Gulfport)
8. Christmas Shoe Boxes (youth)
9. Sunshine Center for abused women/children (provide money, volunteers, pastoral support)
10. 10% of general fund receipts go to Disciples Mission Fund.
11. Act 4 Fund (provides discreet financial assistance to congregants as needs arise)

Governance

The Board has a potential participation of 44 members. Attendance is generally just beyond a quorum, which indicates the board is too large and that most of the important decision making gets done in other places/structures of the church. Thus, although the board does good work and in a worshipful way, the board is generally not as effective a means of communication with the congregation as it could be and is too large and changing to serve as a consensus developing body. It also depends more upon democracy (win-lose votes on motions) rather than discernment and consensus in

important matters. Though the congregation has had no significant conflict in the past decade, the board is structured in a way that could invite conflict.

The committee/cabinet system seems to function well with good attendance. An “Annual Planning Event” to generate the ongoing program of the church might help to streamline the organizational structures a bit while enhancing the congregation’s ownership of its program.

Cabinet – 17 members

Evangelism – 5-7 members

Admin – 10 members

Property – 1 chair (recruit volunteers as needed)

Nurture – 2 co-chairs (recruit volunteers as needed)

Worship – 4 members

Christian Ed – 4-5 members

Mission – 6-7 members

Memorial/Scholarship – 5 members

Pastoral relations – 6 members (not currently meeting)

Permanent Fund trustees – 6 members

Trustees – 3

Elders and Deacons

The elders are a very strong group that serves as the spiritual leaders of the congregation in partnership with the pastor. They meet monthly as a worshipping group, pray, nurture and care for the pastor, and are trained by the pastor to do effective pastoral care, are available to pray for and with members, and serve at the Table. Their enthusiasm is contagious. *“Our elders rock!”*

The Diaconate performs the usual duties of Disciples deacons: serving communion and collecting the offering in worship, open and close the building on Sunday mornings.

Conflict

There has not been a history of serious conflict in the congregation. In the 1970’s there was a major disagreement over the direction the congregation should take. This did result in a major division. However, through the years there has been much peacemaking between individuals, so the conflict is not a major factor in the life of the congregation today. The conflict did have a positive outcome in clarifying the future direction of FCC.

In the past ten years there have been some families lost due to disagreement about theological direction, calling a female pastor, etc. As painful as these incidents always are, they have helped the congregation move forward with greater clarity about what God is calling it to be and do.

Vision Statement (2004)

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a thriving Christian community that

** welcomes all to experience the love of God,*

- * *equips believers to realize and achieve their God-given purpose, and*
- * *sends passionate, spirit-led disciples to make a difference in Montgomery and beyond.*

Desired Outcomes

The Visioning Committee named the following desired outcomes:

1. Redefinition of the board and its make-up.
2. Develop a snapshot of our strengths and weaknesses as a congregation.
3. A Good understanding of where the congregation sees the church going.
4. A clear vision of where God wants us to go.
5. A plan for how to get there!

Reflections (from coach-consultant Dick Hamm but affirmed by the Vision Team)

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is basically a very healthy congregation with very effective lay and ministerial leadership. The membership remains highly committed to the Disciples of Christ and has a strong commitment to local and world outreach.

First Christian Church is clearly not a congregation that can be or will be attractive to *everyone* in greater Montgomery. The congregation has a typical Disciples emphasis upon “faith with reason” and we need to be clearer about the unique witness that this congregation represents here and to learn how better to share it and recruit others to it. This congregation will continue to share the faith with all God’s children and will welcome all into membership, but FCC is particularly well equipped to draw people who are tired of narrow interpretations of the Bible and the Christian faith. Many of these folks will be among the un-churched and de-churched (people who have been members of churches but no longer participate because they experienced abuse or extremism).

One challenge that faces the congregation is moving into a style that continues to serve the current members’ needs but which also helps to “open the congregation up” to “cell growth and multiplication.” FCC needs to develop small groups as portals for entry by new people.

I concur that a downsizing of the board is appropriate. This would make consensus decision making possible. However, these board members would need to see their role as representing others’ opinions in addition to their own, not representing their own opinions only. Also, for the sake of trust, communication within the congregation must improve in order to successfully make the shift to a smaller board.

RLH

Next Steps

Once the congregation affirms this profile (or an amended version) as an accurate picture of First Christian Church today, the congregation will be invited to join in a period of prayer and discernment during which members will be encouraged to share their insights and ideas with the Visioning Committee. The Visioning Committee will then shape the members’ discernment and insights into a vision: a picture of what First Christian Church is being called to be and do in the years ahead. Once the congregation

affirms this vision, then a strategic plan will be developed to help the congregation realize the vision.

May God grant us open hearts and minds as we seek to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit and as we seek to realize what God is calling us a congregation to become.