

## **LABC Long Range Plan – September 2017 SIX PROVOCATIVE PROPOSALS**

### ***Introduction***

From time to time, a church needs to evaluate its life and ministry in the light of changing circumstances both within the congregation and the environment in which the church is placed. What is the church doing effectively? What new challenges need to be responded to? How faithful is the present ministry to the central thrust of the Gospel? What trends in society and within the congregation suggest how the church's ministry should be shaped in the time ahead?

It's important for a church to make long-range plans responsive to what we know about present circumstances and what we anticipate in the future. Because of this, the Church Council, in early 2015, appointed a Long Range Planning Committee to undertake such a task. The committee began its work by reading and discussing the book, *Pursuing God's Will Together*, by Ruth Haley Barton. By mid 2016, to assist the LRPC and the church in developing a Long Range Plan, they secured the services of a respected church consultant, the Rev. Jim Kitchens of the Center for Healthy Churches. Meeting with the committee in an all-day retreat at the beginning of the process, he encouraged adopting St. Ignatius' Principle of Holy Indifference—"I am indifferent to anything but God's will." Rev. Kitchens then led us, as a congregation, in a series of Sunday luncheon consultations in which we were asked to respond to some probing questions about our history as a church, our views of our present ministry, and what we hoped for our future. The intent of the endeavor, it was stated, was to help us clarify our unique identity and giftedness as a congregation, determine areas of focus to build upon the congregation's current strengths, determine areas for future mission and ministry, and develop ministry goals and action plans to guide us in fulfilling our calling in the next five to seven years.

Guided by our consultant, the Long Range Planning Committee began a nearly year-long task of formulating a set of six "Provocative Proposals." They are provocative in the sense that they all involve a challenging stretch for us. (They are not congratulatory re-statements of where we already are.) Recognizing it's one thing to "dream big" and another to bring dreams to fruition, the committee has provided each Provocative Proposal with certain goals to help do this. They are called "smart" goals: S-M-A-R-T stands for "specific," "measurable," "achievable," "realistic," and "time-bound."

The Long Range Planning Committee has worked in a dedicated manner, turning to many in the community and the congregation for counsel along the way, making decisions a matter of prayer, and listening openly to one another. The committee feels inspired by the proposals and the goals and is excited to present them to the congregation. Not all the proposals can be implemented at once. Therefore, there is a plan indicating when and how they will be undertaken over the next few years. We acknowledge that these proposals are ambitious, but we believe a vital church must have a vital vision if it is to be faithful to its calling and transformative in the world.

## Brief Summary of Our Conversations

Congregational Conversation # 1 – September 18, 2016. We looked at our **PAST**. Where did we come from? What do we bring with us as we face the future? From this conversation, we identified three core values: diversity and inclusion, open arms and hearts, living the Scripture in the world. We articulated these values in the following key themes that make Lakeshore what it is:

- **Care and compassion** exercised by ministers and members alike
- **Taking a stand** for a more just society
- **Multiplicity of opportunities** to participate and exercise one's gifts

Congregational Conversation # 2 – October 16, 2016. We looked at where we are **TODAY**. What is working well? What needs attention? Where do we really live? From this conversation, we identified five key areas that emerged as priorities for the congregation: Mission, Worship/Music, Social Justice, Education/Christian Formation and Administration/Stewardship.

Congregational Conversation # 3 – November 13, 2016. We looked at our **FUTURE**. Where do we sense God leading us as a church? We dreamed God-sized dreams for who we could become and shared those dreams with one another. From this conversation and the sharing of our dreams, the Long Range Planning Committee began a discernment process to articulate the following provocative proposals to guide us into who we feel God is calling us to be.

In addition to these congregational conversations, we also sought out input from our larger community. We met with our young adults (many of whom were away during our initial conversations), with the San Francisco Kachin Baptist Church, and with the Lakeshore neighborhood leaders.

The proposals that follow are the result of these important conversations, incorporating what we have heard from the congregation and community as well as where we have discerned God's spirit leading us.

\*Please remember that these proposals are aspirational – they represent who we long to be, and who we commit ourselves to becoming, as a congregation.

## **COMMUNICATION**

**Provocative Proposal** – We at LABC have developed a public identity that is recognizable throughout Oakland through our words, deeds, actions, and attitudes. These are communicated clearly and warmly to members of the congregation and community through a wide range of applications, tools, and platforms.

### **Smart Goals**

1. By March 2018, we will form a two-year Communications Task Force to identify methods and improvements to LABC's communication processes. Working with a staff liaison the taskforce would A: Develop a Church Social Media Policy, B: Improve our website and C: Consider other forms of communication such as an LABC Facebook page, Twitter, etc.
2. The Communications Task Force will create/purchase graphic and promotional materials to enhance our external visibility including banners, displays, media advertising, flyers, aprons, event clapboard signs, etc., as a visual expression of our identity.

## **WELCOME**

**Provocative Proposal** – We at LABC demonstrate intentional welcome by removing economic, physical and transportation barriers to participation in the life of the congregation.

### **Smart Goals**

1. Beginning immediately, we will ensure that cost will not be a barrier to participation in church activities.
2. By 2020, we will develop a plan to meet transportation needs for all ages.
3. Under the Department of Stewardship's guidance, we will upgrade the facility to accommodate mobility (e.g., access to chancel and church office) and audiovisual needs (e.g., evaluate existing hearing assists) by 2021.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**Provocative Proposal** – Because true faith must express itself in action, LABC is actively fighting for justice in our local community. We serve as a hub for the greater Lakeshore Community connecting partners and allies in common cause and as a catalyst for individual involvement by removing barriers that prevent participation.

### **Smart Goals**

1. By November 2017, the newly formed Sanctuary Working Group will make its preliminary report to the congregants on how they can become aware and involved with advocacy, education and assistance with the Sanctuary Movement.
2. A social justice program called “LABC Justice Jam” will be established by fall 2018. It involves quarterly community round tables or lecture series on social justice issues and illuminates LABC’s involvement to the community. Bimonthly educational events are also provided for LABC congregants to keep them informed about social justice issues.

## **CHRISTIAN FORMATION**

**Provocative Proposal** – At LABC, all members recognize that they are Christ’s followers on a life-long journey of discipleship. Persons from all ages and walks of life embrace opportunities to be formed by biblical wisdom, through spiritual practices, and in authentic and intimate fellowship.

### **Smart Goals**

1. Each year, during the liturgical seasons of Lent and Advent, the congregation will collectively engage intentional exercises of spiritual reflection and growth. Social media and other information technologies will be employed to broaden participation numerically and deepen engagement by individuals throughout the week. The inaugural season will be Lent 2018.
2. By the beginning 2019, 75% of our congregation is engaged in a communal practice of Christian formation, apart from the main Sunday service, at least once monthly. These practices include Bible studies, prayer and spiritual practice groups, contemplative gatherings, and more.

## WORSHIP

**Provocative Proposal** – LABC worship connects us with one another, God, and the Christian tradition. We provide a variety of worship opportunities in which believers exercise their gifts both as leaders and participants.

### Smart Goals

1. We will re-envision our weekly schedule to facilitate new opportunities for worship. By fall of 2018, we will add at least one worship service.
2. We will provide recurrent training in the arts of worship leadership: preaching, teaching, reading, prayer, music, etc. (John Skogland's "Principles of Christian Worship" is a helpful resource in developing the above trainings.)

## EVANGELISM

**Provocative Proposal** – LABC members actively invite persons to become followers of Jesus Christ.

### Smart Goals

1. LABC will provide a training program for sharing of one's faith to be taught to the congregation by 2019.
2. By 2020 we will develop a series of educational opportunities to inform the congregation about the growing demographic of the "Nones" (the growing percentage of adults who do not identify with a religious group) and discern best practices for outreach to those in our community.

The Long Range Planning Committee consists of Paige Bence (*Convenor*), Jewelle Gibbs (*Member during the Committee's initial work*), John Claassen, Dale Edmondson, Paul Keener, Sandra Lee, Casey Mitchell, Chris Schelin, Sheila Sims, Leon Taylor, and Mark Wilson. Pastors Jim Hopkins and Allison Tanner met regularly with the committee.