

Saratoga Federated Church

The Great Commission: The Transformative Journey to Christ-likeness

A Strategic Vision for 2004 - 2009

Prepared by the Strategic Planning Team

August 2, 2004

Table of Contents

Review of Existing State	3
Saratoga Federated Church Mission Statement	4
Mission	4
Message	4
Maturity	4
Ministry.....	4
Strategic Vision	5
Acquiring our Faith	5
Declaring our Faith.....	6
Learning and Living our Faith	6
Primary Ministry Areas	8
Prayer.....	8
Worship.....	9
Outreach/Evangelism	11
Baptism and Other Declarations of Faith and Commitment	12
Membership	13
Leadership Development	13
Stewardship.....	15
Congregational Life.....	16
Generational Programs	17
Children and Youth.....	18
Adults	20
Adult Education	21
Congregational Care	22
Other Items	24
Strategic Vision Team	24

Review of Existing State

In the fall of 2003, as the church neared the successful completion of the "Above and Beyond" campaign, the Council of Elders at Saratoga Federated Church (SFC) commissioned the development of a team to prepare the strategic vision for the next major season of our corporate life. We give thanks to God for the richness of his blessings as we prepare to enter this new season.

The last five-year season brought the development of a talented and passionate staff committed to enriching the spiritual journey of each member and attendee of SFC. The strategic vision team has partnered with the staff to ensure their involvement in this process and to recognize the unique gifts of the staff. The process began with their assessment of our corporate performance against the goals set in the 1998 *Above and Beyond Green Book* to determine which objectives were met, which were not achieved, and why. With this understanding of our previous performance and under the leadership of the head pastor, the church staff then developed specific ministry goals for the next five-year season of our church life. Working in parallel with the staff, the Strategic Vision Team identified key target areas based on analysis of our theme verse, Matthew 28: 18-20. The five-year staff goals have been incorporated into the appropriate ministry area of the vision document. We experienced remarkable unity between independently developed staff goals and vision team ministry goals, a confirmation this is a Spirit-led effort.

Saratoga Federated Church has a rich history of embracing diversity with unity, and we want to uphold that tradition. Since its founding, SFC has continually sought to conform the church to the Biblical model with features that characterized the early Church. It is truly an interdenominational church, welcoming members from all denominations and providing a re-entry point for people who have drifted away from established churches to discover anew the joys of Christian community.

A review of SFC's existing strengths include our rich and varied worship services with strong Bible-based teaching as well as effective programs for children, youth and singles, providing guidance to each individual on his/her own journey to transformation, the process of becoming more like Christ. The church has strengthened its programs in congregational care, discipleship and adult education, and increased its focus on evangelism and prayer over the last five years. We have significantly increased our personal commitment and financial support to a large variety of new ministries as well as significantly improving our facilities.

We have endeavored to be faithful to the values expressed in our Mission Statement at every stage of this process, and have sought the Lord's leading through prayer.

The next section looks at SFC's Mission Statement, developed as part of the previous five-year plan.

Saratoga Federated Church Mission Statement

Mission

The mission of Saratoga Federated Church is to invite seekers into a relationship with Jesus Christ (**message**), to nurture God's people in community toward a Christ-like character (**maturity**), and to equip them for effective service in the church and the world (**ministry**)

Therefore we highly value:

Message

- Honoring the triune God through corporate worship, the life blood of the community,
- Introducing seekers to Jesus Christ through authentic friendships.

Maturity

- Gathering people in small groups as the primary way to provide a place of belonging, encourage maturity, and accomplish ministry.
- Nurturing health within families—God's primary setting for shaping a Christ-like character.

Ministry

- Meeting felt needs through a ministry of care that is both preventative and restorative.
- Mobilizing and equipping every believer to exercise his or her spiritual gifts for ministry.
- Establishing ministry teams to reach out in mission, locally and worldwide.

The next section presents the strategic vision for the next five years and is in harmony with the mission statement.

Strategic Vision

We envision transformation—the journey to Christ-likeness—as the primary area of focus for the next five-year season in the church. Key elements in this process include prayer, outreach and evangelism, baptism, leadership development and stewardship. The increased focus in these areas must be balanced by maintaining the growth made over the last five years in the areas of worship, membership, children and youth, congregational life, congregational care, singles, and improvements to the church facilities. In order for the church to have sufficient resources to build upon the growth in these areas, while increasing its focus on transformation, the role of lay leaders becomes increasingly important. This will be further discussed in the leadership development section.

The theme verse—the Great Commission—for the coming season of church life provided the basis of our vision:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matt 28:18-20

The concept of transformation is inherent in the Great Commission as we are changed from a self-centered resident of the world into a Christ-centered resident of the kingdom of God. The transformative power of this directive from Jesus includes three specific actions, each building upon the previous activity to achieve the ultimate objective (transformation). The major actions Christ calls us to are:

- Leading others to become followers of Jesus Christ (acquiring our faith)
- Publicly proclaiming our commitment to Christ (declaring our faith)
- Equipping believers to be followers of Christ; facilitating the continuing spiritual growth of all believers to be more effective teachers, leaders and servants of Christ (learning and living our faith)

The goal for Saratoga Federated Church is bold: we seek transformation during this next season of our church life as evidenced by new people who will come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior, members who publicly declare their commitment to Him, disciples who are trained and equipped to go where the Lord might lead in order to be witnesses for Him in our homes, schools, workplaces and community. This transformative process can be described as a journey to Christ-likeness.

The three primary areas expressed in the Great Commission (acquiring our faith, declaring our faith, and learning and living our faith) are explored further in the next section. Prayer is the overarching aspect of the Great Commission and a key element in the process of transformation.

Acquiring our Faith (Prayer, Outreach and Evangelism)

Goal: To lead those who seek meaning for their lives into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Sharing the good news of Jesus with others first requires building authentic relationships with them. To build relationship, we (the members of SFC) must reach out to three separate population groups:

- The internal community (those who currently attend SFC but are not members)
- The local community (those who live within the local area but don't attend SFC)
- The global community (all others)

The initial focus is on the vertical relationship between the believer and God. His love for us is at the core of all understanding in our relationship with God and forms the basis for all relationships. The discipline of daily prayer is key to developing a deep relationship between God and self. The next area of focus is on the horizontal relationships that make up a community of believers, our families and our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our love for one another must be apparent. Prayer, by helping us become aligned with God, is a vital part of this process as it helps enables us to love others (I John 4:9).

Our vision is for a community that demonstrates the love of Christ to one another and to the outside community, and through His love, leads others to Christ. Our community applies the word of God in our daily lives, and experiences the joy and power of a vibrant prayer life; these practices enable us present the word of God to each population group and develop innovative ways to reach them.

Declaring our Faith (Prayer, Baptism, Membership)

Goal: To build understanding of the significance of baptism, to encourage all believers to be baptized, and to declare our relationship with Christ in a variety of ways

Christ calls all believers to be baptized, an outward sign of an inward transformation and commitment. We must ensure that all who attend SFC understand the significance of baptism (death to our sinful nature and rebirth as a child of God) and accord baptism the importance it deserves in our church life.

The declaration of our faith should then be lived out in a variety of ways. Each of us should be equipped and encouraged to use our specific spiritual gifts to declare that we are part of the body of Christ. In this way we declare our faith through doing all that Christ commands us to do.

Prayer is a continuing affirmation of our commitment to Jesus, and enables us to deepen our faith. Since prayer is an integral part of our relationship with Christ, we want to encourage all to make prayer a priority in their lives.

Learning and Living our Faith (Prayer, Leadership Development, Stewardship, Congregational Life, Adult Education, and Congregational Care)

Goal: To instruct and equip our members in all the things Jesus taught and commanded us to obey; to equip believers to lead others into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ; to facilitate the continued growth of all believers in their relationship with Christ, so that they will become more effective teachers, leaders and servants.

Leadership development is a key to achieving the goal of transformation. Leadership and teaching are high callings from God, and those so called are encouraged by the Bible to use their spiritual gifts in the service of God and the church. We will develop better ways of identifying and training potential leaders and teachers, and, through the obedient use of these gifts, build up a broad range of ministries and operations as noted in the Leadership Development ministry section

In addition to giving of our time, the Bible instructs us to give of our finances. We seek to glorify God through the works (time, treasure and talent) of His people at SFC and will

encourage all to give generously of their time, treasure and talents in obedience to His word. Therefore, stewardship will be an increased focus in the next five years of church life.

We will continue to strengthen our strong educational program to foster learning at many levels for all ages through a variety of traditional and nontraditional learning modalities. The focus of all education is on awareness, knowledge, and understanding of Christ and His Word. We recommend encouraging memorization of the Bible, and study and application of the Word. Each member of SFC should know what we believe and be able to comfortably explain it to others. The educational program will include a variety of settings: traditional classrooms, small groups (relationship focused), and self-paced instruction (CD and online). A well-developed website is essential.

The ministries of Congregational Life and Congregational Care provide valuable services and programs to equip and support believers as they grow in their faith, develop their gifts in service to the body of Christ, and minister to others.

These primary ministry areas are key to the transformative process. The following section discusses these ministry areas as well as those areas in which the church has strong programs (worship, etc). Each area provides a vision and value statement for the ministry, scripture references, and objectives for the area.

Primary Ministry Areas

Prayer

Vision: To increasingly become a Church of Prayer where all who come are taught how to pray; are given a context to pray, are encouraged to pray and every ministry is bathed in prayer.

Values:

- Active and effective prayer is the essential foundation necessary for the Lord to transform us both individually and as a church
- Prayer is a form of obedience
- Prayer is the method by which we communicate with God
- Prayer is a tool for health and survival
- Prayer is a vehicle for communicating repentance and receiving forgiveness

Scripture references:

- This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever" (Matthew 6:9-13).
- Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness and prayed (Luke 5:16).
- And the Holy Spirit helps us in our distress. For we don't even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words (Romans 8:26).
- Pray without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:17).
- Confess your sins to each other, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results (James 5:16).

Objectives:

- 1) Increase the variety and frequency of opportunities for members to learn about and experience the power of prayer by:
 - a) Prayer services or special times for prayer
 - b) Training by staff and lay leaders for members on the importance of prayer and how to pray
 - c) Starting and concluding church meetings with prayer
 - d) Incorporating prayer into our website with daily prayer devotionals, 24 hour hot line and email prayer requests (if we can appropriately respect privacy concerns)
 - e) Providing a proper setting for after service prayer for those seeking support

- f) Effectively communicating prayer requests through the prayer chain or other mechanisms
 - g) Make prayer a priority in Small Groups
- 2) Increase the focus on prayer at all church functions by:
- a) Making prayer more of a priority at all leadership and ministry meetings (staff, elders, ministry teams)
 - b) Equipping Elders and other lay leaders to actively participate in activities including visiting and praying with the seriously ill
- 3) Increase the emphasis on teaching and experiencing prayer in our children, youth, and small group programs by:
- a) Equipping and ensuring all lay leaders pray individually as well as corporately with the students and participants. They should be comfortable teaching and modeling prayer. Activities should begin and end with prayer.
 - b) Conducting and implementing activities in the children and youth programs so that prayer becomes the foundation of their spiritual lives and carries into adulthood.
 - c) Offering training on prayer to Small Group leaders
 - d) Offering curriculum on prayer for Small Groups and other interested parties to study

Worship

Vision: To glorify and please God in our worship, welcoming all who come, drawing us closer to God's heart through His Word, the power of His Holy Spirit and the praises of His people.

Values:

- Accurate and compelling presentation of God's Word with practical applications.
- To tie the contemporary soul with ancient ways of worshipping by joining new worship styles, including multimedia elements, with more traditional styles, including more quiet and reflective elements, as is appropriate for the designed worship setting and audience.
- A grace-based environment where love, both for God and for all the people He has created, is the order of the day.
- Nurturing those involved in worship ministry to reach their full potential to glorify God.
- Embracing the role God has given worship ministry to serve as a bridge connecting: The worshipper and God, the artist and the opportunity for expression, the seeker and the community of faith.
- God is the rightful focus of all worship and we believe that by His Holy Spirit He will illuminate the path, resource the journey and empower us, His servants, to faithfully follow Him.
- Embracing the value of ardent, selfless affection and dedication in every aspect of worship, by doing the best you can with what you have. We adopt the ethic of

Colossians 3:23: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not men."

- Reflecting the joy we have in Christ as we worship and share life's journey

Scripture references:

- He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord (Psalm 40:3).
- Sing to the LORD a new song, sing to the LORD all the earth. Sing to the LORD, praise his name, proclaim his salvation day after day (Psalm 96:1-2)
- Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture (Psalm 100:1-3).

Objectives:

1. Continue to nurture and improve our presentation of multiple styles of worship for traditional, seeker and contemporary participants to give a wider cross-section of people a meaningful encounter with God.
2. Provide convenient worship times and locations to help include groups that now find it difficult to attend currently scheduled services. Use different worship venues, e.g. outdoor locations (patio, Mountain Winery) and innovative elements that will help us to attract our un-churched friends and neighbors.
3. Continue to provide worship ideas and guidance to those in other ministries who ask for worship program help for their events.
4. Develop ways for worship leaders and musicians to broaden their skills, experience worship styles and resources used at other churches and in other regions (e.g. short-term missions).
5. Encourage the continued development of new teaching methods and congregation participation during worship.
6. Make corporate prayer and meditation a key and expanded part of worship.
7. Provide ways to share our worship experiences with our missionaries, e.g. videos, and encourage periodic video presentations during worship of our missionaries' lives in the field.
8. Develop ways to more fully integrate Baptism into our facility and into our worship experience.
9. Create a community of artists; explore various art forms as means of worship expression, finding ways to highlight the gifts of members, nurturing their growth, validating their expression, and celebrating God's generous distribution of talents.
10. Complete the development and construction of improved main sanctuary spaces, improved acoustics and support facilities, such as multimedia systems, to better serve worship of God by our congregation and visitors.

11. Working with Children and Youth Ministries, evaluate ways to increase the participation of children and youth in our main worship experiences, and present findings to staff and Elders.

Outreach/Evangelism

Vision: Ensure the Gospel of Jesus Christ is effectively shared in as many venues as possible.

Values:

- Every member of Saratoga Federated Church an Ambassador for Christ by actively and effectively sharing the good news with family, friends, neighbors and strangers
- Teach everyone about sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ
- The gospel is presented in an easy to understand manner
- Sharing the good news is in obedience to Jesus' call for believers to reach out to all people and not to rely only on those in a pastoral staff role or who may be specially gifted
- Outreach and evangelism are an indicator of the health of the church

Scripture references:

- We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us (I Corinthians 5:20).
- I pray that the sharing of your faith may promote the knowledge of all the good that is ours in Christ (Philemon 1:6).

Objectives:

1. Support Outreach/Evangelism through the pulpit, classes, conference, discipleship, and personal training.
2. Every member of the congregation should be comfortable in sharing their faith and lifestyle, and prepared to give the reason for the hope inside them.
3. Every member of the congregation should be comfortable with inviting friends and associates to church services and activities.
4. Preserve and grow the spirit of Above and Beyond in our financial support of local and global ministry as well as the significant involvement of our members in mission outreach.
5. Ensure all missions' agencies routinely experience our encouragement and influence. Continue and grow our support for Christian missionaries and organizations, particularly those personally supported by our members.
6. Continue to make the church available to engage the un-churched community in care situations such as weddings and funerals.
7. Relate well to un-churched neighbors, friends and sub-populations in a creative and generous witness.

8. Partner with our local and global missions teams to provide testimonies, videos and pictures that engage people in worship services toward the enticing pleasure of kingdom investment
9. Create church-wide programs to bring in non-believers and believers
10. Nurture and support SFC-grown ministries with facilities and infrastructure

Baptism and Other Declarations of Faith and Commitment

Vision: To be a church where public declarations of faith (i.e., baptism, membership, etc.) are a faith-affirming part of the journey toward Christ-likeness and where the declarations are a true community celebration, with individuals, families and congregants participating in informed, authentic ways.

Values:

- Baptism has always been a public identification with Christ. For participants, it is a threshold act, an outward sign of an inward transformation and commitment.
- For the church, baptism is where the church offers the spiritual bond of fellowship and celebrates the person's inclusion into the household of faith
- It is an obedient response to the Great Commission of Matthew 28. Jesus Himself was baptized. All believers are exhorted to be baptized.
- Declarations of our faith and our commitment to Christ should be encouraged in our church body. Each of us should be equipped, with avenues available, to declare our faith publicly and to encourage others to do so.

Scripture references:

- Peter said, "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2: 38).
- And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name (Acts 22: 16).
- As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3: 16-17).
- That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).

Objectives:

1. To insure that teachings and practices are consistent with scripture.
2. To clarify, and then teach, the particular theology that support different modes of baptism and for different ages.
3. To educate the congregation regarding the significance of baptism in our journey to Christ-likeness.

4. To create experiences that are memorable milestones on that journey, both for those making the declaration of faith and those who participate in the ceremonies, encouraging others to take similar steps.
5. To give renewed attention to other events and practices that represent public identification with Christ and outward signs of inward commitment (dedications, vows, renewals, rededications, public professions and confessions, membership covenants, creeds and liturgies).

Membership: Membership is a declaration of faith and commitment. It encourages those who are seeking spiritual growth and desiring authentic relationships by providing a safe environment in which to explore these areas.

Vision: All members have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, been baptized, and are using their gifts in the service of the Lord

Values:

- The New Testament frequently mentions membership in a local church, and refers to the church as “God’s household” (I Timothy 3:14a). As exemplified in the Bible, membership in a local church is to be appreciated as a gift from God and entered into in obedience to God’s teachings.

Scripture references:

- Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household (Ephesians 2:10).
- In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others (Romans 12:5).

Objectives:

1. Attend Inquirer’s Class to learn about SFC and understand what it means to be part of our church family.
2. Accept the Gospel message and be baptized.
3. Seek ways to serve the Lord with both time, talents, and treasure.
4. Develop a membership covenant.
5. Membership required for leadership role in the church.

Leadership Development

Vision: To be an energetic and focused church where many highly motivated and competent lay leaders collaborate with the professional staff in leading the church programs with shared vision, values, direction and vigor.

Values:

- Leadership of the church is a high calling from God, encouraged by the Bible, and can provide tremendous personal satisfaction.
- Accountability for leaders and teachers as stated in James 3:1: "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."
- The work of the Lord in this church warrants the most skilled and effective leadership and administration that we can provide.
- To accomplish our broad range of ministries and operations we need many more enthusiastic and competent lay leaders.
- To have adequate lay leaders we need to find better ways of identifying, motivating and training them.
- It is essential for the unity and cohesive progress of the church that all ministries of the church share common vision, values and direction.
- The time and energy of lay leaders is precious and needs to be conserved and used effectively.

Scripture references:

- We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a person's gift is...leadership, let him govern diligently (Romans 12:8).
- Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians. 15:58).
- Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (Colossians 3:17).
- Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life, but as those who do. Make the most of your time despite all the difficulties of these days. Don't be vague, but firmly grasp what you know to be the will of the Lord (Phillips translation of Ephesians 5:15-17).
- In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned (Titus 2:7-8a).

Objectives:

1. Increased use of lay partnerships to assist the paid professional staff in the leadership of all church activities.
2. Better and earlier identification of members with leadership skills and interest. This is especially important for newer members of the congregation who have great potential but are not as well known.
3. Clarification of the responsibilities and procedures of the Nominating Committee.

4. Making sure that each person who accepts a leadership or teaching position has received a written description of the job he/she is being asked to do and that they clearly understand that job description and are prepared to invest themselves in it sufficiently to accomplish it to the best of their ability.
5. We ensure accountability for our leaders and teachers through an interview process with pastors, staff, and lay leaders prior to appointment to leadership/teaching positions, and by continued review.
6. Increased training of teachers as well as team leaders and members.
7. Increased attention in every part of the organization to the effective leadership of meetings, including the conservation of members' time and energy.
8. Every part of the organization shares the same vision and values, and has a clear understanding of the role it plays in our common direction.
9. A much greater focus and dependence on prayer at every level of leadership.

Stewardship

Vision: For each member of our church family to experience the joy and blessings of sacrificial giving of time, treasure and talent as God works through us to advance His Kingdom.

Values:

- To love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength
- To acknowledge that all we possess belongs to God; He empowers us to be stewards of His resources. We acknowledge this by intentionally returning with a joyful heart some of His largess to fund His work
- To glorify God through the works (time, treasure and talent) of His people at SFC empowered by the Holy Spirit
- Transformation of lives to be more Christ-like through the giving of ourselves and God-given gifts to His work.

Scripture

- Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you (Luke 6: 38).
- Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg'" (Luke 16:1-3).
- Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Malachi 3: 10).
- For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:21).

- There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men (I Corinthians 12: 4-26).
- From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:16).

Objectives:

1. Increase the awareness of the SFC community of the importance and significance of making God first in our lives by returning to Him a portion of our time and treasure.
2. Make stewardship a key part of our teaching from the pulpit, in Sunday school classes and in small groups.
3. Make stewardship a key part of our prayer life, asking for God's help in this important work.
4. Continue focused teaching on ways to adjust our budgets and our schedules to make tithing and ministry work easier to accomplish.
5. Develop promotional and recruiting programs to draw in people not now involved in any ministry.
6. Continue to develop and promote spiritual gifts awareness training for all our congregation, including follow-up placement of people in ministries.

Congregational Life

Vision: A warm, welcoming church body that seeks to reach out in Christian love to all within the church community. A spectrum of fellowship groups that will give every person an opportunity to build relationships within the church family.

Values:

- Christian fellowship is an important component in the process of spiritual maturity
- In essentials, unity; in opinions, liberty; and in all things, charity
- Grace is extended to people of various denominational backgrounds to re-establish or strengthen their relationship with Jesus Christ
- We seek to reach the community outside the church and invite them onto our campus
- It is important to integrate new people into the church family
- Excellent communication throughout the community encourages participation in the life of the congregation
- We value the body of Christ and encourage opportunities to fellowship with other faith communities
- We embrace opportunities for spiritual growth and fellowship that originate in other ministries beyond SFC (e.g., 40 Days of Purpose, Alpha Dinners, and ecumenical Thanksgiving services).

Scripture:

- They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42).
- God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (I Cor. 1:9).
- We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (I John 1:3).

Objectives:

1. Continue to develop opportunities to engage the surrounding community.
2. Improve signage to make the facility more welcoming and less intimidating.
3. The entire church community should be challenged, trained and encouraged to participate in the process of welcoming visitors and new members (in addition to the excellent hospitality ministry already in place.)
4. Continue to develop a system for integrating newer people (those attending less than three years) into the life of the church, including "Golden Key" events, fellowship groups, small groups, Bible studies and service opportunities. Involve more of the church in this process.
5. Encourage the congregation to integrate their faith in all areas of their lives and to act upon their faith in Jesus Christ.
6. Look for more opportunities for the whole church to share common experiences (Mother's Day, church picnic, etc.) in order to overcome the division of different worship services.
7. Continue to improve the communication within the church community, so that there is a high awareness of opportunities to participate in events, classes, etc.
8. Seek out at least five local churches with similar values to share information about successful ministries, programs, etc.
9. Seek out appropriate opportunities to partner with local churches to more effectively reach the surrounding community. Conduct partnering events when appropriate (i.e., the recently shared outreach to the local community to discuss *The Passion of the Christ*.) Utilize non-church settings such as the Foothill Club where possible.

Generational Programs: This section looks at several programs within the church: children and youth; adults including singles and seniors; and adult education. In addition, it encourages interaction between different generations and seeks to foster an appreciation of those differences.

Vision: Young and old will build relationships to link the wisdom of the older and adult with the energy and wonder of the young. Mentoring relationships will exist at all levels.

Values:

- Multi-generational programs have much to offer to all participants. Older adults provide wisdom to younger generations, while children provide a sense of wonder that is important for adults to receive. Encourage intergenerational mentoring to develop and strengthen bonds between young and old

- Create an appreciation of church and spiritual history between old and young, and foster a sense of appreciation of our older members as a source of wisdom to our young people

Scripture references

- And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions (Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17).
- Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching (Proverbs 1:8).
- Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained by a righteous life (Proverbs 16:31).
- Ask the former generations and find out what their fathers learned, for we were born only yesterday and know nothing, and our days on earth are but a shadow (Job 8:8).

Objectives

1. Build bridges through creative ways between the children, youth, and adult congregations.
 - a. Encourage older members to volunteer with children
 - i. Reading together
 - ii. Rocking babies
 - iii. Telling stories of historical events (WWII and other war veterans, special accomplishments, etc.)
 - b. Provide more multi-generational events such as All Church Picnic
2. Encourage mature Christians to mentor new Christians, young people, new marrieds, new parents, new members, etc.
3. Encourage students to participate in service opportunities with older members

Children & Youth

Vision: Reaching students and children, connecting them with Christians, helping students and children to grow in their faith, challenging them to serve others using their God-given gifts, and honoring God with their daily lives.

Values:

- Deepening relationships with Christ
- Building and sustaining individual relationships and community
- Providing a safe place of acceptance and transparency

Scripture references

- Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40).
- Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I

have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28: 19-20).

- Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it (Proverbs 22: 6).

Objectives (Students)

1. Special events (activities, camps)
 - a. Friendship evangelism
2. Sunday mornings
 - a. Confirmation
 - b. Special events (activities, camps)
3. Grow small group Bible studies
 - a. Jr. High: Wednesday
 - b. Sr. High: Various times
 - c. Special events (activities, camps, mission)
 - d. Baptism class (high school)
4. Spiritual training
 - a. Jr. High: Going Deep
 - b. Praise and worship nights
 - c. Spiritual gifts inventory
 - d. Special spiritual events
 - e. Special events (activities, camps, mission)
5. Service opportunities (serving others by using their God-given gifts)
 - a. Special events
 - b. Mission—local, global
 - c. Student leadership team
6. Establish programs for teacher training and spiritual mentoring

Objectives (Children)

1. Continue to improve Children's Ministry
2. Increase awareness of Kid's Town
 - a. Expand outreach to non-churched community
 - b. Increase visibility of Kid's Town in the services
 - c. Increase parental involvement with Kid's Town
3. Develop, equip and nurture leadership team
4. Improve integration of adults and children
5. Develop a process to integrate parents new to SFC into the Children's Ministry
6. Increase prayer focus across all aspects of the ministry

Adults: Adult Ministry is based on three cornerstones: discipleship, adult education, and small groups. Although this plan does not specifically address discipleship and small groups, they are considered foundational to the transformation process and are incorporated in the operational aspects. This section focuses on two particular segments of the SFC population (Singles and Seniors). While all adult ministries are valued, these two have been given greater emphasis since both these ministries need special focus at this time to maintain or restore the level of resources available.

Singles: Like other groups focused on a particular segment of the church population, the Singles group spans a wide range of needs. Some of these needs are unique to this group, while other are true for any group of believers. We applaud the resources that have been made available for the Singles group over the last two years and believe this level of resourcing should continue for the next five years. At the same time, we want to encourage the Singles group, as well as all other groups, to become integrated in the church at large.

Vision: A community of Christian singles growing to maturity in faith with the Lord

Values:

- Encouraging a strong walk with God
- Offering a safe place for healing from divorce, loss, and related issues
- Helping others through community service.

Scripture References:

- Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (I Cor. 12:27).

Objectives

1. Develop new ways of ministering to the needs of singles.
 - a. Unique needs include dating, pre-marriage relationships, understanding of biblical meaning of equally yoked, divorce issues, single parenting issues, and being single in today's Christian community.
 - b. Other issues that are not unique to singles include loneliness, grief/loss/pain, anger, learning to trust again, parenting, boundaries, and growing to maturity in Christ
2. Provide opportunities for social and service activities to build a sense of community within the Singles group
3. Encourage greater integration of singles with rest of church

Seniors: Like other groups focused on a particular segment of the church population, the Seniors group spans a wide range of needs. Some of these needs are unique to this population, while others are true for any group of believers. While the Seniors program has been active in the past, it currently lacks active leadership. Like other particular demographic groups, we want to encourage the Seniors group to become integrated in the church at large.

Vision: Seniors (those of retirement age and those who wish they were) would be active, vital members of our church family, sought out for their wisdom and maturity, and participating in a wide variety of educational, leadership, service, and social activities.

Values:

- Appreciating the collective wisdom of this age group
- Utilizing the spiritual gifts of this group
- Embracing the memories, understandings, and histories as links to our church and societal history
- Fostering community through fellowship through fellowship, social and service activities, and Bible study

Scripture references:

- Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding? (Job 12:12)
- Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching (Proverbs 1:8).
- Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained by a righteous life (Proverbs 16:31).
- Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord (Leviticus 19:32).

Objectives:

1. Encourage seniors to continue to use their spiritual gifts
2. Encourage greater integration of seniors into SFC
3. Recruit and train a senior's leadership team
4. Identify and meet the primary needs of seniors
5. Initiate a variety of social and educational activities (dinners, on-and off-site events) in response to these needs

Adult Education

Vision: To transform the lives of every adult member and attendee by developing a strong education program

Values:

- Our relationship with Jesus deepens from increased knowledge of Jesus and the application of that knowledge in our daily lives.
- When we study the Bible via various courses, the Holy Spirit enables us to understand and apply it. This process is fundamental to Christian growth.
- In order to know what Jesus would do we must know what he did, which comes via study and education.
- Teaching is a high calling, and in and of itself, is a vehicle to grow in our faith, because as we teach we learn even more.
- Teaching is a way of expressing spiritual gifts and of giving back to the body.

Scripture references:

- And to some, his 'gift' was that they should be teachers; to knit God's holy people together for the work of service to build up the Body of Christ, until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself (Eph 4:11).
- For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Peter 5: 1-8).

Objectives/ Goals:

1. SFC will have a structured curriculum with both depth and breadth, so that each individual understands where s/he is in her/his spiritual journey and is able to grow to higher levels of spiritual maturity.
2. To quickly build out our program we will initially rely on the gifting and knowledge of the teachers raised up for us in our church by the Lord.
3. The curriculum will continue to get richer and more robust to satisfy the spiritual needs of our specific church and will be implemented to be consistent with the great commission.
4. As we broaden our curriculum we will also offer classes at times other than Sunday mornings.
5. The adult education will be taught primarily by developing our own members to teach the classes. When appropriate in special cases, we will leverage well-known speakers from around the world.
6. We will provide training events to develop our faculty including encouraging them to attend classes offered elsewhere in the greater church body.
7. Our goal is that at least 50% of our members regularly attend a class. We will keep in mind that bigger ratios and class sizes are only step one, and that without the "acid test" of changed lives it means little in the Kingdom of God. So we will also measure ourselves by: people demonstrating a greater hunger and thirst for God, by them being more engaged in service (through gifts of time and money), through an increased devotion to prayer and a more robust worship, along with other identifiable factors.
8. Where appropriate, we will utilize some of the excellent course material developed elsewhere in the body of Christ.

Congregational Care

Vision: To glorify and obey God by caring for His people, the body of Christ. To create an atmosphere where all feel valued with a sense of belonging. To provide care programs to assist those in times of crisis. To offer these services to both our own members and others in our community.

Values:

- Each of us is a valued member of the body of Christ, and as such, deserves tender and loving care at all times and especially during times of crisis.
- We are to care for each other as part of the same body—the body of Christ.

Scripture references:

- If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (I Corinthians 12:26-27).
- Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but examples to the flock (I Peter 5:2-3).
- Again Jesus said, "Simon, son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you?" Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep" (John 21:16).

Objectives

1. Increase understanding of "one body in Christ" by improving awareness within the church family of others' pain, sorrows, and joys. This increased understanding of "one body in Christ" will be evidenced in an environment of inclusiveness and understanding that what affects one of us, affects us all.
2. Each member and attendee will participate in compassionate service
3. Encourage an environment of inclusiveness and understanding that what affects one of us, affects us all
4. Increase understanding of "one body in Christ"
5. Teach small groups how to be first responders on behalf of group members. Ensure this is included in small group leader training
6. Create a safe space physically separated from the main church building to provide a welcoming environment to host confidential and support groups
7. Encourage the dual expression of Christian fellowship through compassionate engagement with those not yet in the family. The care services rendered on our campus are available on a secondary basis to the community.
8. Improve our systems for identifying and responding to care needs
9. Improve communication of needs within care teams
10. Improve communication of available resources within the church family

Summary

This document is a "living document" in that it recognizes the dynamic nature of our community. In order to fully utilize the gifts God provides during this five-year period, the Board of Elders will review it on an annual basis to evaluate progress made and to suggest course corrections as necessary.

This document has reviewed SFC mission statement, identified transformation—the journey of becoming more like Christ—as the primary focus for the next five years in the life of the church, and provided vision, values, and objectives for each specific ministry area. This next section briefly discusses other important challenges, including church growth and facilities.

Other Items

An exciting infusion of new energy and people is already apparent at SFC. This leads to several important challenges that are not addressed in detail in this document.

Church Growth

During the "Above and Beyond" project, we completed a major expansion and renovation of our physical plant. We have limited options for additional expansion or renovation of our facilities due to the constraints of the neighborhood in which we are located. Our primary opportunity for facility improvements is to upgrade our sanctuary to significantly improve our corporate worship experience and possibly expand the capacity. The Council of Elders has commissioned a team to prayerfully develop the requirements for this activity. We will continue to seek God's timing for implementation of this project.

The footprint of our property in downtown Saratoga places fixed constraints on the number of parking spaces within a convenient walk to our facility. This limits the number of people that can be simultaneously on our campus to approximately 600 people, a number that we are now regularly exceeding on Sunday mornings. The Council of Elders has commissioned a Church Growth team to address this topic and recommend ways to accommodate the additional people being drawn to Saratoga Federated Church, therefore, it is not addressed further by the vision team.

Facilities

Since useable space is at such a premium, we recommend a systematic study of all space on our present campus (such as the bride's room), the church office on Saratoga Avenue and the space we are using in the rear of the Cox building to determine space could be more effectively utilized for higher priority activities such as Sunday morning classrooms.

Our church has been slow at adopting technology that would help enhance our worship experiences, improve the quality of training and education and improve paid and lay staff productivity. Hence we will make this a priority in the coming 5 years and explore technology use more aggressively. Technology is defined broadly to include: phone wiring, phones including Polycoms, phone systems, audio and video systems and projection, PCs, printers, web site and use of satellite broadcasting and other mediums.

Strategic Vision Team

Chair: Jeff Davis

Committee: Sally Bryant
Dana Chase
Libie Cilker
Linda Connors
Carl D'Costa
Andy Eschenfelder
Dave Lee

The Strategic Vision Team gives thanks to God for His leading in this endeavor!