

**THE  
MISSION VISION**

**FOR  
OLD FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH**

**SAN FRANCISCO,  
CALIFORNIA**

*Touching the lives of  
people in the city  
by God's surprising grace*

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*We all are called for service to witness in God's name;  
Our ministries are different, our purpose is the same:  
To touch the lives of others by God's surprising grace  
So every folk and nation may feel God's warm embrace.<sup>1</sup>*

Rusty Edwards

## INTRODUCTION

God continues to call Old First Presbyterian Church to a unique ministry in the city of San Francisco. This report seeks briefly to tell the story of this congregation, who we are today and what we could become. (A short history of Old First since our founding is in Appendix I.) Our hope in telling this story is that we will all come to share a common understanding of the state of this congregation today and to share a common sense of purpose as we face the difficult challenges of the future.

Those difficult challenges are all around us. Internally our membership and giving has been declining in the last few years. In addition to a dropping membership nationally, our denomination's unresolved issues on ordination affect our ability to minister. Hostility toward organized religion seems to be increasing in our culture. Yet through this all, God continues to call us to be a light, to demonstrate the love that God shows to all people.

The Mission Vision Team started its work in early 2004, and all four of us had been on the team that prepared the 2000 Mission Vision report. Since it had been only four years since that report was completed, many thought that we would need only to update a few sections and then reissue a new report. We came to realize, however, that a lot has changed at Old First since 2000, for example, both membership and worship attendance have dropped about 25% since the beginning of 2000. We concluded, therefore, that a totally new mission vision would need to be written, one that reflected the needs and situation of Old First today. And in preparing this report we spent more time listening to the congregation and the Session.

This report will first offer a statement that describes the overriding purpose of all our work, both corporately and as individuals. This is done with the hope that, in time, it will become a commonly shared sense of purpose that will help guide our journey into the future and help us set our priorities.

The complete story of this congregation that we all love is far too complex to capture here; each member will be able to fill in their own details and hopes for the future. This report does, however, reflect the major themes about our story today. This is done by describing the basic dimensions of our mission, the work we do as a forgiven and forgiving people. As you will see, our work is much like the work of Christian congregations everywhere. There are, however, special qualities about Old First that are distinctive and need to be reaffirmed and preserved.

Moving into the future will present challenges, both to our pastor and to our leaders; these are described later in the report. The report concludes with a reminder that pointing the way to what Old First should and could be must be done continually by the leaders of Old First, especially the pastor. At the end are eight appendices that supplement the information in the report.

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<sup>1</sup> The second verse of *We All Are One in Mission*, Hymn 435 in The Presbyterian Hymnal

## THE PURPOSE OF OLD FIRST

Some have observed that Old First today lacks a shared sense of purpose, that is, a unifying understanding of our ministry or a common sense of what God calls us to do and be. As a result, we at times do not seem to be pulling in the same direction and many good works do not appear coordinated. This congregation has demonstrated in the past that, when we all work toward a common purpose, we can accomplish unexpected things.

The poem of Rusty Edwards shown at the top of the previous page may help provide this unifying purpose for our mission:

***Our Purpose: To touch the lives of people in the city by God's surprising grace***

Clearly there is a challenge for everyone in this statement. "To touch the lives of people..." suggests developing warm personal relationships with those inside our church as well as outside. This touch could take many forms. "...people in the city..." helps us to claim our place as an urban church with its unique opportunities and challenges. And the instrument we use to do this is "...God's surprising grace" that we have all experienced. Sharing that surprising grace should be the major focus of our lives, both individually and corporately.

All dimensions of our work or mission would be improved if they were guided by this purpose. Even our committee work would be more enjoyable if meetings were conducted in a way that touches the lives of others.

This congregation has a history of dealing with important social issues and undoubtedly will continue doing so. Keeping this purpose in mind will remind us why we do these works, how our works are informed by our Christian faith and how our efforts are different from social service agencies. In other words, this statement of purpose helps to provide integrity to what we do, that is, making clear that each element of what we do is integrally related to our purpose as Christians and to our ultimate mission.

Additionally, our personal relationships during the week, at work, at play and at home, would be improved if we were governed by this purpose. But doing this will not always be easy. Imagine applying this idea when dealing with those who disagree with you or who do not appear to experience God's surprising grace.

## OLD FIRST TODAY AND OUR MISSION

For years there has been a weekly reminder in our Sunday bulletin of who we are and who we welcome:

OLD FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IS AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY OF FAITH  
UNITED BY TRUST IN GOD AND FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. WE WARMLY WELCOME ALL WHO  
ACCEPT AND RESPOND TO GOD'S SAVING GRACE IN JESUS CHRIST AND WHO DESIRE TO  
PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF THIS CHURCH.

While this description remains true today, it doesn't say much about our mission or ministry, that is, the work we do together as a congregation. For almost any Christian congregation, the basic mission includes worship, congregational care, spiritual growth, evangelism, service and stewardship.

Not surprisingly, these are also the basic dimensions of our mission or ministry at Old First. We have been, after all, on a long journey with many

other Christian churches. There is much that unites all of us, and we should recognize and build on that common heritage.

Notice that there is a cycle to these dimensions. The first three describe gathering and nurturing elements; we gather for and are nurtured by worship, mutual care and Christian education. But the Christian life does not end there. The second three describe our response elements; in response to God's call and refreshed by worship, care and education, we move back into the world to share the Good News, address the needs of others and give of our time and money. This is much like the cycle reflected in our Reformed worship services.

But not all Christian churches, or even Presbyterian churches, are the same. What is it that makes us distinctive from other Presbyterian churches? What are the special qualities of Old First that we want to reaffirm and preserve? It is these *special qualities* that make us distinctive, that describe our character or personality and that are the reasons we come to worship and work year after year. Each of us can recite the reasons that are important to us.

Our mission and some of our *special qualities* can be described as follows. (Our *special qualities* are described after the words *where*.) It should be clear that the mission of Old First is not exclusively focused internally; there is a clear external focus, both in evangelism and service.

***Our Mission: Opening ourselves to God, we...***

**CELEBRATE the living God through worship,**

*where* compelling, lectionary-based preaching is the norm, *where* creative collaboration between clergy and laity in worship planning and leadership is expected and *where* the congregation actively participates in Reformed liturgy inspired by music, the arts and liturgical seasons

**BUILD a nurturing community from the diversity of the city,**

*where* caring for individuals is both a clergy and congregational strength, *where* all are welcomed and valued as integral to congregational life and *where* officers are elected based on their ability to serve the needs of our diverse and inclusive congregation

**GROW spiritually as informed Christians,**

*where* young and old, both laity and clergy, find opportunities to engage scripture and practice spiritual disciplines and *where* faith journeys are shared and supported

***And seeking to touch the lives of others by God's surprising grace in response, we ...***

**EXPRESS our Christian faith in ways that are relevant to the lives of urban dwellers,**

*where* friends, neighbors and colleagues are invited to participate in our community and *where* visitors are greeted with warmth and enthusiasm

**TOUCH the lives of those in our broader community who need a helping hand,**

*where the congregation and friends are involved in a ministry of outreach, compassion and justice in our community and beyond*

**PRACTICE stewardship of our resources to support our multi-dimensional mission,**

*where use of time, finances and our building is generous and effective*

This statement captures the essence of our mission. It does not, however, capture the details of our mission today. In Appendix II each of these dimensions is discussed in more detail as a way of telling our story and helping people to share a common understanding of the state of this congregation today. The discussion in Appendix II also describes in more detail the special qualities that characterize our congregation and those ways in which God has shaped us historically and continues to shape us today.

Associated with each of these dimensions are challenges, that is, those areas of our life together where growth or change is occurring. Though these challenges are sometimes uncomfortable due to differing expectations and priorities within the congregation, they may well be where God is calling us into the future. These challenges are also discussed in Appendix II. The major themes are summarized here.

- We need to improve our processes for integrating new members into our community life.
- We need to improve our processes for nurturing the small groups in our community.
- We need to create a culture where all opinions can be freely expressed without fear of judgment and where each person feels supported and listened to.
- We need to understand the most effective ways to strengthen our adult education programs.
- We need to articulate an evangelism style that is appropriate for this congregation.
- We need to find new ways to reach out to the public and learn how to share our faith journeys with those outside our building.
- We need to make a commitment to an adequate support of benevolences in our annual budgets.
- We need to review the size, structure and processes of the Session.
- We need to improve our lay leadership skills.

## **ANALYSIS OF SOME ELEMENTS FROM OUR RECENT PAST**

One important element of our recent past that we need to understand is the recent trends in membership, worship attendance and giving. These trends are analyzed in Appendix III. The major themes can be summarized as follows:

- Membership and worship attendance are down 25% from 1999 levels
- Our operating budget is down 13% from 2002 levels
- Even though worship attendance dropped after 1999, total giving (and spending) were higher in 2001 and 2002

- The actual pledge plus loose plate giving has dropped 10% from 2002 levels
- The percentage of our membership who pledge dropped 39% between 1999 and 2005; currently 47% of our members pledge
- To support our budget, we are growing more reliant on a smaller percentage of our membership
- The Core Pledging Group is mostly working adults (age 40 to 59) as opposed to retired persons (age 60 and older)

The demographics of our neighborhood and our congregation are analyzed in Appendix IV.

An inventory of our current programs will be found in Appendix V. Though the programs offered at Old First are varied, it has been years since we have asked whether these programs are right for today or whether there are major holes in our programming, e.g. responding to a need for a young adult group. We seem to continue with programs as long as there are volunteers to support them.

## **CHALLENGES FOR OUR PASTOR**

Moving into the future will present challenges for both the pastor and the leaders of the church. This section describes the challenges for our pastor. The next section will discuss the challenges for the leaders and some possible responses to these challenges.

One important component of our recent past has been pastoral leadership. This is analyzed in Appendix VI. The implications of the analysis are too numerous to repeat here. But that appendix describes the context in which our pastor must operate.

### **Leadership Style**

One leadership style will not fit all situations at Old First. Any pastor will need to employ a broad spectrum of leadership styles to find those that are most effective for Old First. The challenge for our pastor is to be flexible and to employ the leadership style that is appropriate for each context.

People at Old First often speak of collaboration as being an essential element of pastoral leadership. Yet there is a noticeable lack of collaboration between church leaders and across committee boundaries. The level of collaboration between all leaders will strongly depend upon the personality and style of the pastor. This style must support the development of trust, trust in God, one another and the pastor, and a shared sense that the important thing is the strengthening and growing of the congregation.

Old First takes some pride in the high level of lay leadership demonstrated in the past. Yet there is often a hesitancy to take decisive leadership positions absent the leadership of a called pastor. So the pastor is challenged to be both a leader of leaders and a nurturer of leadership. That is, our pastor will be challenged to act with us as an equal partner and to listen and communicate on the major issues we will face together.

Many in our congregation have an unexpected depth of training, theological and organizational skills, and sheer energy, especially in the areas of Worship and Christian Education. The community includes a variety of highly capable people who teach children and adults, lead the liturgy, preach, sing and play instruments, create art, lead groups and lead group processes, maintain and

design and build physical plants, program and operate computers, provide pastoral and physical care, minister to others, track finances, and build visions of the future. To some pastors, this expertise could be seen as a threat, to others, an opportunity.

**Being a Pastor** Many members of the congregation have high needs for pastoral care. The deacons perform much of this function but require the pastor's presence and support. We have been clear that we expect our pastor to be present with members in times of crisis, but we have not been clear about our expectations for pastoral care at other times.

Because this congregation takes pride in its struggles as an urban church, many in the congregation expect the pastor to live in the city and share the same struggles. Additionally, building community is very important for this congregation, and many expect the pastor to be at the center of this community. These expectations present challenges to the pastor, balancing the needs for involvement in community life and social interaction while retaining necessary private time away from congregational activities.

**Being Head of Staff** As has been mentioned, Old First has a very active and diverse program, yet the size of the staff is smaller than needed to support this level of activity. As a result, lay leaders and volunteers help make these activities run, in effect, functioning as unpaid staff. Unfortunately, these "activity leaders" are unable to attend staff meetings so there is often a lack of communication and coordination among activities. Also, this high level of volunteer effort can increase the risk of burnout.

The pastor needs to be aware when changes in the lives of leaders affect their ability effectively to perform their assigned functions. In such cases, leaders need to be personally supported, but program needs must also be temporarily sustained by the pastor or other leaders.

## **CHALLENGES FOR OUR LEADERS**

The story told so far only hints at the challenges facing the Old First congregation and its leaders. This part of the report describes the most critical of those challenges. These are not the only challenges facing us; each dimension of our mission faces challenges. The Mission Vision Team assumes that the committees responsible for each of these dimensions (such as Worship, Christian Education, Evangelism, etc.) will make the time to identify and address these other challenges.

The eight challenges described here are the most critical for Old First; they are listed in priority order.

1. Build Community
2. Expand Small Groups
3. Welcome Visitors and Integrate New Members
4. Strengthen Leadership Training
5. Strengthen Evangelism and our Outward-Looking Face
6. Review Session and Committee Structures
7. Strengthen Stewardship
8. Increase Paid Staff

Each of these challenges and some possible initiatives to address each are described below. Addressing these challenges will require changes in



attitude, will require us to think and work in new ways or will require the cooperation of several committees. Addressing these challenges will also require additional human, and sometimes financial, resources over that needed for 2005. In other words, working on these initiatives generally will require time beyond that needed to do the usual work of the church. These additional resources are identified after **H:** and **\$:** below.

There are clearly many years of work suggested here, work for both the congregation and our leaders. Since it is unrealistic to do everything at once, completion dates are proposed for each initiative that distributes this extra work over the next few years. The Mission Vision Team encourages the leaders to take ownership of these challenges and to hold themselves accountable for addressing them; part of taking ownership should be to keep these challenges and completion dates in the foreground of their thinking.

Obviously, new challenges will be identified in the future. When this happens, the Mission Vision Team urges the Session to evaluate the resources needed to address any new challenges and the impact of any new challenges on the resources needed to complete the challenges described here. Based on such an evaluation, the Session should then set priorities.

There is an assumption made by many members that has not yet been expressed: Old First today is not comfortable with its current size (221 members) since our resources are not adequate to support the staff and programs we think we should have. Many leaders seem reluctant to imagine that God might be calling us to be the size we are now and are convinced that we need to grow in size. Only time will tell whether this assumption is valid.

The Mission Vision Team believes that, to carry out the Vision described in this document, we will need to reorient the human and financial resources we have and develop new resources.

## **1. Build Community**

Christianity is about far more than just an individual's personal relationship with God – it is about our life together as a community of faith. In our mobile urban culture, it can be difficult to find experiences of community. Unfortunately, community does not just happen; it needs to be deliberately built.

The Mission Vision Team believes deliberately building community at Old First is so important that it should be our first Challenge. From welcoming and integrating new members, to nurturing small groups, to learning how to share our faith journeys with each other and those outside the church, to creating a culture where opinions can be more freely expressed without fear of judgment and where each person feels supported and listened to – building community is the challenge that should guide our approaches to all other challenges.

What makes people feel part of the Old First community? Simply put, they have many opportunities for interactions at times beyond worship and coffee hour. They work together, they party together, they laugh together, they cry together and they pray together. And during this time of work, play, laughter, tears and prayer, they share their faith journeys and learn a lot about each other: what they have in common, what they love and what bugs them. They develop friendships and trust; they feel connected and can be honest with each other.

While it may be true that some members of Old First are not seeking friendships and community, clearly others are. Unfortunately, some of those seeking community do not yet feel that they are part of the Old First community; they feel that there are barriers to developing feelings of community which may be hard to recognize, especially by those on the inside. But they are real to those on the outside, and these barriers say something about our culture.

For example, we like to think of ourselves as a “family”, but it is difficult to become a new member of a family. We have long-standing committees that know the “Presbyterian” way to do things, but little effort is made to bring in new perspectives. Also potential new members are sometimes made to feel that they don’t have the right experience or understanding to contribute.

At the center of our community is our shared experience of worship. This common experience provides the foundation of our life in community, but it cannot be our whole experience of community.

Another effective way to build community is through shared work. Generally, we use only one model to get work done: form a committee. Unfortunately, our committee work tends to be modeled on the efficiency of the corporate world. Because agendas seem too full, little time is given to devotions, learning about each other, sharing faith journeys or just sharing our lives with each other. As a result we miss opportunities to practice community building. With little “extra” time, all committees could become communities, but this will require deliberate work and commitment.

There are other models we might use to structure our work so that agendas are not too full and so that time can be devoted to building communities: short-term projects, task forces or ministry teams<sup>2</sup> in which people join together for a specific purpose then disband with a new set of friends. There is also an underutilized pool of resources around Old First, the ordained elders and deacons who haven’t served in years. This pool of experience is rarely used and is often forgotten.

This is not to say that communities do not exist at Old First. Micro-communities can be found in small groups, mission activities and even in some committees. These micro-communities provide many opportunities for interactions as described above. Even in larger gatherings at Old First, it is the small groups around a dinner table or small break-out groups that provide these opportunities for interaction.

Hence, the Mission Vision Team suggests that we should deliberately work to build a closely linked, fluid network of micro-communities. If all of our gatherings of “two or three in my name” were treated as opportunities for community building and if these micro-communities had ever-changing memberships then, in time, most of the congregation would feel part of our community. Such micro-communities would be linked by the network of personal relationships of those involved.

The pastor’s role in community building should also be mentioned. The pastor is essential to the building of community, but the pastor need not be the central figure. In fact, no one person can or should be the central figure.

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<sup>2</sup> Ministry teams do not meet and discuss; they function. Examples at Old First include the ushers and choir.

We cannot expect the pastor to be a part of every micro-community, but we can expect the pastor to be an integral part of our whole community.

The existing culture will be difficult to change. This will require nothing less than changing the way we do our work together by placing the building of community at the center of all our priorities. Also we should recognize that, for a new member, becoming actively involved in a community is much like a courtship, it is a deliberate process requiring great sensitivity.

Simple initiatives can be used to start building communities in our committee work such as ...

- a. Begin to experiment with small revisions to the monthly Session meeting agendas to transform Session meetings into community building opportunities, by 1Q06.  
**H:** Pastor and Planning Committee  
**\$:** None
- b. Based on the lessons learned in Session meetings, all committees begin to experiment with small revisions to their meeting agendas to transform committee meetings into community building opportunities, by 2Q06.  
**H:** Committee moderators  
**\$:** None

## **2. Expand Small Groups**

One strategy for fostering closer personal relationships, offering opportunities to share faith journeys and providing mutual pastoral care, is to expand the types of and participation in small groups and develop ways to link these small groups into the fabric of the congregation. Through small groups members and friends have a regular way to touch the lives of others by God's surprising grace. And expanding small groups is an excellent way to build community.

Unfortunately, there is an incomplete list today of available small groups so no one knows the real extent of our small group ministry. Additionally, the process for adding new people to existing small groups is not clear. To help, each small group should develop in an "empty chair" philosophy that keeps each group perpetually open and a "birthing ethic" that compels each group to multiply and produce new groups.

Several initiatives may be needed to expand our small group ministry such as ...

- a. Appoint a volunteer Small Group facilitator who will, in the short term, appoint a task force (that shall report to the CE Committee) to provide leadership and oversight to small groups at Old First, including linking friends and members to new and existing small groups and coordinating resources for and communication between small groups, by 1Q06.  
**H:** One part time facilitator and a task force of up to three people  
**\$:** None
- b. Hire part-time staff to provide leadership and oversight to the small groups. (See Challenge 8, Initiative a for **H:** and **\$:** on Page 14)

- c. Experiment with specialized forms of small groups, e.g. small groups based on specific interests or on shared tasks or intergenerational small groups, by 2Q07.

**H:** New staff (See Challenge 8, Initiative a for this new staff)

**\$:** None

- d. Explore the options for and the benefits of specialized training and some joint meetings for small group leaders, by 4Q07.

**H:** New staff (See Challenge 8, Initiative a for this new staff)

**\$:** Minimal for training materials or programs

### **3. Welcome Visitors and Integrate New Members**

A fact of life for an urban congregation such as Old First is a fluid, ever changing membership. To make up for the stream of members who leave, this congregation must attract new members continually. People who enter our church are searching for an energetic, well-organized, caring, spiritual community that makes faith relevant today.

One strategy for adding members is to ensure that people who walk through our doors will feel welcome, valued and eager to participate in our community of faith. In other words, we need to help visitors understand that, as a part of this community, their lives can be touched by God's surprising grace. Building relationships with visitors and new members is an excellent community building opportunity.

One thread heard frequently by the Mission Vision Team is that we are not adequately deliberate about integrating new and recent members into our community life. The first two years of membership may be as critical as the first impressions we give. After a few years of membership, some still feel as if they are outsiders. People do not keep coming to our church for our programs; they continue to come for the relationships. Finally, we should be more deliberate about reaching out to inactive members to give them new opportunities to rejoin this community.

Several initiatives may be needed to welcome visitors and integrate new members such as ...

- a. Develop and implement processes to greet new and returning visitors, stay with them in coffee hour and introduce them to small groups and church programs, by 1Q06.

**H:** One volunteer to develop, initiate and maintain process, two volunteers each Sunday

**\$:** None

- b. Form joint teams of members of the Evangelism Committee, Deacons and the Member Care Team (or identify mentors) to maintain active contact with new members over at least two years, or until they are actively involved in the fabric of our congregation, by 3Q06.

**H:** Members of Evangelism Committee, Deacons and Member Care Team

**\$:** None

- c. Develop and implement a comprehensive orientation process for inquirers and new members that includes a strong Stewardship element, by 4Q06.

**H:** Members of existing committees and pastor

**\$:** None

#### **4. Strengthen Leadership Training**

The effectiveness of any leadership team depends upon a shared understanding of important concepts such as the history of Old First; local and national church governance and the Book of Order; the Session and its work and structure; church business, finance and budgeting; skills for handling conflict; committee skills; ministry skills and even what it means to be a leader. There is also a need to develop a shared set of assumptions about how they will work together, argue together and rejoice together.

One strategy to address this need and improve the Old First leadership culture is to conduct a multi-week training program annually for each class of elders and deacons before they are installed. These training sessions would provide a unique opportunity to build community.

Several initiatives may be needed to strengthen leadership training such as ...

- a. Appoint an individual in 1Q06 to develop, in collaboration with Session and the Planning Committee, an annual leadership training program to include elements such as what it means to be called to ordained office; spiritual discernment; responsibilities of leadership; communication and collaboration processes involving leaders, pastor and congregation; community building; group dynamics; processes to ensure open communication and respectful discussion of congregational issues and committee leadership, by 2Q06. (The Table of Contents of such a training program in another church is shown in Appendix VII.)  
**H:** One part time volunteer for three months plus consultation with pastor, Planning Committee and Session  
**\$:** None
- b. Expand the officer election-through-installation schedule to allow sufficient time for training and the leadership retreat, by 3Q06.  
**H:** Members of Planning Committee  
**\$:** None
- c. Complete first class of new leadership training program with the active participation of the pastor, by 1Q07.  
**H:** Time of 16 people over two or three months (class plus pastor and facilitators)  
**\$:** Minimal (for training supplies)

#### **5. Strengthen Evangelism and Our Outward-Looking Face**

Our current evangelism efforts are aimed primarily at making visitors feel welcomed when they enter our doors. Not enough is done by Old First to present a compelling face to our community in order to attract people who do not yet know us. Some of our mission efforts serve the needs of our community, for example, the Welcome Ministry and the Senior Center, and some of those who came to know us through these activities have become faithful members. But we do not feel challenged as a congregation to be a spiritual beacon to the larger community in San Francisco.

There are other people in the city that do not yet know us. To those starved for spiritual values, we could be articulating a theology that is relevant to the lives of modern urban dwellers. To those seeking a caring community, we could offer a community of mutual support and service. We need to find ways to touch their lives with God's surprising grace.

Because some members are uncomfortable with more conservative evangelical styles, we need to find an evangelical style that works for us and,

through that style, learn how to share our faith with others.

Several ideas have been suggested for attracting other people, for example, conducting seminars on topics of current interest that might draw both the public and church members to attend and participate in discussions from a Christian perspective such as is done by other churches in our neighborhood such as Grace Cathedral and First Unitarian Universalist Church. The many good ideas that have been suggested will require new resources to manage and support. The leaders may wish to explore this strategy to learn what might be effective and realistic for Old First.

Several initiatives may be needed to strengthen evangelism and project an outward-looking face such as ...

- a. Develop and initiate processes to reach out to people who will be attracted by the special gifts Old First offers, such as worship, welcoming hospitality and support of young families and take advantage of entry points other than our worship services, by 4Q06.  
**H:** Members of existing committees  
**\$:** None
- b. Increase the visibility of the church on Van Ness Avenue, such as adding banners and lighting rose window, by 1Q07.  
**H:** Members of existing committees  
**\$:** Could be several thousand dollars
- c. Articulate a style of evangelism that fits Old First and provides opportunities for members to practice sharing their faith and articulating a theology that is relevant to urban dwellers, by 2Q08.  
**H:** Members of existing committees  
**\$:** None

## **6. Review Session and Committee Structures**

At their current sizes, the 21 elders on Session and the 21 deacons constitute 30% of the average worship attendance last year. These bodies may be too large for the size of Old First today. Much of the work of the church is done by committees of Session, but that structure has not been reviewed since 1992. There is no body in the church today that takes seriously the need for long range planning. All of this suggests that there may be opportunities to significantly improve the effectiveness of the Session and possibly make the experience more enjoyable.

One strategy for addressing this situation is to complete a comprehensive review of the size of Session, the structure of Session committees and the processes employed to get their work done.

Several initiatives may be needed to accomplish this such as ...

- a. Charter a Session Structure Task Force to review the size, structure and effectiveness of Session, by 3Q06. (See Appendix VIII for a draft charter)  
**H:** 5 persons plus pastor for about 12 months  
**\$:** None
- b. Implement Session Structure Task Force recommendations by 4Q07 (for approving any needed Bylaw and Standing Rules changes and revising the nomination process) and 1Q08 (for the new structure).  
**H:** Time to discuss in Session meetings  
**\$:** Minimal

## **7. Strengthen Stewardship**

Historically, our stewardship efforts can best be described as fundraising. And, given the messages of Appendix IV that giving and the percentage of people who pledge are declining, it is tempting to respond with a better fundraising program. Instead, we should step back and take a fresh look at what stewardship should be about.

This document characterizes Stewardship as a response to God's call and to God's abundance in our lives. This suggests that our Stewardship efforts should be focused, not simply on fundraising, but on creating a congregation so aware of celebrating God's abundant love that they long to respond with generosity. We can point to generous people around Old First, but imagine a whole congregation of generous people. Realizing this will not be a two month effort; rather it will require a year-round effort over many years. This work was begun in the Fall of 2005. Strengthening Stewardship could be another way to touch the lives of others by God's surprising grace.

Several initiatives may be needed to strengthen stewardship such as ...

- a. Develop and publish a report describing a new understanding of year-round Stewardship that is appropriate for Old First. This report should be based on reading about alternative views of Stewardship and conversations with neighboring churches and should include elements such as how the new understanding will be implemented and communicated to the congregation, by 4Q06.  
**H:** Members of existing committees  
**\$:** Minimal
- b. Provide bi-annual training on generous Christian stewardship, including estate planning and effective use of personal resources, starting 2Q07.  
**H:** External resources will be required  
**\$:** None, if viewed as a sales presentation
- c. Develop a long-range plan to address the needs of our building, by 2Q07.  
**H:** Members of existing committees  
**\$:** Minimal
- d. Demonstrate a long-term commitment to every member visits for communication and feedback about the life of Old First at least every other year, starting 4Q08.  
**H:** 20 hours/year by all elders and deacons  
**\$:** None

The 2000 Mission Vision report included a long-range financial plan for funding the new initiatives proposed therein. That plan included projected increases in membership and giving. These increases did not happen for the reasons discussed elsewhere in this report.

The current Mission Vision Team has decided not to include such a long-range financial plan in this document because, as we have learned, predicting income increases in the next few years is very difficult and deciding today how best to use any increased resources does not allow for changing priorities. But the Team does recognize that the initiatives proposed here will require extra volunteer and financial resources. As mentioned above, these extra resources are estimated for each initiative.

**8. Increase Paid Staff** This challenge is listed last, not because of its priority, but because its nature is different than the others above. This challenge provides a firm foundation on which to base effective implementation of many of the initiatives described above.

Our recent history has demonstrated that our major programs are more effective if they are supported and managed by someone trained and paid to do this work. We have also demonstrated that some programs can be led and managed by volunteers in the short-term, but this requires an exceptional level of talent, commitment and time that cannot be sustained for the long-term. In addition, not having a sufficient number of paid staff members puts an unrealistic burden on our pastor.

When the Director of Christian Education resigned in 2002, the Session decision not to fill the position was driven, not surprisingly, by financial considerations. Those financial constraints may still exist. Half way through 2005, the Session was able to find new money and committed to funding a new Church School Director through the end of 2006. This was not a long-term commitment.

To provide the additional income needed to cover the costs of new positions only, the Mission Vision Team suggests that the Session use some of the church assets to provide the additional income needed for the first three years of any new position. Such a decision should be viewed as an investment in the future to provide program quality and stability.

In setting these time estimates, it is assumed that all paid staff will attend staff meetings as often as needed for communication and coordination.

We may need to add several new positions to provide adequate support and management of critical church programs such as ...

- a. Hire a part-time Congregational Nurture Director 1) to provide leadership and oversight to the small groups at Old First, including coordinating resources for and communication between small groups, 2) to link friends and members (existing and new) to church activities, including small groups and 3) to staff Small Group sub-committee of CE and Deacons, starting 3Q06.  
**H:** 30% paid position  
**\$:** \$16,000/year
- b. Make a long-term commitment to continue funding of a part-time Church School Director, at no less than 40%, starting 1Q07.  
**H:** 40% paid position  
**\$:** \$20,700/year
- c. Hire a part-time Adult Education Director to provide leadership and management of the Adult Education programs, starting 1Q08. (This responsibility could be added to the Director of Congregational Nurture, if appropriate.)  
**H:** 20% paid position  
**\$:** \$11,000/year
- d. Increase the percent of paid time of the Church School Director or Adult Education Director to expand ministry to children, youth and families, starting 2010.  
**H:** 20% paid position  
**\$:** \$11,300/year



## **OTHER CHALLENGES**

In some areas of our mission, the seeds of change and commitment to new directions have already been planted. These new seedlings, however, have yet to become fully integrated into our organizational and institutional structure. They remain vulnerable to changes in priorities and leadership and will need continued support and nurture.

The Other Challenges described in this section can be addressed by existing committees. Generally, these committees know what the challenges are and only need to make time to do what they know needs to be done.

### **A. Strengthen Mission Commitment and Participation**

The seeds of understanding mission as, not just giving money, but giving of ourselves in a ministry of presence and compassion, have been planted. But these seeds have not yet fully taken root throughout the congregation.

We mostly rely on paid staff, a few dedicated volunteers and ecumenical networks to maintain community ministries. More effort needs to be made to encourage members to participate in and support our community ministries and to integrate their programs and clients more fully into the life of the church.

Several initiatives may be needed to strengthen mission commitment and participation such as ...

- a. Commit to a minimum budget for mission as a percent of undesignated income, by 1Q06.  
**H:** Discussion in Session  
**\$:** 5% will require \$16,250, 10% will require \$32,500
- b. Calendar mission interpretation in worship services at least monthly and schedule other opportunities for mission interpretation in small groups and one-time events, with the intent of increasing awareness of community ministries, global mission and peacemaking and of the need to be connectional (both ecumenically and denominationally), by 2Q06.  
**H:** Members of existing committee  
**\$:** None
- c. Complete a time-limited mission project that requires direct involvement of members either locally (such as Habitat for Humanity) or internationally, by 2009.  
**H:** Significant time for 6 to 12 people  
**\$:** Potentially significant

### **B. Strengthen Christian Education for All Age Groups**

Christian growth is understood as a life-long journey. Currently Christian Education serves the needs of a wide age range of members from infants to elderly. The organizational and training needs of the church are very specialized and time-intensive and the recent addition of a part-time church school director has helped to strengthen our Christian Education program for children. By contrast, there is no current staff involvement in adult education programs.

Several initiatives may be needed to strengthen Christian Education for all ages such as ...

- a. As an interim way to distribute responsibilities and maintain important elements of communication and coordination, restructure the Christian Education Committee into four sub-committees: CYF

(Children Youth and Families), Adult Education, Small Groups and Congregational Retreats, each with a moderator who need not be an ordained elder or deacon, maintaining the CE Committee moderated by a ruling elder and meeting only with sub-committee moderators once a quarter, by 2Q06.

**H:** CE Moderator to develop the new structure

**\$:** None

- b. Initiate joint annual planning meetings involving members of the CE and Worship Committees to ensure that CE curriculum and worship themes are coordinated and to improve accessibility of worship for children, by 3Q07.

**H:** Members of existing committees with pastor and appropriate staff

**\$:** None

### **C. Strengthen Worship**

Many in San Francisco are unfamiliar, or perhaps uncomfortable, with the experience of Reformed Worship. When liturgy is enlivened by music, the arts and liturgical seasons, however, Reformed Worship has the potential to enrich spiritual lives, attracting people throughout the city to come and participate.

Several initiatives may be needed to strengthen worship such as ...

- a. Develop an annual planning calendar for liturgical seasons and festival Sundays, starting 2Q06.

**H:** Members of existing committee with pastor

**\$:** None

- b. Conduct semi-annual training programs in lay liturgical leadership, by 1Q07.

**H:** Members of existing committee with pastor

**\$:** None

- c. Develop for Session approval a plan for restructuring and coordinating non-traditional worship experiences such as Jazz Vespers, Wednesday night vespers, healing and prayer vigils, by 1Q08.

**H:** Members of existing committee with pastor

**\$:** None

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Many of the challenges that we need to face at Old First are not unique to Old First. Many other churches in San Francisco, and in the Presbytery of San Francisco, are also facing these challenges. Some have found successful ways to address them. The Mission Vision Team suggests, therefore, that those who are chosen to work on these initiatives should not try to reinvent their own wheel but, rather, should spend time learning about how others have faced these challenges. It may even be appropriate to work cooperatively with other churches to address these initiatives.

In this report, the Mission Vision Team has sought to point the way to what Old First should and could be. We suggest, however, this visioning work should not be done once every few years when the pastor leaves and the Session forms a Mission Vision Team. Rather this should be done continually by the leadership of Old First, led and encouraged by the pastor. Only in this way will we continue to focus on what we should and could be. In other words, the Mission Vision Team urges the pastor, the Session and the congregation to view this as a living, dynamic vision.

But if it is to live, it needs ownership and it will need constant nurturing. The proposed strategies and initiatives will need to be evaluated periodically and refined as conditions change and new realities present themselves. If this vision is living, over time it will change; some initiatives may need to be pruned and others added. Please make this vision your own and participate in its continuing development.

<b>Hopefully</b>	Cindy Burt
<b>submitted by your</b>	Barry Clagett
<b>Mission Vision</b>	John Sebastian
<b>Team</b>	Jeannie Choy Tate

## **APPENDIX I – A BRIEF HISTORY OF OLD FIRST**

The year 1999 marked our official Sesquicentennial, celebrating 150 years as a congregation.

Founded on May 20, 1849, in the first months of the Gold Rush, Old First is California's oldest Protestant congregation. In its early years, the church established California's first orphanage and the YMCA; later Old First leaders were instrumental in forming the San Francisco Theological Seminary and the University of California.

An early ministry with Chinese laborers led to the founding of a Chinese congregation, which survives today as the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown – one of several churches Old First helped found to serve the needs of the growing city.

The present sanctuary, the congregation's sixth building, was built in 1911 after the previous building was dynamited to help stop the fires that followed the 1906 earthquake.

Old First has always been engaged in social issues. Our pastor in 1861 persuaded the national Presbyterian Church to stand with President Lincoln against slavery. During World War II, our ministers and elders protested the internment of American citizens of Japanese descent. In the 1970s we helped create the Larkin Street Youth Center to serve the needs of runaway teens.

Currently we are working with others to provide services for our homeless neighbors. Another significant dialog involves the ordination of gay and lesbian people in the Presbyterian Church.

(This information is from the Old First Web site, [www.OldFirst.org](http://www.OldFirst.org).)

Additional aspects of our more recent history, particularly as this history relates to pastoral leadership, will be found in Appendix VI.

## **APPENDIX II – OLD FIRST TODAY**

The OLD FIRST TODAY AND OUR MISSION section of the report describes the six dimensions of our mission and some of the special qualities that we want to reaffirm and preserve. This appendix describes these dimensions in greater detail.

Associated with each of these dimensions are challenges, that is, those areas of our life together where growth or change is occurring. Though these challenges are sometimes uncomfortable due to differing expectations and priorities within the congregation, they may well be where God is calling us into the future. Our response to God's call will depend on prayerful discernment to discover where the Holy Spirit is leading us, an ability to engage one another in respectful dialogue, on leadership and resources and on the particular gifts and interests of members and staff.

### **WORSHIP**

Worship is central to Old First's life in Christian community; everything we are and do springs from and informs our life together as a worshipping community. Compelling, lectionary-based sermons, an inspiring music ministry, lay liturgical leadership and participation of children and young adults are central to our worship experience.

Our liturgy is creative. We value Reformed worship and also explore liturgical and musical styles from other traditions and cultures. We celebrate the liturgical seasons through the use of liturgical art, dance and drama.

Christians of all ages are called to glorify God through active worship participation. We take seriously the Reformed concepts that the church is “reformed and always reforming,” that we are a “priesthood of all believers” and that worship is “the work of the people”, not just the pastor. Many members find that worship leadership, healing prayers and liturgical expression through the arts are vital to their spiritual experience.

While in many congregations worship is viewed as primarily a pastor's responsibility, we have a long history of creative collaboration between clergy and laity in worship planning and leadership. Both staff and lay worship leadership work creatively and collaboratively in planning worship services and celebrations and some members are prepared for active, informed worship participation and leadership.

**Challenges:** We have expanded other worship opportunities such as Jazz Vespers, liturgical workshops with other SF churches, Wednesday night vespers and prayer vigils. For all of these we need to develop a better structure for support, communication and accountability.

Worship requires active participation, but we do not always adequately prepare members of all ages for informed worship participation and leadership.

### **CONGREGATIONAL CARE**

Old First is a nurturing Christian community built from the diversity of the city: singles and couples, gay and straight; retirees, families with children, young adults and homeless; all from a variety of income, ethnic, educational and theological backgrounds and with much theological diversity. Many reside in the city only for brief periods. For many members, far from family connections, Old First becomes their Christian family.

As an involved urban congregation, many members focus their lives around church programs and member care. The role of caring is a valued congregational strength; this caring is provided by both the pastor and our active Board of Deacons and Congregational Care Committee. Elderly, homebound and members with significant needs depend upon Old First for friendship and support.

A small but significant number of members have serious personal needs and depend solely on Old First for friendship and support. As elderly members become increasingly homebound, they sometimes feel isolated from congregational life. These needs place a special burden of pastoral care on both staff and members that goes beyond occasional visits or support only in times of crisis.

**Challenges:** There is room for improvement in the way we integrate new members (especially those who may be with us only a short time) quickly into community life. We have long-standing “in groups”, but we do not have an effective mechanism for integrating newer members into these groups. Additionally, we must be realistic in our expectations of church leadership, both pastoral and lay, to help people discern the limits of self-giving and find balance in their personal and spiritual lives.

There are several active small groups at Old First, but the nurturing of these small groups has much room for improvement. Knowledge about the number and membership of these small groups is not broadly shared, and little effort is made to form new small groups or to encourage existing small groups to invite new members into their circle.

Change is inevitable and, though sometimes accompanied by insecurity and controversy, nonetheless holds positive potential for spiritual growth as a Christian community. Because we bring different experiences, assumptions and expectations to our communal life, we sometimes have difficulty hearing and responding to one another in times of controversy. There is a continuing need for learning process skills and for leadership that helps us create a congregational culture where minority opinions can be freely expressed without fear of judgment and where each person feels supported and listened to.

## **SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

Old First provides opportunities to educate the intellect as well as the heart and spirit, but, sadly, few adults participate in these opportunities and we do not truly understand why. We enjoy exploring informed Biblical scholarship and diverse spiritual traditions, and prefer an educational approach that encourages sharing of questions and doubts, sharing personal faith journeys and discussion of theologically and socially controversial issues in a respectful manner.

We are blessed with gifted members, some theologically trained, who, from time to time, lead Sunday morning adult education, small groups, Bible studies, liturgical workshops, retreats and e-mail discussions. Old First remains committed to reaching out to support young families and to form the next generation of Christians.

**Challenges:** Though the whole congregation makes baptismal vows to educate children in the faith, Old First parents bear a disproportionate burden for children’s Christian Education. Though strongly committed to having a part-time paid professional CE on staff, financially we have not been able to meet this commitment until recently. Since the funding for this position is viewed as temporary, we need to make a long-term commitment to funding this important position.

There is an interest in strengthening our Christian education programs for adults, but there is little understanding of what kinds of programs are needed. Additionally, to ensure that our adult education programs are effectively managed, we need to add a part-time adult education professional to our staff. This person could also manage our small group activities.

Because members come from a wide variety of Christian backgrounds, there is a need for CE to create a shared understanding of what it means to be Presbyterian. There is also a need to encourage greater commitment from adult members to their own on-going spiritual growth, possibly in small groups or through new adult education opportunities.

We do not provide opportunities for individuals to learn the skills needed for their own balanced multi-dimensional ministry: 1) liturgical understanding for active worship participation; 2) interpersonal skills for living and serving in a diverse faith community; 3) spiritual skills for discernment and for engaging

one another and our faith tradition in life-long journeys of spiritual growth; 4) a heart for discipleship with an informed understanding of mission and of social and global issues.

## EVANGELISM

Our responses in both evangelism and service (mission) are focused outward to the world beyond our doors. Our evangelism efforts are motivated by the recognition that we offer worship enriched by the arts and opportunities for spiritual growth, for being part of a caring community, and for service to those in need. We intentionally practice welcoming, inclusive hospitality, identifying visitors to our worship services and inviting them into our ministry. We are not, however, as effective as we need to be in integrating newer members into the fabric of our community.

**Challenges:** We have yet to articulate an evangelical style that works for us, and, in fact, some are uncomfortable with the word *evangelism*. Many members are uncomfortable with more conservative evangelical styles. Some feel that evangelism too often seems motivated by a desire to grow the church larger (to provide a budget and volunteer levels needed to achieve our program goals) instead being seen as a normal response to our experience of God's grace.

It may be possible to identify target populations who will be attracted to the special gifts Old First offers and offer programs that will meet their needs. We may first need to learn how to share our faith journeys, which are often inspiring, with each other. With this practice, we can begin to share the Good News with the un-churched and those in spiritual need in The City.

## SERVICE

Our service or "mission" efforts at Old First today are a continuation of this congregation's long history of supporting an active urban ministry and world mission, all based on a commitment to make a difference in the city and beyond. Examples include our Senior Center, Concerts Program and monthly Jazz Vespers. Our recent history also includes taking risks to respond to the needs around us such as our Welcome Ministry to homeless in our neighborhood, helping to form Covenant Network and commissioning marchers in the annual Gay Pride Parade. Our gift, we have discovered, lies in not just giving money but in providing a ministry of presence and compassion in mutually transforming service.

The seed of understanding mission (as not just giving money but giving of ourselves) has been planted but has not taken root. And many members have neither the time nor informed understanding to participate actively in our local community ministries, let alone those beyond our neighborhood. As a result, we mostly rely on paid staff and a few dedicated volunteers available during the day to maintain local programs.

**Challenges:** Perhaps because of the consuming nature of our local mission efforts or the often intense needs of our own members, mission beyond our members and neighborhood is an area of our ministry that has recently not been emphasized. Visitors to worship, for instance, may hear little about our efforts to make a difference in the city around us or about the mission of the broader church. In this sense, we are not very denominationally "connectional", globally aware or politically active. In the past two years, in response to lower pledge levels, the benevolence budget has been significantly reduced and all but eliminated.

The Welcome Ministry has been a valued way for some members and friends to serve, however, the activity, with the attendant gathering of homeless people along our sidewalk, is upsetting to some neighbors and members. Some members feel a need for more mission interpretation from the pulpit as well as on-going discussion of community ministries, global mission and political issues. Such discussions can be potentially controversial due to the differing opinions and world-views of members, so it is important to conduct them in a way that respects these varying opinions.

Called as Christians to “do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God,” Old First may be more comfortable showing mercy and walking humbly with our God and less comfortable doing justice. For example, with homelessness we seem better at showing mercy and kindness one-on-one, but we are not comfortable with advocating for systemic, political changes.

## **STEWARDSHIP**

This congregation is blessed with able and committed volunteers, financial resources, a beautiful building and parking facilities. With a diverse program, some Old First members unselfishly give of their time, talents and resources, in some cases, performing work that in other congregations would be done by paid staff. For some, this high level of commitment may increase the potential for burnout.

In recent years, however, membership, worship attendance and giving have been declining. (See Appendix III.) This has forced the Session to make difficult budget decisions about priorities. This has been hard on the expectations of our members, especially in relation to Christian Education and Mission. While the congregation may be willing to live with these priorities in the short term, it is unlikely that they will be willing for the long term. Some believe that the only solution to our budget deficits and volunteer time limitations is to grow the church larger through more active evangelism, while others feel that Old First needs to make a long-term financial commitment to all dimensions of the mission described here, no matter what our congregational size. If this is to be the case, we will need a budget process that moves away from old budget paradigms to provide acceptable levels of financial support for all areas of our mission.

**Challenges:** The challenges facing us in the area of Stewardship are best understood by reading Appendix III.

## **LEADERSHIP**

When enthusiastic members identify new needs, we are good at giving permission to develop new programs but rarely do we set up structures for accountability and communication. Too frequently we rely on the head of staff or the church administrator to coordinate a confusing multiplicity of committees, programs and volunteers. In our compassion for each other’s feelings, we are inclined to avoid making the hard decisions such as cutting back or terminating programs or staff.

During the 1990s we completed two multi-million dollar capital campaigns that made significant improvements in our building. In recent years, however, we have not undertaken any significant building projects. As a result serious maintenance problems continue to go unaddressed.

**Challenges:** Urban life and our diverse church program create unrelenting demands on people’s time yet it is not clear that our structures and processes ensure the most effective use of our limited time resources. The size, structure and processes of the Session and its committees have not been reviewed for 12 years – an evaluation is overdue. Such a review may find ways to improve structures and processes that would allow volunteer and staff time to be used more effectively. We need to set clear and realistic expectations for committees and programs and be intentional about ensuring continuity of leadership on committees and in times of transition.

The effectiveness of Session could be improved if elders shared an understanding of important concepts such as the history of Old First; local and national church governance and the Book of Order; the Session and its work and structure; church business, finance and budgeting; skills for handling conflict; committee skills; ministry skills and even what it means to be a leader.

Many members feel that they are not connected with the leaders of the church and that the leaders do not seek their input on important issues. On the other hand, some elders feel that members of the congregation do not express their concerns to elders and do not support elders or give them feedback. In other words there is inadequate, two-way communication between leaders and church members.



Finally, strong, collaborative leadership is essential for the effective operation of Old First as a partnership between staff and laity and within the staff team. While we believe in a collaborative lay/clergy leadership model, we are not always certain what this means realistically, especially since different leadership styles and models are appropriate on different occasions.

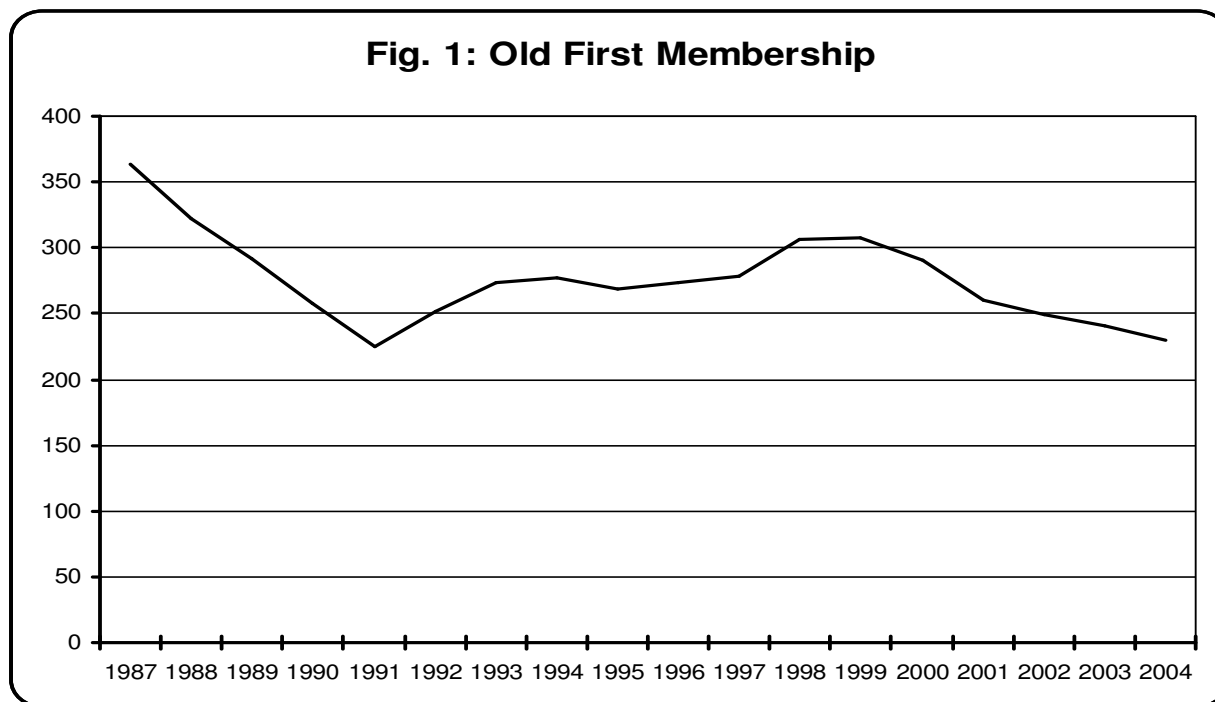
In summary, the following highlights should be noted:

- We need to improve our processes for integrating new members into our community life.
- We need to improve our processes for nurturing the small groups in our community.
- We need to create a culture where all opinions can be freely expressed without fear of judgment and where each person feels supported and listened to.
- We need to understand the most effective ways to strengthen our adult education programs.
- We need to articulate an evangelism style that is appropriate for this congregation.
- We need to find new ways to reach out to the public and learn how to share our faith journeys with those outside our building.
- We need to make a commitment to an adequate support of benevolences in our annual budgets.
- We need to review the size, structure and processes of the Session.
- We need to improve our lay leadership skills.

## APPENDIX III – ANALYSIS OF MEMBERSHIP AND GIVING TRENDS

We can gain some insights on the state of the congregation in 2005 if we look at the trends in membership and giving over the last several years. In particular, it is instructive to look at how much these aspects of Old First have changed since 1999 and to understand the impacts of these changes.

**Membership:** One way to look at the changes we have experienced is to look at the trends in membership over time. These are shown in Figure 1. (These numbers are from our annual reports to Presbytery.) The purpose in showing this trend over this period is to show the cycles associated with the last few called pastors.



Clearly there have been significant swings since the mid 1980s. Some dates may be of interest:

Roger Hull was the called pastor until May 1988

Tim Hart-Andersen was the called pastor from October 1990 until September 1999.

Sam Alexander was the called pastor from November 2001 until January 2004.

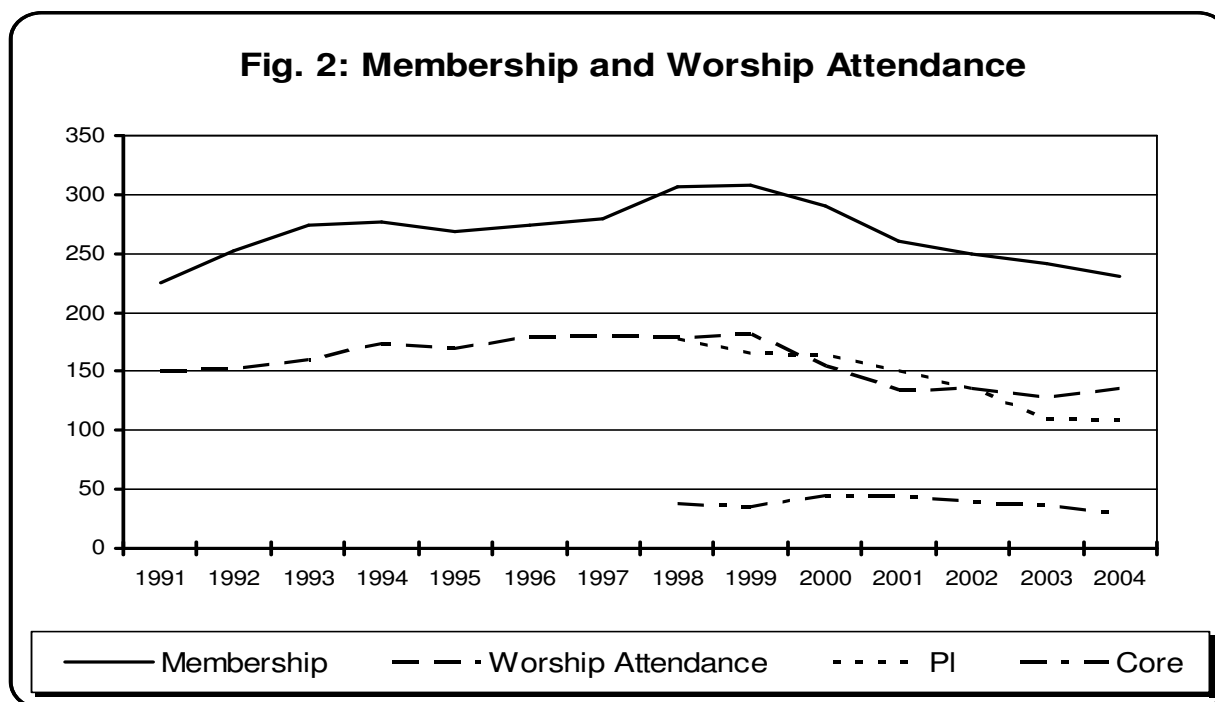
Note that, even with all the work we did to grow membership in the 1990s, the membership never did return to the level it was at the end of 1987 (364 members).

Let's now look at the trends in membership and worship attendance since 1991. These are shown in Figure 2 on the next page.

At the end of 1999 our membership was 308 and the average worship attendance was 182. At the end of 2004 our membership was 230 and the average worship attendance was 136. In other words, both our membership and worship attendance is now about 75% of what they were in 1999. (We will describe lines **PI** and **Core** later.)

During this period we gained 54 members and lost 132 members. There are many reasons for the membership drop over this period. Of the losses, 52 (about 40%) were due to our systematic efforts to remove non-active members from the roll. The remaining losses from death, transfer, etc. (80) were not offset by membership gains (54). This helps us understand some of the reasons for the drop in membership. But, since non-active members did not attend worship, it does not fully explain the drop in

worship attendance. The reasons for both drops may be related. Understandably, the reasons for these changes are complex, but these reasons probably include a lack of both stability and a sense of direction since 1999.



Whether we look at membership or worship attendance, there are serious consequences of this drop: we have fewer volunteer resources and fewer financial resources. This reduction has impacts on programming, staff and lay leaders. Our situation today is particularly difficult for staff and lay leaders. With a smaller staff, each is called on to do more and burn out is a looming threat.

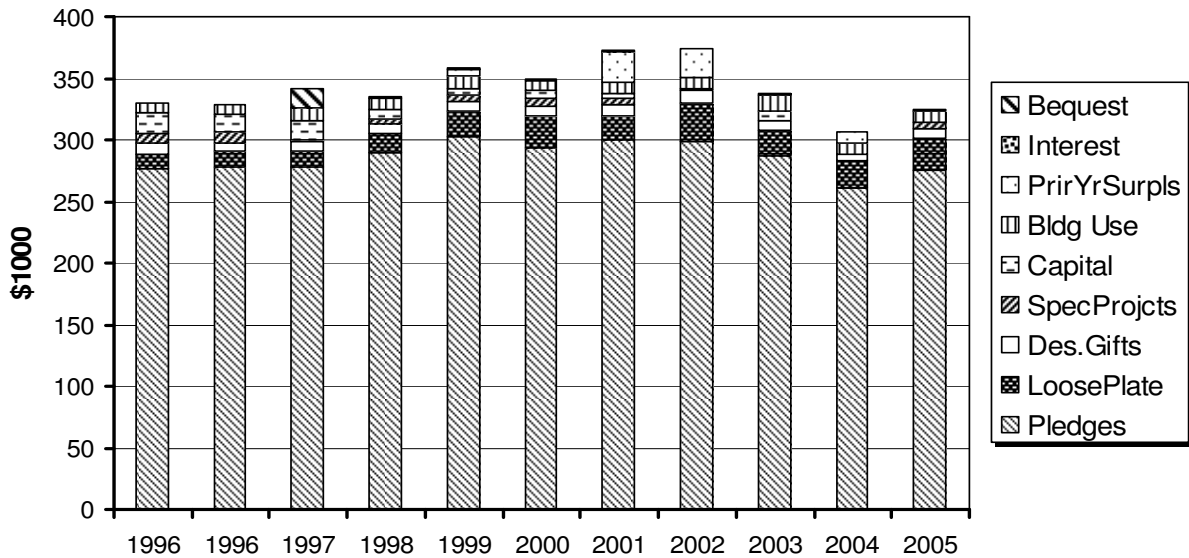
**Finances:** It is instructive to look at the changes in our budgeted operating income and expenses for the period 1999 to 2005. To make comparisons easier, these are called *simplified* budgets. In the *simplified* budgets, some items have been removed from our actual budgets. For example, budget items that are a “wash”, that is items for which the expense equals the income (e.g. One Great Hour of Sharing) have been removed. Also, during some of these years the budgets included a Senior Center Director and Welcome Ministry Director and during others the budgets did not. These last two positions were, in effect, funded by special investment funds and special gifts and so were, in effect “washes”. These income and expense items have been removed from these *simplified* budgets.

Figures 3 and 4 on the next page show the income and expenses in these simplified budgets. These simplified budgets show more clearly how church operations are supported by pledges and other donations.

This graph clearly shows that most of our income comes from pledges. Loose Plate income is that received in the weekly offering plate that is not a pledge. Designated Gifts are those given for Coffee Hour, Flowers, etc. Special Projects are fund raising projects that Session decides to undertake from time to time to help balance the budget. Capital is the amount we use from investment funds.

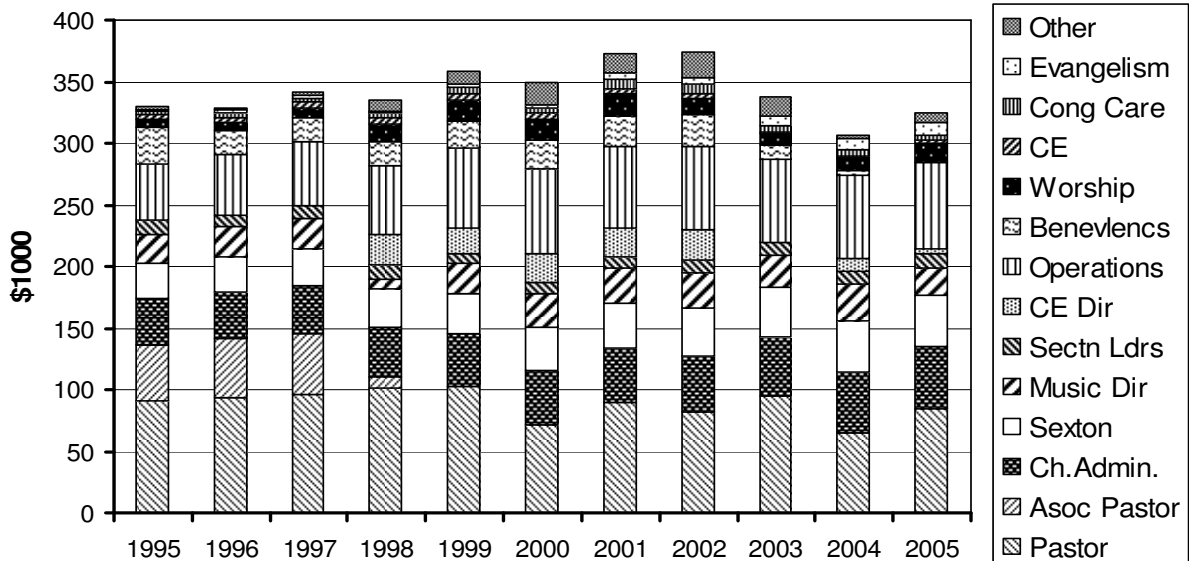
During this period, the sum of Pledges and Loose Plate was between 87% and 93% of the *simplified* budgeted income.

**Fig. 3: Simplified Budget Income Sources**



The Simplified Budget Expenses are shown in Figure 4.

**Fig. 4: Simplified Budget Expense Categories**



The expenses shown for each position include the salaries paid to the individuals and the taxes and benefits we pay on those salaries. Some of these expenses are relatively constant over this period, such as the Church Office Administrator and Sexton positions.

If you look carefully at this graph you will notice that for 1995 through 1997 we had an Associate Pastor (Lonna Lee). For the years 1998 through 2002 you can see the Christian Education Director. Through most of this period benevolence giving was significant, but in 2004 it almost disappeared and in 2005 it vanished altogether. (Because the 2005 budgeted benevolences were funded totally from 2004 surplus, both the income and expense were a wash and, hence, are not part of this *simplified* budget.)

We could just as well have plotted actual expenses, but we chose to use budgeted expenses since they display the priorities of Session each year. Also, budgeted expenses are set to match the expected income each year. (Since the severance costs in 2004 were covered by special gifts, these budgeted costs were excluded from the 2004 totals.)

The values used to plot this graph are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Approved Budgets, in \$1,000**

<b>Year</b>	<b><u>1999</u></b>	<b><u>2000</u></b>	<b><u>2001</u></b>	<b><u>2002</u></b>	<b><u>2003</u></b>	<b><u>2004</u></b>	<b><u>2005</u></b>
Personnel	241.5	228.0	238.2	239.3	235.5	210.5	222.3
Operations	64.0	68.9	66.5	67.5	66.9	67.4	69.7
Benevolences	22.1	23.5	24.7	25.7	11.7	3.8	0.0
Worship	16.7	16.5	17.8	13.1	8.8	9.7	15.9
Christian Education	5.6	5.2	4.0	4.0	2.3	2.1	2.3
Congregational Care	5.3	4.2	8.4	8.3	4.9	4.5	4.8
Evangelism	2.5	2.5	4.6	4.7	7.0	9.1	10.2
Other	0.4	0.0	8.0	12.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>358.1</b>	<b>348.8</b>	<b>372.1</b>	<b>374.5</b>	<b>337.1</b>	<b>307.1</b>	<b>325.2</b>

Note that, by far, the largest expense is Personnel. This includes salaries, benefits, insurance and all other personnel related expenses. The next largest is Operations (split into Administration and Building in our budget), which has remained fairly constant during this period. The most variable personnel costs over this period are those of the Pastor, which is not surprising because of the many changes.

The year 2002 was the last year we had a part time Christian Education Director. The total *simplified* budgeted expense was \$374,500 in 2002. For 2005, the total budgeted expense is \$325,200, a drop of \$49,300 (13%). While some categories increased during this period, the big drops were in Personnel and Benevolences. Note also that, for 2005, the sum of Benevolences, Worship, Christian Education, Congregational Care and Evangelism is \$33,200 or about 10% of the total *simplified* budget.

In 1999, support of the three full time positions (Pastor, Church Office Administrator and Sexton) required 74% of the personnel expenses. In 2005 these positions require 79% of the personnel budget.

**Giving:** Let us now look at some giving metrics. Using the information in Figures 2 and 3, it is interesting to consider the numbers shown in Table 2. (In this table, the Annual Budget amounts are from the *simplified* budgets.) Note that in 2001 and 2002, the *simplified* annual operating budget was greater than in 1999. Note also that, because the average worship attendance was down and the annual budgets were up, the budgeted dollars per worship attendee were significantly higher in 2001 and 2002 than they were in 1999. Since 2002 this giving has dropped, but not to the level it was in 1999.

**Table 2: Giving Metrics**

<b><u>Year</u></b>	<b><u>Avg. Worship Attendance</u></b>	<b><u>Annual Budget</u></b>	<b><u>Budgeted \$ per Worship Attendee</u></b>	<b><u>Actual P+LP Giving</u></b>	<b><u>Generosity Index</u></b>
1999	182	\$358,100	\$1,968	\$320,600	\$1,762
2000	154	\$348,800	\$2,265	\$336,000	\$2,182
2001	134	\$372,100	\$2,777	\$329,500	\$2,459
2002	136	\$374,500	\$2,754	\$333,400	\$2,452
2003	127	\$337,100	\$2,654	\$321,800	\$2,534
2004	136	\$307,100	\$2,258	\$298,700	\$2,197

Typically, the sum of pledge giving and loose plate giving (non-pledged offerings put in the plate each week) is about 90% of the total *simplified* operating fund income. (The other 10% is shown in Figure 3.) Since this giving is not designated for a specific account, it is a good gauge of the congregation's generosity. The actual pledge plus loose plate giving is shown in the next to last column of Table 3. Since 2002, this giving has dropped 10%.

The numbers in the last column show a different metric, what is called the "Generosity Index." The Generosity Index is the total pledge plus loose plate income divided by the average worship attendance. Note that the Generosity Index was significantly higher in 2001 and 2002 than it was in 1999. This is because both the giving was higher and the worship attendance was lower. The Generosity Index seemed to go up even higher in 2003, but this is because, while the actual giving went down, the worship attendance went down even further.

The message to be drawn from this is that, even though worship attendance dropped quite a bit after 1999, total giving and spending were up through 2002. Our giving and spending difficulties did not start until 2003.

**Pledging:** It may be helpful to understand a bit more about the trends in pledge giving during this period. Refer back to the graph showing Membership and Worship Attendance, Figure 2. The line labeled **PI** is the number of members who pledged each year (not pledging units). This number dropped from 178 at the end of 1998 to 109 at the end of 2004, a drop of 39%. Put another way, at the end of 1998, 58% of our membership pledged; at the end of 2004, 47% of our membership pledged. This also means that there are 121 members who do not pledge, though about a dozen of these numbers give regularly. So, not only is our membership declining, but the percentage of our membership who pledge is also declining.

Let us look at the core group of people who pledge, that is, pledging units that pledge \$3,000/year or more. At the end of 2004, there were 24 pledging units in this core group of givers. In this 24 pledging units are 30 members. The line labeled **Core** in Figure 2 is the number of members in this core group each year. You can see that the number of members has remained relatively constant over this period. Details of this core group of givers are shown in Table 3 below. The last column shows the percentage of the total dollars pledged from this group. (For 2005 the total dollars pledged is \$265,700.) You can see that we are growing more reliant on a smaller percentage of our membership. The loss of a just a few of these members would have a big impact on our budget.

**Table 3: Contributions from Core Group of Givers**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>% of Membership</u>	<u>Pledged</u>	<u>% of Total \$ Pledged</u>
1999	38	12%	\$153,900	54%
2000	35	11%	\$146,100	52%
2001	45	16%	\$180,800	60%
2002	45	17%	\$199,500	66%
2003	40	16%	\$188,000	66%
2004	36	15%	\$182,600	71%
2005	30	13%	\$187,400	71%

It is worth looking at the age demographics of our pledge base. Table 4 on the next page shows the age demographics of this core pledging group in 2005. The Core Pledging Group is mostly working adults (age 40 to 59) as opposed to retired persons (age 60 and older). Note also that the eight members in the oldest age groups pledge a total of \$33,500. Since new members pledge between \$1,000 and \$1,500 per year, it would take more than 22 new members to realize the same pledge income.

**Table 4: Age Demographics of Core Pledging Group**

<u>Number</u>	<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Amount Pledged</u>	<u>Average Pledge</u>
7	40-49	\$37,240	\$5,320
11	50-59	\$81,520	\$7,411
4	60-69	\$35,100	\$8,775
6	70-79	\$25,500	\$4,250
2	80+	\$ 8,000	\$4,000

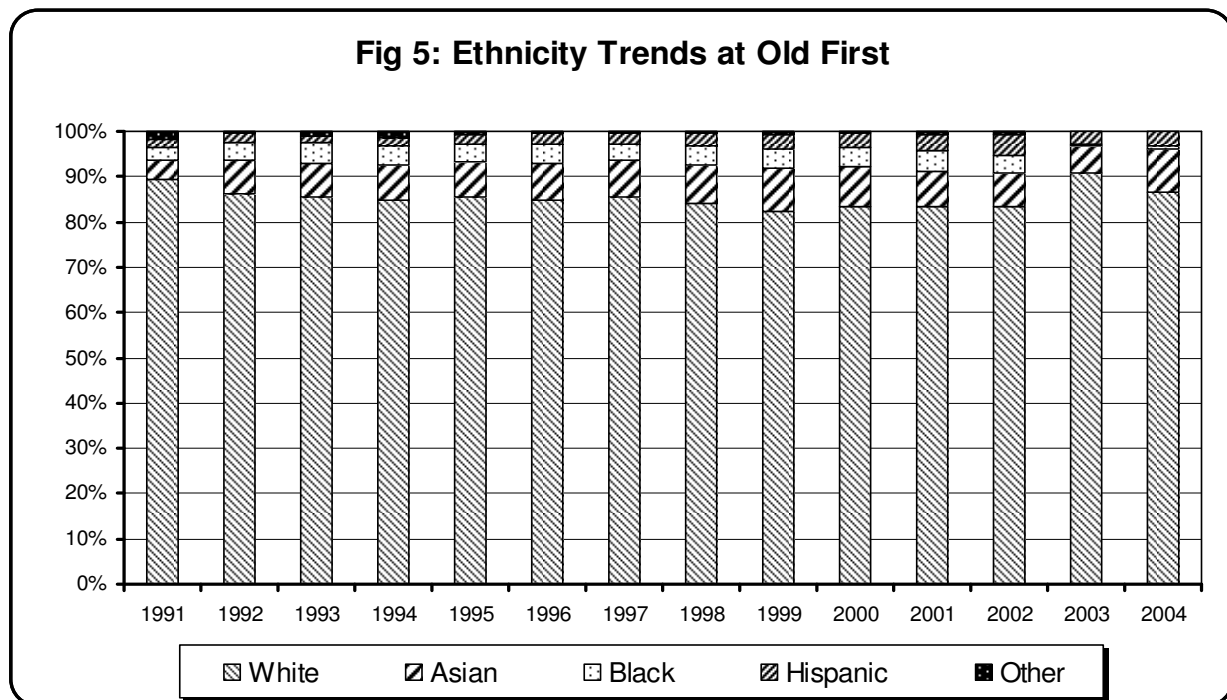
**Budget Impact:** Faced with this declining income, the Session has been forced to make difficult choices at budget time. For example, in both 2004 and 2005, our benevolence giving has dropped to very low levels; in 2005 it dropped to zero, and in 2005 the music program was reduced to a bare bones level. In order to produce a balanced budget, the Session arbitrarily increased pledge and loose plate income and added a \$5,000 special fund raising project to a committee that is already busy. We suspect that this budget makes no one happy.

In summary, from this information we may draw these conclusions:

- Membership and worship attendance are down 25% from 1999 levels
- Our operating budget is down 13% from 2002 levels
- Even though worship attendance dropped after 1999, total giving (and spending) were higher in 2001 and 2002
- The actual pledge plus loose plate giving has dropped 10% from 2002 levels
- The percentage of our membership who pledge dropped 39% between 1999 and 2005; currently 47% of our members pledge
- To support our budget, we are growing more reliant on a smaller percentage of our membership
- The Core Pledging Group is mostly working adults (age 40 to 59) as opposed to retired persons (age 60 and older)

## APPENDIX IV – ANALYSIS OF CONGREGATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHICS

The graph in Figure 5 shows the trends in the ethnicity of the membership of Old First since 1991. This figure is based on the information provided to the Presbytery each year. This figure shows that Old First is primarily a white congregation; the next larger group is Asian (10% in 2004).



Old First views its neighborhood as all of San Francisco. The ethnic composition of the membership of Old First is compared to that of San Francisco and our ZIP code, 94109, in the table below. These statistics are from 1990 and 2000 Census data. The composition for Old First is based on our 1990 and 2004 year-end statistical reports to Presbytery.

Ethnic Group	San Francisco		94109		Old First	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2004
Black	10.5%	7.8%	3.6%	3.2%	2.7%	0.9%
Asian	29.6%	30.8%	32.3%	27.8%	4.4%	9.6%
Hispanic*	14.0%	14.1%	6.1%	7.9%	1.8%	3.0%
White	46.6%	49.7%	57.5%	61.5%	89.3%	86.5%
Other	0.3%	11.7%	0.5%	7.4%	1.8%	0.0%

\*In the 2000 census and subsequently, people of Hispanic or Latino origin may be of any race. Hence, the percentages do not add up to 100%. Additionally, the ethnic characterization in the Presbytery report is not consistent with the characterization used by the US Census Bureau.

Old First is clearly mostly a white congregation, unlike the area around our church or San Francisco.

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of households in San Francisco increased 8%, the number of family households increased 2% and the number of married-couple families increased 4%. But, the number of families with children increased only 2% during this period.

It is instructive to compare the percentage of families with children in San Francisco with two of our neighbors. In 2000, 17% of the households in San Francisco were families with children, but in Oakland, 29% of the households were families with children and in San Jose, 38% of the households were families with children. So, while the number of families with children in San Francisco may be increasing slightly,



these families make up a significantly smaller percentage of the total number of households when compared with other cities. In addition, 16% of the population in San Francisco is under 20 years old. In Oakland, 27% is under 20 and in San Jose, 29% is under 20. These statistics reflect the special challenges that families with children have in San Francisco.

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of non-family households increased 13% and the number of householders living alone increased 6%, but during this period, the number of householders 65 years and over dropped 9%, and the total population of those 65 and older increased by only 0.7%. In 2000, 39 % of households were people living alone, a higher percentage than in Oakland (33%) and in San Jose (18%).

Understanding the age distribution in San Francisco in 2000 might help to define a target population for our evangelism efforts.

<b><u>Age Group</u></b>	<b><u>2000 SF % of Population</u></b>	<b><u>2004 OF % of Congregation</u></b>
Under 26	24	8
26 to 35	23	13
36 to 55	31	43
56 to 64	8	12
65 and over	14	24

The third column shows the age distribution of the congregation at the end of 2004. One reason the percentage of people under 26 is lower in Old First is that we do not count children as members until they actually join. Note also that the percentage of those 65 and older is higher in Old First than it is in San Francisco.

## APPENDIX V – INVENTORY OF PROGRAMS

PROGRAM	STAFF/COMMITTEE	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
<b>Worship Committee</b>				
Sunday Worship Service	Pastor, lay leadership	A service that is inclusive, welcoming, grounded in Biblical scholarship, expressive in music and liturgical arts and encourages participation by lay leaders	Average attendance - 90	Sundays 11:00 - 12:15
Jazz Vespers	Pastor, lay leadership	Contemporary worship service focused on the spiritual aspects of life with live jazz music by local jazz musicians	Average attendance - 70 with 90% non-members	First Sunday of every month 5:00 p.m.
Central Gardens Worship	Volunteers	One on one visitation; tea parties with music; monthly worship service	Volunteers	Once a month
Wednesday Evening Prayers	Volunteers	A contemporary service of disciplined quiet, mediation and music	Average attendance - 10	First Wednesday of every month 7:30 p.m.
Liturgical Dancers	Director of Music	Working closely with the Director of Music, lectionary-based dances are presented as part of the Sunday worship service several times a year.	Dancers	Worship services
Choir	Director of Music	Music is lectionary-based and includes a broad range of styles, including rhythms, sounds, and songs from around the globe and across the Christian era. The choir also presents concerts featuring large works and other special music during the year.	25 adults	Sunday worship service
Children's Music Program	Director of Children's Music	Children are guided in the development of music fundamentals, and basic music elements.	10 children	Sundays 9:30 - 10:15
<b>Christian Education Committee</b>				
Adult CE Education	Pastor, Volunteers	Sunday morning class that alternates between Bible study, theological topics, and social issues.	6-15 participants; Open to members and visitors	Sundays 9:30 - 10:30
Church School	Church School Director, Volunteers	Ecumenical lectionary-based curriculum	Approximately 15 children, ages 3 - 15	Sundays during worship
Nursery	Paid staff	Caring relationships for infants and toddlers.	3 to 5	Sundays 10:00 - 12:30
Confirmation Class	Volunteers	6-8 week series of classes in preparation for confirmation	Ninth-graders	As needed
Congregation Retreat	Christian Education	A weekend get-away for discernment, fellowship and fun	Congregation invited; 55 - 85 participants	Annually Spring
Fellowship Events	Volunteers	Fellowship events that are family-oriented like Advent Wreath making and trips to the zoo	Congregation invited, especially families	3 - 4 events/year
Wednesday Bible Study	Pastor or volunteer leader	Reading and discussion of lectionary for the upcoming Sunday worship service	8 - 10 members	Wednesdays 10:30 - Noon

PROGRAM	STAFF/COMMITTEE	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
<b>Congregational Care Committee</b>				
Church Social Events	Congregational Care Committee	Fellowship opportunities for the congregation	Typically 80 - 90 participants	Approximately six events a year
Small Groups		Opportunities for fellowship, study and support	5+ groups	Variable but most meet once a month
<b>Mission Activities Directed or Administered by Old First Church</b>				
Senior Center	Director of the Senior Center, volunteers	Activity center started by Doris Kraus over 35 years ago and has been in continuous operation. Opportunity for lunch and fellowship through discussion groups, arts and crafts, mahjong tables, arm-chair exercises, music, tai chi, line dancing.	Anyone over the age of 60. Approximately 50 - 60 seniors; most are women in their 70s and 80s.	Mondays 10:00 - 2:30 p.m.
Welcome Center	Director of the Welcome Ministry, volunteers who help serve guests and provide hospitality	Offers a ministry of presence to homeless neighbors. Provides lunch on Tuesdays and activities one Wednesday a month and a safe quiet place to rest. Offers pastoral support including prayer, and referrals to health and social services.	45 - 50 regular guests	Tuesdays 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. and second Wednesday 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.
Community Dinner	Director of the Welcome Ministry, volunteers from nearby churches and businesses	Serving and providing hospitality with a hot meal to our homeless neighbors	90 guests	Second Saturday of the month
Care Closet	Director of the Welcome Ministry; Board of Deacons	Provides nonperishable food, nutritional drinks and clothing to homeless neighbors	10 people per week	Three days a week
Moment for Mission	Mission Committee; representatives from organizations supported by OFPC.	Monthly opportunity for organizations that receive OFPC Mission financial support and OFPC members to educate and learn about their organizations' work	Organizations that receive OFPC Mission support.	Monthly
<b>Evangelism Committee</b>				
Visitor Lunches	Pastor, Evangelism Committee	Provide opportunity for visitors to know Old First better	Visitors to worship	Sundays after worship every 2 - 3 months
New Member Classes	Pastor, Evangelism Committee	Presbyterian denomination information for and expectations of interested potential new members	Prospective new members of Old First	Periodically during the year

PROGRAM	STAFF/COMMITTEE	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
<b>Other Programs</b>				
Presbyterian Women	Volunteer co-moderators	Opportunity for fellowship and bible study; fundraising activities to support Witnessing Ministries for Christ and various local benevolence	12 - 15 members	Third Saturday of the month, 2 hour meeting includes lunch and bible study
Leadership Retreat	Planning Committee	A weekend off-site meeting to discuss current Old First topics	Serving Deacons and Elders	Annually February
Old First Concerts	Old First Session, Executive Director, Community Board of Directors, Old First and other volunteers	65 Chamber Music concerts/year that feature professional musicians from Bay Area orchestras and conservatories. Ticket pricing directed to frequent concertgoers, seniors and students. Emphasis on neighborhood access and volunteers	6 - 7,000 attendees annually	Friday evenings, Sunday afternoons

## APPENDIX VI – ANALYSIS OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

In recent history, Old First has had three different permanent pastors – in the 80s, 90s, and 2002-03. For all three, the Pastor Nominating Committees nominated married men with young families. These Pastor Nominating Committees also consistently emphasized compelling, scholarship-based sermons and a commitment to ministry in the city of San Francisco. Given these three commonalities, it seems important to explore their implications in greater depth.

Other aspects of pastoral leadership also deserve some analysis: Contrasting Pastoral Leadership Styles and Church Growth and Pastoral Leadership Styles.

### **Pastors with Young Families:**

The option of a pastor with a young family is an attractive one, possibly based on the assumption that a pastor with young children is more likely to reach out to other San Francisco families. A relatively young pastor may also be considered likely to engage the interest of young couples and singles in joining the church. Indeed, this has often been the case. In the 90s, in particular, the number of younger members and young families grew to the extent that the church was able to employ a part-time Director of Christian Education to enhance the Church School program and also involve children more in worship.

**Implications:** 1) As the City becomes increasingly unaffordable to young families, this impacts the pastor and his or her family. Not only does the provision of housing in a desirable neighborhood impact the pastor's and the congregation's finances, there are other issues to take into account: quality education, the changing needs of growing children and job considerations for spouses. Over time, children grow up; marriages sometimes change. A pastor's spouse, for instance, may change in their understanding of their marriage, career and role in the congregation or enthusiasm for urban living.

2) In the 90s, our pastor's spouse worked in the family home and valued making the pastor's home a center for congregational hospitality; this was greatly appreciated. However, it is unlikely that many pastors with children will, in the future, find living on a single salary to be an affordable option.

### **Worship and Sermons:**

In the 80s, while continuing to focus sermons around the lectionary, the pastor began to move towards a less formal preaching style and towards more creative, engaging worship. The 80s also saw an emphasis on sacramental ministry with the frequency of communion increasing to twice a month.

These changes continued into the 90s. The pastor moved toward shorter, engaging sermons and a warm, inviting liturgical style. There was greater focus on the importance of the whole liturgy to the experience of worship. Musical styles expanded in cultural diversity. Festival Sundays were inaugurated to celebrate the liturgical year through the arts, in dance and with the participation of children and youth. Laity became very involved in worship planning and many began to see this involvement as important to their spiritual growth.

In 2002-03, however, the role of laity in planning worship became a major issue for the new pastor, as did the tradition of lectionary preaching. The pastor felt his own worship leadership skills were being underutilized and unappreciated. Sermons again became longer and occupied a central place in the worship.

**Implications:** 1) Some members consider the sermon to be their major, if not only, source of adult Christian Education and therefore a high priority. Other members receive their spiritual nurture more through the experience of creative liturgy and the liturgical arts and would like to increase this emphasis. It may be difficult to find pastors equally skilled in preaching and in the liturgical arts.

2) There is wide variation in what is considered a good sermon: a) thoughtful Biblical scholarship and

lectionary-based exegesis; b) pastor's personal faith journey; c) skilled use of language and metaphor; d) vision and challenge to serve others in the city.

3) While committed to worship as the work of the people, Old First is just beginning to develop a collaborative style for worship planning that ensures adequate preparation and follow-through; in the past, responsibility has often fallen to the pastor for coordination and follow-through to ensure lay participation.

4) While Old First values imagination, creativity and spontaneity in worship, we also place great importance on Reformed worship traditions.

### **Mission to the City:**

In the 80's, the pastor helped Old First with a response to neighborhood and merchant concerns about homeless and runaway youth. Initial dialogue through the Polk St Town Hall led to partnering with the community to establish the highly successful Larkin St Youth Center that continues to this day. The Senior Center, Tutorial Program and Old First Concerts were continued through this time. Only the Senior Center and Old First Concerts are active today.

In the 90s, a growing issue in San Francisco was that of homelessness. As church members encountered homeless people sleeping in our doorways and alongside the church, a need was felt to seek a faithful and tangible response to homeless people. A Homelessness Task Force was established, a community dialogue begun and the Welcome Ministry started. The Welcome Ministry has since incorporated as a separate non-profit organization though the part-time staff person remains a member of the Old First staff team. Funding for this program and on-going congregational and community interpretation continue to be necessary.

In the 90s, another major issue confronting San Francisco and Old First was the AIDS epidemic. Several members, including deacons and elders, became ill and died. This included a gifted artist who came to our doorstep asking for our help in exchange for a painted ceiling in the exonarthex. The Holy Spirit was at work in Old First as hearts and homes opened. People with AIDS were embraced, vigils held with them as they died and their lives were celebrated in memorials and quilt panels. These personal experiences led our pastor and our congregation to study the issues of homosexuality, faith and the church's response. Over several years Old First became a leader in the Presbytery and then the denomination in efforts to make the Presbyterian Church more welcoming and inclusive, particularly through the ministry of the Covenant Network. This commitment continues as an active concern today.

**Implications:** 1) Much of the energy and ground work for both the Larkin Street Ministry and the Welcome Ministry was performed by an associate pastor or seminary intern along with lay leaders. The Head of Staff has rarely had sufficient time to implement such extensive projects. For both projects, paid staff was eventually hired and the programs were spun off as non-profits. These projects work best, however, with continued strong commitment and involvement on the part of the Head of Staff, especially in providing on-going interpretation to challenge the congregation to remain involved. Without this strong commitment, it is easy for relationships between mission programs and congregation members, as well as neighborhood groups, to deteriorate. Additionally, it needs to be recognized that both the associate pastor and the seminary intern were women who often felt their skills and theological training, as well as their ministries of service, were not fully supported by the congregation.

2) In 2002, although he had committed to moving to San Francisco by the end of his first year, the pastor began to question the need to live in San Francisco or in an urban environment. This lack of commitment to city living became a serious issue with many members. Clearly, the issue of urban housing for a pastor will be a difficult one for any PNC, especially since each pastor brings to the call process different financial situations and needs which greatly impact the ability to accept a call. To help with this issue, Old First has reserved resources committed to a shared appreciation loan.

3) For whatever reasons, Old First has only called married heterosexual white men. There may be value to providing guidance for the PNC by discussing, either as a congregation or as Session, the implications of calling a person who is single, a single-parent, a woman, an ethnic-minority or someone who could be challenged by Presbytery as homosexual.

### **Contrasting Pastoral Leadership Styles:**

Sadly, in the 80s, the pastor became clinically depressed, requiring hospitalization. Old First supported the pastor for several years before he made the decision to leave. Thereafter, it took four years to complete the mission study and pastoral search, during which period there were five interim pastors. As the congregation grieved, reflected and contracted, lay leaders were challenged and strengthened to maintain the church's membership, its sense of identity and the feeling of community.

In the 90s, Old First was ripe for youthful exuberance, experimentation, church growth and renewal. Renovation and an internal facelift (as called for in the Mission Vision) were just what the church needed, and two successive capital campaigns and a three-stage renovation project took place over the next nine years. This project helped the pastor and the congregation grow together, in partnership, in all aspects of the church's life as everyone rolled up their sleeves to paint, haul junk and clean every nook and cranny, thereby claiming, renewing and reinvigorating the church.

In the 90s, the pastor's leadership style was empowering of laity; members felt encouraged to be creative in visioning and in implementing new programs. This was a time of expanding programs and permission-giving; there seemed little need to learn to say 'no.' Though there was sometimes an impression of complete freedom, in fact, the pastor asserted strong, guiding leadership, meeting, for instance, extensively with people prior to controversial decisions and mediating differences of opinion among members. During this time, our Board of Deacons became well organized to provide care for members and gained equal status with the Session as an important leadership body.

When, after nine years, just after we celebrated our bicentennial, the pastor left unexpectedly for a much larger congregation and salary, many members felt hurt and abandoned by the abruptness of the departure and the loss of a collaborative relationship. With the three interims that followed over the next three years, these feelings were talked about honestly and feelings of excitement about our Old First ministry and congregational spirit remained high.

The permanent pastor called in 2002, however, felt he was being measured in comparison to the previous permanent pastor. Issues arose regarding leadership styles, particularly in relation to a) worship planning and lectionary preaching, b) member care and visitation, c) pastoral residence and presence in congregational life and d) the handling of disagreements. Some members felt that, while the 2000 Mission Vision had set a clear direction and congregational identity, the pastor preferred to set another, different direction.

Before the end of his first year, in response to the pastor's complaints to Session naming people said to have problems with him, Presbytery was asked to become involved. A task force was formed to define the next steps and a consultant was hired. Despite a Leadership Retreat, two congregational meetings, a congregational workshop on Pastoral Role and several individual mediations, the issues remained unsolved. Membership and pledging units declined and leadership positions could not be filled. Ultimately both parties decided the match was not a good one.

**Implications:** 1) The members who have been around for several years have a sense of pride that is expressed through the continuity and the cohesion of the community through thick and thin and the lay leadership that helped to make that happen. This pride has generated an important motivation for staying engaged with the congregation despite rough and uncertain times, especially since 1999. There is also pride in history of progressive social and political stands taken by Old First in the past.

2) It might be said that Old First has had a recent history of difficult pastoral leavings. Though we long

for a pastor who loves us for who we are, we have learned of necessity to survive on our own. It may be that trust in the pastoral role will need to be slowly re-built and re-negotiated.

3) Members continue to express some confusion about the pastoral role in relation to the congregation's own goals and institutional memory. Should institutional memory and goals be communicated to the pastor and, if so, by whom and how? Or should the pastor be encouraged to start fresh with new vision and direction? How do these get integrated? While Old First would like, as much as possible, to implement an empowering, collaborative style of leadership and a lay-staff team approach to ministry, we find few models for this and are not yet certain what that leadership style might look like. Perhaps it is important to find a pastor who is self-confident but flexible, who is energizing and enjoys being with people, and who is visionary but likes empowering others and building consensus.

4) While we say we want a collaborative leader, we are also used to relying on the pastor to provide a strong center and mediate differences of opinion. Our lay leadership has been strongest at concentrating energy on the hard work of program tasks and maintenance rather than on communication and relational connections and on thinking long-term.

### **Church Growth and Pastoral Leadership Styles:**

Old First members have viewed themselves as a large, caring "family" over the last decade or two. We are of a size that any person can know most of the active members, and our pastors have been at the center of our life together. In this sense, one could say that we resemble what is often described as a Pastoral Church. On the other hand, we have a large number of active programs for a church our size (See Appendix V) and constantly challenge ourselves to provide a quality of programming beyond our current level of resources. Members are very committed to these programs and visitors are often attracted to Old First by the vitality and diversity of opportunities we provide. In this sense, Old First resembles what is often described as a Program Church. And in many ways, some want us to grow to be even more like a Program Church. In a real sense, Old First is on the cusp between a Pastoral Church and a Program Church with some of the qualities of each.

The pastoral leadership styles needed in a Pastoral Church are very different from those needed in a Program Church. The challenge for our pastor is to combine the styles required by both types while recognizing that our pastor cannot meet all the needs of both types of churches. Another challenge is to empower the laity in both Pastoral and Program Church approaches.

We are now at the point where the current staff and the available volunteers cannot adequately support these programs, especially at the level of professional quality we hope for. We tend to keep adding worthwhile endeavors and rarely delete programs, despite decreasing giving and membership levels. In order to support these programs and staffing needs, we often envision ourselves growing significantly beyond the twenty some new members required just to maintain current membership levels.

Many factors affecting congregational growth, however, are beyond the pastor's or the congregation's control and may act to limit our growth. Factors such as ...

- 1) There is little growth in most mainstream denominations;
- 2) The Bay Area, in particular, is unusually hostile to organized religion while most residents are unfamiliar, or uncomfortable, with a Reformed worship style;
- 3) We assume that new members will bring time, talent and money to enhance our services but, as an urban church, we may be as likely to attract new members who make increasing demands on our services;
- 4) Nationally and locally, the economic gap is currently widening. The middle class people Old First most often attracts are increasingly squeezed financially and many may be unfamiliar with the concept of pledging and tithing.

These factors are not well understood by the congregation or its leadership.



**Implications:** 1) While maintaining our current membership level is critical, perhaps it is time to ask ourselves seriously about the realism of growing much beyond our current membership level. Perhaps it is time to ask ourselves what God is calling us to do with what we have.

2) When member growth is a high priority, it influences who we seek as a pastor. In the past, compelling preaching and a pastor with a young family have been seen as potential sources for attracting new members.

3) Because the needs of Old First are complex, we seem to need an experienced pastor or a pastor whose previous career skills fit well in a pastoral setting. However, we have also had very good experiences with pastors and interns who want to grow and learn with us. A high profile, highly experienced pastor is likely to command a high salary which will impact other aspects of church program, particularly whether or not we can hire other members of a staff team. With regards to head-of-staff salary, some members have a preference for a highly paid CEO model; others have a preference for a more collaborative social service model.

## APPENDIX VII – ELEMENTS OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING

(This outline is used by First Presbyterian Church Concord)

<b>About First Presbyterian Church</b>	A Snapshot of FPCC A Brief History of the Church Our Confessing Church Statement Long Range Plan
<b>Church Governance</b>	Overview of Church Governance Introduction to the Book of Order Introduction to the Book of Confessions The Constitutional Questions for Church Officers
<b>The Session and Its Work</b>	The Session's Responsibilities Session Roster for Current Year FPCC Session Organization Session Procedures Session Ministry Teams Responsibilities of Elders
<b>FPCC'S Basic Ministry Structure</b>	Staff Organization Ministry Organizational Chart
<b>Financial Information</b>	Church Business and Finance A Basic Budget Glossary of Financial Terms Real Property owned by the Church Finance Policy Memorials and Special Gifts Policy Finance Procedures, FAQ
<b>Handling Conflict</b>	Seeking to Be Faithful Together Issues in the history of FPCC
<b>The Deacons</b>	Responsibilities of the Deacons Deacon Committees
<b>Elder Skills</b>	Minutes and Committee Reports Working with Vision Taking a Candidate Under Care Stewardship Bible Study How to Conduct a Hearing How to Run a Meeting Steps for Developing New Leaders How to Publicize Events How to Develop a Budget
<b>Universal Ministry Skills</b>	How to Work a Room Helpful Listening Closing the Loop The Missing Link Reproducing Leadership How to Prepare Your Personal Testimony

How to Disagree  
Handling Complaints

**Documents**

By-Laws  
Policies and Procedures  
Personnel Policy  
Weddings at FPCC  
Baptisms at FPCC  
Funerals and Memorial Services at FPCC

## APPENDIX VIII – RECOMMENDED CHARTER ELEMENTS

### RECOMMENDED CHARTER ELEMENTS FOR SESSION STRUCTURE TASK FORCE

**Purpose:** To prepare a recommendation to Session on the size, committee structure and processes of the Session to improve its effectiveness.

**Members:** The Task Force will be made up of 6 members:

Moderator	1	Non-active elder appointed by Session
From Session	1	Moderator of Planning Committee
From Congregation	2	Chosen by the Session
From Mission Vision Team	1	Chosen by the Mission Vision Team
Pastor	1	

**Sponsor:** The Task Force reports to and is accountable to Session.

**Meetings (Time Requirement):** The Task Force is expected to meet at least bi-weekly until the recommendations are completed. Between meetings, Team members may be expected to do a significant amount of work individually or in small groups. The target date for completing the recommendations is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Deliverables (Products):** The recommendations presented to Session should include:

1. A report to Session with recommendations for changes, if any, to the size and committee structure of Session and to major Session processes (such as the budgeting process)
2. If necessary to implement the recommendations, proposed changes to the Bylaws and Standing Rules of Old First Presbyterian Church
3. Proposed charters for each committee that define the membership size and composition, requirements of moderator, responsibilities, limits of authority, staff liaison, and administration requirements (e.g. subcommittees, minutes, etc.)

**Expectations:** The Task Force will work under the following expectations and constraints:

1. The Task Force will gather information about advantages and disadvantages of the current session size, committee structure and inter-committee coordination and communication from current and former members of Session and from interested church members.
2. The Task Force will meet with representatives from other churches and read the literature to gather information about alternative session structures and the effectiveness of each.
3. The Task Force will analyze various Session processes, such as a) leadership processes, b) budgeting processes and c) communication and collaboration processes involving the Session, pastor and congregation, and explore ways for improving these processes.
4. The Task Force will consider alternatives for getting the work of the church done, including traditional committees, commissions, ministry teams, short-term task forces and individuals.
5. The Task Force will consider ways in which changing Session structure and processes can help to build community at Old First.
6. The Task Force will explore the advantages and disadvantages of changing the church calendar cycle for elections, budgeting, planning, etc.
7. The Task Force will coordinate their work with those involved in developing and implementing the Leadership Training program.