

## Strategic Thinking Process – Executive Summary

Brief History: In 2010 a Guide Team was formed to consider the question: who is God calling us to be? In 2012 Peace River Presbytery adopted the following Vision statement: We believe God is calling us as a Presbytery: \*to affirm congregations, \*connect disciples in mission and \*be the Body of Christ together. In doing so we follow the guiding values of being a missional, relational, and learning community together centered in Christ. This new vision and strategy had ramifications for the structure of the organization and subsequent moves were made to utilize and deploy resources of both volunteers and staff to move from a model that was based on being a *regional mission and program agency* to a *learning and deliberative* body that exists to serve the mission of God in the world.

Time for Review: In 2017, five years after embracing that vision, the Steering Committee appointed a Strategic Review Task Force to reflect on the accomplishments and shortcomings of the five years since adoption. They interviewed members of the original guide team and considered the 12 criteria and benchmarks that were laid out as evidence of success.

In doing so, the team advanced an observation that the **culture** of the Presbytery has been favorably impacted by the mission/vision focus.

On the other hand, the measures where we fall shortest of the aspirations seem to cluster under an umbrella of **communication**.

While progress is apparent in areas of **system agility and leadership**, these are not firmly embedded in the organization's culture and systems and need further work.

Reacting to the Assessment: Earlier this year, the Steering Committee and the Presbytery as a whole were invited to reflect on the assessment and begin to inform the strategic priorities for the future. The ideas were considered and sifted, building out a strategic thinking document that would begin to order the priorities across three time horizons, which were ultimately reduced to two: less than a 1 year (actively being planned, consistent with priorities and being worked on now), 1-3 years (initiatives to advance efforts toward the new benchmarks).

During the journey Graham's plans for retirement became known, so the strategic thinking process took new importance. It would chart the framework for not only the work of the Presbytery but also the search for a new leader.

Building Out the Strategic Thinking: That led to a cycle of World Café meetings, on-line surveys and email feedback to explore the primary themes that were emerging. The goal was not to produce a 3-ring binder with tasks, dates and assignments...but rather broad themes to serve as directional focus from which to operate; a living and guiding framework for the time prior to Graham's retirement and a road map for priorities when the new General Presbyter is selected.

# Peace River Presbytery – Building the Roadmap to the Future

VISION: We believe God is calling us as a presbytery to ~~affirm~~ assist and support congregations, connect disciples in mission and be the Body of Christ together.

The current vision has served the Presbytery well, each word carefully chosen and woven together. There is one word that the team, in consultation with the Steering Committee, is recommending for change; to shift from AFFIRM congregations to the more active words of ASSIST and SUPPORT congregations. It acknowledges the important role of the presbytery in providing support to church leaders of all stripes; teaching elders, ruling elders, deacons, Christian Education staff, and other leaders.

VALUE: Affirm a culture that nurtures joyful and caring relationships as we learn to do God's work together.

Originally eight areas of focus were identified but one became overwhelmingly important to each of the remaining priority directives: to nurture relationships: this is at the core of being able to bring people together to do God's work. While opinions, views and theologies may differ, it is the commitment to work together and learn together with mutual respect and genuine caring that ministry can be done joyfully. It is about setting the tone of a nurturing culture. Therefore, this theme is elevated to the level of a guiding VALUE statement.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

1. Support pastors: Provide better support for pastors toward vibrant ministry in an ever-changing culture.  
*Benchmark: Encourage a culture of permission giving that energizes our connectional commitment to mission in an ever-changing community and world.*
2. Equip church leaders: Support churches in strengthening and equipping leadership toward a broad missional view.  
*Benchmark: Empower and unite congregations as a presbytery while equipping and celebrating the ministries of individual congregations.*
3. Improve Communications: Develop a communication strategy and create systems of sharing/teamwork that improve exchange between all bodies.  
*Benchmark: Strategize and experiment to find the most effective communication plan for shared ministry.*
4. Encourage greater diversity: Determine opportunities for greater diversity.  
*Benchmark: Leverage the diversity of southwest Florida to build excellence, innovation and hospitality that allows all members of the community to contribute their best effort.*
5. Empower outreach: Focus and empower current outreach projects while being open and responsive to new opportunities.  
*Benchmark: Create mission awareness to develop and implement programs of outreach that balance the needs of our region, nation and world with the resources of the congregations and presbytery.*
6. Prepare for transition: Develop a plan to proactively address upcoming leadership transitions.  
*Benchmark: Use every opportunity of leadership transition to bring positive energy and passion to move ministry to new levels of vitality.*
7. Create new and renewed worshipping communities and ministry models.  
*Benchmark: Grow Peace River Presbytery membership at rate equal to population growth.*