

Sowing the
Seeds of
Abundance

Report to the
First Presbyterian Church Session
August 24, 2015

introduction

Whoever sows
bountifully will also
reap bountifully.

2 Corinthians 9: 6

These two verses certainly apply to First Presbyterian Church! We have been blessed in every way and have strived to be both responsive and responsible to God's call. We have seen that as we sow Christ's love into our community, the Lord blesses our congregation.

In 2015, we are in a season of extraordinary financial abundance. Our growing congregation continues to give beyond even the generous amounts pledged to the annual ministry and mission of the church. We have completed our \$5 million capital campaign for renovating our buildings and grounds, fully funded all mission components and set aside significant funds should extraordinary circumstances interrupt our giving or damage our buildings. We support a talented, dedicated staff, undergird missionaries around the world and support two dozen local ministry partnerships. The "engine" of the church runs wide open.

And still there is a surplus! As will be detailed, over the next half decade, the Session will have approximately \$2.6 million in addition to our regular operating budget to direct in the mission of our church above and beyond its annual programs.

These are indeed extraordinary times which demand extraordinary thoughtfulness and prayer, seeking the Lord's leading as stewards of such abundance. In January, 2015, the Session appointed our Task Force to cast a vision for the next phase of our mission as a church that accounts responsibly and faithfully for these gifts. This report outlines our process in developing a vision for the mission focus of our church and a proposal for the deployment of this bounty to that end.

Everyone to
whom much was
given, of him much
will be required.

Luke 12: 48

current status



2014 Mission Expenditures \$530,660

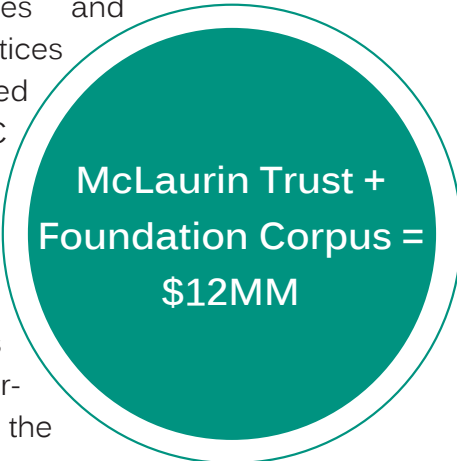
In order to make this report the Task Force first considered the current status of the church finances and the availability of resources to fund major mission and mission opportunities.

FPC presently funds local and global missions through the regular operating budget. The level of this expenditure in 2014 was \$530,660 and is budgeted to be \$567,170 in 2015. Further, most recently, in addition to these amounts, FPC funded \$400,000 for mission and ministry through the “tithe component” of the capital campaign.

In addition, through the prudent management of bequests by the First Presbyterian Church Foundation and the church Trustees who manage the McLaurin Trust, substantial monies are made available to FPC

each year for funding of additional mission and ministry opportunities under the guidance of the Session Income Allocation Committee. In recent years, these funds have been committed to uses that have now been fulfilled. Combining the Foundation and the McLaurin Trust, there is presently over \$12 million in the corpus which generates the funds provided to the Session for distribution. In future years these funds, totaling approximately \$300,000 per year, will be available for funding of ministries under the supervision of Session.

Several policies and historical practices were considered in detail. FPC has not historically utilized funds distributed from the above sources to fund the operating budget of the church.



McLaurin Trust + Foundation Corpus = \$12MM

Further, FPC operates on a balanced budget basis, neither budgeting for a deficit nor supplementing future budgets through prior year surpluses. It is also noted that it is a long standing policy of the Session of FPC that bequests to FPC should be delivered to the Foundation for investment and management. Dispensations from this policy have been made before; most recently a \$400,000 bequest was utilized in the recent capital campaign. This report will consider whether, under what circumstances and to what extent deviation from that policy is appropriate and make recommendations with respect thereto.



**\$300 K /year
from McLaurin
Trust and
Foundation**

Finally, the Task Force was charged with making recommendations with respect to the recent gifts of John and Mildred McKay.

To summarize our current situation we will have approximately \$300,000 per year for funding of mission and ministry opportunities for the next several years. We have received the McKay gift and will soon receive their bequest which will result in approximately \$1.2MM being available to the church. The Task Force was charged with making recommendations as to the recurring distributions and whether departure from or modification to the existing Session policy is appropriate.



**McKay bequest
= \$1.2MM**

¹ It is noted that the priorities exist in current Session policy for funding through the SIAC. Among these priorities is support of seminary studies for members or pastors of the church. These priorities, except as noted below, were considered to be appropriate by the Task Force.

mission & ministry opportunities

The Task Force includes the current and a past chair of the SIAC. It was noted that outside of the funding of seminary education, there are concerns about the uses of funds available for ministry support. In recent years, the funding requests considered by the SIAC and approved by the Session have not equaled the funds available. Additionally, the funding approved in many instances is often not considered to be of a level which “makes a difference” in our

mission at a meaningful level. This is often because the amount available was not an amount which allowed FPC to fund at a significant recurring level. Most recently, we found it sometimes difficult to identify mission opportunities for the tithe component of the capital campaign. Again, the funding in some cases was not of a significant level or was not of a recurring nature so the impact of the funding was diminished.

principles for use of funds

1.

HISTORY AND CONTINUITY

The Task Force felt strongly that all uses of the funds should be solely for purposes consistent with the longstanding mission and ministry of FPC. Funding should be made available only in order to fulfill our mission of spreading the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Further, it was con-

cluded that the recipients should be those with whom FPC presently has or will have a personal relationship – i.e. mission opportunities which we have historically funded or have an historic relationship; opportunities at FPC or in Baton Rouge; or support of opportunities in our Presbytery.

2.

CONCENTRATING OUR FOCUS ON LARGE PROJECTS

The Task Force initially concluded that given the extraordinary nature of our bounty, we need to consider only extraordinary uses of these funds. The Task Force is unanimous in its belief that prayerful consideration of committing to fund large mission opportunities is the best manner in which we can deploy these funds in order to have the greatest impact in our mission. Further, to insure that the grants

made by the FPC have a long term impact, it was concluded that we should look at a multi-year horizon for the grants.² Finally, in recognition that much of our current bounty is the result of prudent management of the funds given to the church by those who have served before us, we should, as a general rule, continue adherence to that policy. Accordingly, the Task Force is making recommendations for a 5 year commitment of funding for these extraordinary grants up to the amounts set forth below.

Summary of Available Funds (2015 to 2019)

McKay Gifts	\$1.2 million (\$675,000 gift received; bequest expected in 2015)
Foundation Grants	\$500,000 (estimated \$100,000 per year) ³
McLaurin Grants	\$875,000 (estimated \$175,000 per year)
TOTAL	\$2,575,000

² The exact timing and amounts actually funded would vary over the life of the commitment up to the maximum stated.

³ This amount is after allocating an estimated \$25,000 per year for seminary education.

suggested grants

GARDERE COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

\$500,000 (\$100,000 per year)

The Gardere area of Baton Rouge is “another world” to many of us. It is a world where children grow up hearing nothing but negative comments about their community. It is a world where crime is rampant and the streets and lots are trashed by litter, drug paraphernalia, and the grime of an inner city neighborhood long forgotten. It is a world where gunshots no longer cause residents to flinch. It is a world in desperate need of Christ’s help.

Unlike most of us who close our eyes and speed through the area only when required, Nancy and Dan Zito decided to bring the children of Christ who happen to live in Gardere to Him. That is, they followed his command to “...Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Mark 10:14). The Gardere Community Christian School (“GCCS”) was formed with “God at the center of its mission and vision.” Nancy Zito and her staff are fully committed to “caring for and nurturing the child’s spiritual life.”

Each member of the Sowing the Seeds of Abundance Task Force toured the campus of the school and was impressed by the difference the school is making in the lives of the children who attend the school and their families. We were also impressed that the school is growing and glowing. It is providing a comprehensive education to children of Gardere and they and their families are a beacon in their community and in our world. We are to a person impressed with the difference GCCS is making and we are prayerfully certain our support of the school will move our community “Deeper in Christ” and will carry His Message “Further into the World.”

The Task Force also carefully considered the viability of GCCS. We believe that, although they will continue to face challenges, they have turned the corner. They have reached a size where economies of scale are working in their favor. They have several major donors who are committed to the school. The amount proposed will allow Gardere to reach the next level and will stabilize the school for future success.

We recommend, without reservation, supporting Gardere Community Christian School by putting some of our God-given abundance to work over the next five years. The Task Force recommends that, in an arrangement similar to the Christian Counseling Center, the Session be afforded representation on Gardere's Board to support the school and to regularly report to the Session as to the work of the school.



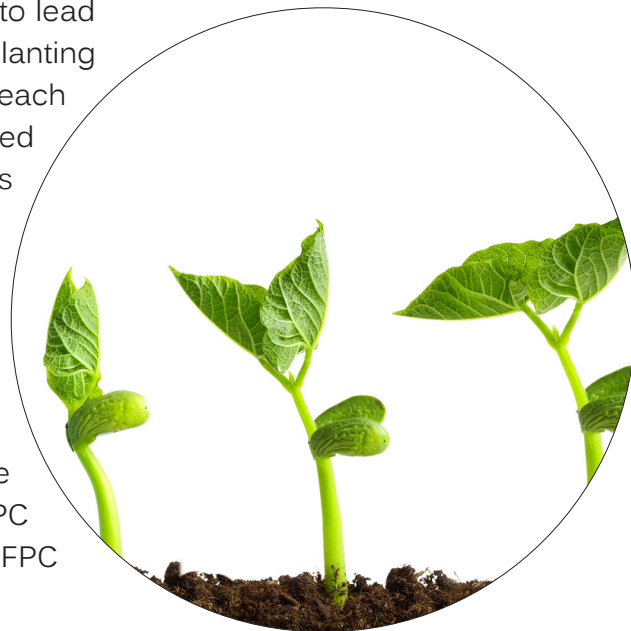
CHURCH PLANTING

\$500,000 (\$100,000 per year)

First Presbyterian Baton Rouge has a rich history of planting church communities in our area. Recent internal conversations along with collaborative work with like-minded churches have led us to believe another church plant could be on the horizon!

Much of the conversation started when FPC gifted \$100,000 to Covenant Presbyterian Church (EPC) in Mobile, AL (Alec Flynt's congregation) through the tithe component of the capital campaign. The vision was to assist Covenant in finding a permanent church home which, through faith, would insure the success, both financially and spiritually, of this new congregation. The goal was for this success to lead Covenant giving back to a church planting fund that FPC would also match (each contributing \$50,000 for a total seed amount of \$100,000). Covenant has succeeded in both areas as evidenced by growing membership and retiring its debt much faster than forecast. Fulfilling its commitment to FPC, Covenant is now ready to join with FPC in planting the next new EPC church. Even more exciting, this model has led other EPC churches to feel called to join with FPC and Covenant in church planting.

Conversations quickly progressed to a meeting of church leaders in the Gulf South Presbytery with consultant Tom Ricks out of St Louis, who is the EPC contact for church planting initiatives. At this meeting a loosely affiliated alliance that we could call the Gulf South Church Planting Network was formed consisting of 6-8 churches all feeling led to focus energy in New Orleans - focused on ministering to the large influx of young families in the Lakeview and Mid-city areas. Since that meeting, leadership has identified a few families in Lakeview that are interested in being point people for a church planting effort. The next steps would be to identify a budget and firm up leadership.



There are many possibilities and places on this earth to plant churches and it is easy to think FPC should focus in our backyard. There have been discussions throughout recent years about Zachary and the Gardere area, in addition to Lafayette, or even as far as Texas. There seems to be an energy with the network of churches in the Gulf South to affect a change in New Orleans due to the massive amount of change already being experienced in the area and a tremendous void of reformed churches. The key factors for supporting an effort in New Orleans include the city's close proximity to FPC, its being a cultural mecca that can be shaped and have an impact on the world, its proximity which allows FPC to support the plant with more than just money and there being a group of like-minded participants willing and able to contribute people and resources to the effort (we don't have to do it alone...).

Tom Ricks advises that an estimated annual budget for a church plant over 5 years is around \$250,000 per year. Conventional wisdom suggests that local families contribute a portion towards the budget in the beginning and a network of supporters raise the bulk of the remaining funds in Year 1 to support a lead pastor in getting feet on the ground. Depending on the mission "outpost," annual support may increase over time (low income outreach) or it may taper off (self-sustaining family oriented congregation).

If the momentum continues moving towards what appears to be a supportable planting effort in the New Orleans area, we could see FPC play a leading role in this network of churches by committing to provide \$100,000 of annual support over a 5 year period. It would be our hope that the new church would grow rapidly and quickly be able to stand on its own and perhaps monies would be freed for another church plant or other mission opportunities. It is our hope that should Session agree in spirit with this concept that we form a church planting committee to assist in efforts and to oversee investment opportunities presented through the process.

The Task Force recommends that a special committee be appointed, in a manner similar to the SIAC and subject to approval of the Session, to oversee the implementation of the church planting and the associated funds committed for this purpose.

WORSHIP AUGMENTATION

\$200,000 (over 3 years in declining amounts)

The Task Force believes the worship experience at FPC is an essential component of the ministry and mission of our church. It is the central and most visible ministry to everyone who enters the doors of FPC on Sunday morning. It is a part of the engine through which the Holy Spirit compels us to go “Deeper in Christ” and “Further into the World.”

As our Senior Pastor recently proclaimed, “Through the years, we have named this place, this Church, Beth-el, the house of God. For we have fled to these pews to pour out our grief in the time of loss and to hear the hope of the resurrection. ...We have felt the gates in our souls open when the music and voices have created a stairway to heaven -- [and] upon the music the angels have descended and ascended.” (Rev. Gerrit Dawson, *Finding Heaven’s Gate*, 6/14/2015)



The Task Force considered a variety of specific requests for worship augmentation. Exhibit “B” is an example of the items considered. While the Task Force believes that the worship experience at FPC is critical to growth of the church and should be augmented through the abundance of God’s blessing of resources, we concluded that it is outside the scope of our charge to make recommendations as to the specific expenditure of funds for worship. Thus, with this critical ministry and mission of our church in mind, the Task Force recommends “seeding” the augmentation of our worship experience for a 3 year period as outlined below.

The Task Force believes that if additional expenditures are undertaken to augment worship, this should occur in the context of a comprehensive review of the entire worship experience offered by FPC on Sundays. In contrast, we found that the requests for funding were focused on the style of worship for which the staff member is responsible. While this enthusiasm is applauded, it focuses on what we *now do* in worship and does not allow for a meaningful evaluation of what we *should be doing* in worship. We are, therefore, unable to determine whether a particular requested enhanced expenditure is consistent with the best overall mission of FPC. Further, it was noted that the Session has recently had discussions about the juxtapositioning of the Classic Reformed Service in the same time slot as the Acoustic Communion ser-

vice, among other worship topics. The Task Force believes that now is the time, while funds are available, to take a step back and look comprehensively at our worship experience and the monies spent on worship. This would include looking at the number, styles and times of worship services.

Accordingly, it is recommended by the Task Force that a committee led by Gerrit be appointed to undertake the analysis contemplated. We do not recommend that other staff (except for Barry for budgetary reasons) be included as committee members, although their thoughts, expertise and opinions should certainly be solicited and incorporated in the process.

In addition to the amounts currently budgeted for worship, the Task Force recommends that, following the analysis outlined above, up to: \$100,000 (year 1); \$70,000 (year 2); \$30,000 (year 3) in additional funding be made available. The special worship committee would study how to best invest these funds to enhance the worship experience offered by FPC with the goal of bringing souls to Christ through worship. This additional money is considered to be a special investment in our church that would be available over a three year period, and it would be tapered off during the three year period to allow for the regular church budget to grow and to absorb these expenses.

Specifically, it is our hope that should the Session agree in spirit with this concept that we form a special worship committee to study and assist the Session in an effort to intentionally augment the worship experience at FPC. It is the belief of the Task Force that FPC is uniquely suited to be the church within our community that inspires all who enter to go “Deeper in Christ” and “Further into the World,” through the proclamation of God’s Word, within the context of the highest quality music and worship experience that we can offer.

CONTINUED FUNDING OF SIAC \$500,000 (\$100,000 per year)

The Task Force is of the opinion that the continuation of funding of projects through the SIAC should remain a priority of our church. The SIAC funds as a first priority the seminary education of those with ties to our church. This priority should remain unchanged. The Task Force recommends that SIAC initiate a second priority in keeping with our vision for church planting and the priority of church planting in the EPC: the funding of internships for young pastors training to be church planters. Also, the SIAC has traditionally provided “seed money” for start-up



ministries or to fund special projects. A summary of these grants by the SIAC is attached as Exhibit “A.” As shown, many of the grants are extremely worthwhile and have paid huge dividends in the building of the Kingdom. As noted above, more recently many of the requests have not fit the criteria for funding. The Task Force believes that with greater communication of the work funded through the SIAC, FPC can continue to make good use of the available funds and therefore funds should continue to be made available.

SESSION POLICY

The current policy of the Session with regard to bequests provides as follows: “That all undesignated bequests and wills go to the Presbyterian Foundation with the income from such requests to be used by the church as the Session and Diaconate wish, whenever those bodies so wish” (October 25, 1982). The Task Force noted that this policy has served FPC extremely well over the last several decades. This works particularly well when relatively smaller amounts are left to the Church. In the event, however, of larger bequests, the Session has determined that strict adherence to this policy was not in the best interest of the mission of the church. Most recently, dispensation from the policy was made in order to assist in capital campaign. Accordingly, the Task Force believes that



some minor modification to the policy is appropriate to make the policy consistent with its historic application and the application proposed in this report. The Task Force recommends the policy outlined above be restated as follows: *Ordinarily, undesignated wills and bequests to First Presbyterian Church will be directed by the Session to the Foundation for deposit to the Foundation’s undesignated corpus. In cases of extraordinary opportunity or need, however, the Session may elect to deploy up to the entire amount of such bequests for special projects. In those extraordinary circumstances, ordinarily the Session will use an agency account of the Foundation for the Foundation to manage the funds until dispersal is complete.*

TRANSFER OF FUNDS TO THE FOUNDATION

\$875,000 allocated as set forth below

The Task Force is of the opinion that the work of the FPC Foundation and FPC Trustees has been exceptional. It is noted that the historic practice of transferring bequests to the Foundation has generated a corpus of sufficient magnitude to generate substantial annual income for distribution as outlined above. Further, these funds have facilitated major renovation projects and the planting of River Community Church. Therefore, the Task Force believes that some of the balance of the McKay bequest should be transferred to the Foundation as outlined below.

Two particular future needs were identified for funding through this mechanism. First, the Owen/Huff Fund was established to provide funding to supplement the private Christian education of the children of our pastors. Most recently, however, the low interest environment and the rapidly rising cost of tuition have led to the funds available being insufficient to adequately support the tuition. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that \$200,000 be transferred to the Foundation to supplement the funds generated by the Owen/Huff Fund. The funds so transferred would carry the stipulation that the earnings thereon, plus an annual amount of up to \$7,500, be available as needed to supplement the Christian education (K-12) of the children of our pastors.

Second, the Task Force has considered the need for the church to acquire additional real estate. The Task Force believes that acquiring downtown real estate can be a prudent investment. Specifically, two uses were identified: (i) the church is in need of additional parking; and, (ii) FPC is considering a pastoral intern program and it may be that such a program is more viable from a budget stand point if housing can be provided, thereby reducing the salary needs of the intern. Housing in the Beauregard Town nearby the church is available and is a convenient possibility. For a purchase of either property, the proceeds could be utilized as a down payment should the church elect to finance the acquisition. It is the recommendation of the Task Force that \$375,000 be transferred to the foundation in an Agency Account to be available for the purchase of real property in support of the mission of FPC. (It is noted that the church Trustees must concur in the purchase of real estate and the Finance Committee would need to consider the financial terms of any such purchase).

The Task Force recommends that the balance of the McKay bequest (\$300,000) be transferred to the Foundation for deposit in the corpus of the Foundation.

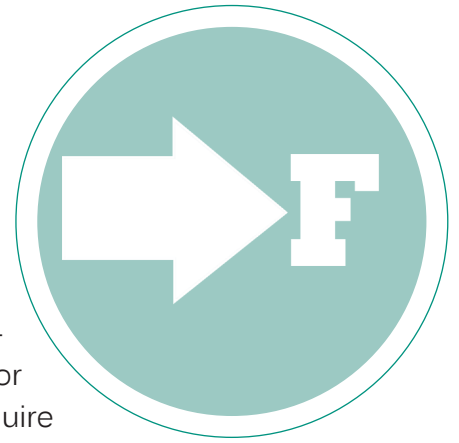


exhibit A

SIAC FUNDING 2012-2015



Notes:

In each year, requests for seminary education were funded first, then grants considered for the items listed.

In 2013, FPC utilized the McLaurin funds to retire the balance of the Capital Campaign loan. In prior years, FPC utilized the McLaurin funds to restore the corpus of the McLaurin Corpus Restoration Fund which had been utilized in part to underwrite the capital campaign.

exhibit B

WORSHIP AUGMENTATION ITEMS REQUESTED

Among the items considered included bringing to our worship services (i) a resident string or brass quartet; (ii) weekly retention of individual professional musicians; (iii) choir enhancement with additional professional singers for the sections of tenor, bass, alto and soprano; (iv) retention of Dr. Borislava Ilcheva, Concertmaster of Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra, for services to locate those musicians who can play remarkably with the least amount of rehearsal time, including expansion and booking for all Sunday morning professional musicians; (v) four major works in addition to the major Christmas and Easter works for unified services; (vi) a Vespers-Evensong service with a quarterly, sunset evening prayer service with substantive music (choir, orchestra, organ, soloists) of a major work, prayer and Scripture reading; and (vii) technology for worship augmentation, such as a Telex Communication System to allow our worship leaders and technicians at various stations (e.g., pastor's pew, sanctuary's crow's nest, chancel area, media room) to communicate with each other in a closed circuit situation to enhance the worship experience for our members.

summary

The Sowing the Seeds of Abundance Task Force has had the thrilling task of seeking God's vision for the expansion of the mission and ministry of our church. We have sought to make proposals for putting into play considerable funding for projects which arise from our historic identity. And we have sought to discern where God is already at work and calling us to join him with deeper commitment. Our proposals thus arise from three joyful affirmations:

1) We are a church that has gathered for Biblically faithful, musically excellent Presbyterian worship in the center of this city for nearly two centuries, and desire to shape worship that will attract and bless our city for generations to come.

2) We are a church at the heart of a great city with deep concern for bringing the gospel to our community. We have always had a particular burden for children, and have sought ways to transform our city by the way we care for and educate children.

3) We have a long history of church planting, and for 8 years have been happily a part of a denomination which prioritizes church planting. So we have embraced our leadership role in our denomination in bringing the gospel to our nation through the planting of new Christ-centered, Presbyterian churches.

4) We recognize the work of those who have gone before us who have implemented policies of fiscal discipline which have contributed significantly to our bounty. We have embraced these policies believing they are in the long term best interest of mission and ministry of FPC and have tried to make recommendations consistent with the spirit of those policies.

We believe that God has answered our prayers and given us a vision to lay before the session as it leads the church. We believe the deployment of funds as set forth above is consistent with these priorities and will inspire participation by our congregation in the work of the church. Importantly, we believe this path will unleash giving from our members both to the annual ministry of the church and to the legacy giving of the Foundation. We believe these proposals focus our energy in a Christ-centered, missional direction.

Respectfully submitted,
Brett Furr, chairman
Scott Bardwell
Kyle Beall
Pat Canfield
Pat Kerr
Benn Vincent
Gerrit Dawson, ex officio

August 24, 2015

