

Strategic Envisioning Process
Celebration Report



December 2, 2014

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Summary

In October of 2013, Meadows Baptist Church set out on a quest to marshal resources and leadership to thoroughly evaluate our church structure, ministry philosophy and effectiveness in order to sharpen our vision and enrich our impact on our community and world for the gospel of Christ. A twenty-six member Strategic Leadership Team was formed and the Malphurs Group was hired to lead the team through an intensive and biblical process of evaluation and vision engineering. The plans and recommendations that came out of the process were presented to the congregation and prioritized for implementation. Many of those initiatives have already been employed and executed to great success, while others are still in the developmental stages of launching and still others are long-term objectives that will be further developed in the future. This report provides the details on how this process was conducted and reviews the key results and benefits for our church.

What is Strategic Envisioning?

In 2013, as we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Meadows Baptist Church, a process was begun to evaluate every aspect of what we do and find ways to improve our effectiveness in carrying out our mission for Christ. This process, known as Strategic Envisioning, was facilitated by a consultant from the Malphurs Group, a biblically based organization that works with churches to help them evaluate where they are now in their ministries and plan for where God wants them to be in the future. A Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) was formed consisting of 26 people from Meadows that represented a broad cross-section of our church family. In October 2013, this team began a seven-month process to review the biblical principles that define and empower the church and to apply them in sharpening our vision and focus.

The SLT consisted of people from across the age range of our congregation including 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's and 70's. The SLT members are listed below.

- Tori Peters
- Rachel Mosquito
- Tiffany Carroll
- Kori McWhorter
- Daniel Sattizahn
- Brian Polito
- Sally Binnix
- Michael Cooper
- Alan Goodroe
- Jon King
- Brad Wilson
- Keith Gray
- Paul Patterson
- Cindy Richards
- Scott Fenton
- Wayne Sharp
- Juanita Bowden
- Jim Connolly
- Nancy Crawford
- Jim McDonald
- Wes Irby
- Doris Sparks
- John Young
- James Fowler
- Joyce Purser
- Earl Thompson

Strategic Leadership Team Phase

The SLT met one weekend a month for seven consecutive months in an intensive study of biblical principles of ministry and was led to engage in robust dialogue, prayer and strategizing. The monthly sessions, which lasted between 7 and 8 hours each, were led by our consultant from the Malphurs Group, Ron Donnini. Out of those sessions, ten Implementation Teams were formed that drew in over one hundred additional gifted and committed leaders from our church family. The Implementation Teams were designed to cover every facet and dimension of ministry throughout Meadows. Each team forged a vision and was asked to develop strategies to help propel our church to an even higher level of devotion and effectiveness for Christ and his kingdom.

Implementation Teams and their focus:

- Community Outreach – looking at new ways to impact our neighborhoods with the love of Christ.
- Disciple Making – defining and refining ways to promote spiritual growth.
- Mobilization – empowering each member of Meadows to reach their God-given potential.
- Communications – utilizing effective tools to inform, educate, and connect.
- Creativity & Innovation – thinking outside of the box to broaden our impact.
- Location & Facilities – addressing current needs and planning for future growth.
- Finance & Stewardship – leveraging all of our resources to best support the ministry vision.
- Staffing – evaluating current and future needs for maintaining a great staff.
- Leadership Development – raising up and equipping new leaders for ministry.
- Prayer – the most important investment to ensure that all of our activities are blessed by God and empowered to succeed.

The first SLT weekend session was held in October 2013 and the focus was to establish and examine the biblical foundation for church growth. We began by reviewing the state of the church in America. Statistics show that the number of churches is declining while cults and non-Christian groups are growing. The percentage of people attending church continues to decrease with each new generation. We then examined the strengths and weaknesses of our church and assessed our readiness to embark on this process of preparing for the future. At the end of the session, each SLT member signed a covenant of commitment to whole-heartedly support the effort with prayer, participation and positive communication.

During the November session, the team focused on the mission and core values of Meadows. We all agreed that the mission of Meadows was essentially the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), but wanted to come up with a simple way to describe it both internally to the congregation and externally to the community. After discussing various ways of expressing this, the team came up with the following mission statement:

- *Know Christ, Love Christ, Share Christ*

We also discussed the core values of Meadows that describe who we are as a church: things like meaningful worship, edifying fellowship and Christ-like service, all guided by the supremacy of God's Word. These are the things that empower and guide our ministry. Coming out of this process, the values identified by the team were captured as follows:

- The eternal truth of God's Word
- The power of Prayer
- The intimacy of true Worship
- The support of Relationships
- The challenge to Serve our world
- The impact of sharing Christ

At the December session, we began to look at the specific topics for the Implementation Teams. The focus for this month was on Community Outreach and Disciple Making so the members of those Implementation Teams were invited to join the meetings.

In the session on Community Outreach, we discussed the sobering fact that most churches today are not doing enough to reach their community. We looked at some characteristics of the areas surrounding Meadows such as demographics and compared those with the demographics of our congregation. We were reminded of the importance of sending the church into the world rather than trying to coax the world into the church. We also had a brain-storming session on new and creative ways in which we could impact the community.

In the session on Disciple Making, we discussed the mission of the church in helping people grow spiritually into mature disciples of Christ. The need was presented for a clear, simple pathway for making disciples that allows people to assess where they currently are on the journey. We began reviewing the things that Meadows is presently doing in this arena and the need to realign any activities that are not effectively supporting the mission. The Disciple Making team began analyzing, refining and developing new approaches in this important area.

For the January 2014 session, the topics were Mobilization and Staffing so the folks from those two Implementation Teams joined with the SLT members to review these areas. The first session was about developing a strategy to mobilize our congregation to do ministry. In most churches, only a small percentage of the membership is actively involved in ministry and this limits the overall effectiveness of the church. We looked at reasons why people don't get more involved such as feeling unqualified or believing that the church staff will take care of everything. Since it is clear that God has empowered every believer to do ministry, we looked at ways to help each member identify how they have been equipped and recognize the need to employ those gifts.

In the session on Staffing, we looked at the importance of having quality staff members, the proper ratio of staff to congregation, and the essential roles that staff should fulfill. Contrary to what some might believe, the primary role of the staff is not to do the ministry – that is actually the role of the congregation. The staff should be focused on developing lay people to lead out in the congregation as it does ministry. We also looked at different methods for defining expectations and evaluating staff members to promote their continued personal growth.

At the February weekend meetings, the focus was on our church's facilities and finances. During the first session, the Location & Facilities members joined with the SLT to review a few items in regards to the church. First, we discussed the current campus of Meadows. Is it appealing to church members and guests? Are there areas that need immediate improvements, or is a "spring cleaning" of the campus needed? Secondly, we discussed the church's location. Is it a generally good location? What can we do to make it more appealing, or is the location already appealing enough? The team members then began to review and prioritize options to

help improve our church's campus. They also began future thinking as it pertains to potential expansion plans.

As we moved into the second topic for this month, the Finance team members joined with the SLT to review issues in regards to financial stewardship at Meadows. We did a general review of our church's budget, and we discussed how the church's members are donating funds. As the other Implementation Teams began submitting ideas for our church, the Finance IT reviewed ways to raise the funds needed or identify available funds in the existing budget. We discussed how we could increase stewardship, and we discussed ways that the current budgeting process could be revised.

The session in March was fully devoted to the topic of leadership development. Much of the time was spent focusing on the example set by the greatest servant leader who ever lived: Jesus Christ. The characteristics, behaviors and teachings of Christ were examined to illustrate what servant leadership is all about and how different it is from what our world views as leadership. The remainder of the session was focused on the importance of building leaders within the church. Specific steps were reviewed to help expand and encourage the leadership development process. Each individual was reminded of their responsibility to be a leader within their own sphere of influence and to continue to grow in that area.

The April session was a combined meeting where all Implementation Team members were invited to join the SLT to review the results in each area. Each Implementation team made a presentation on their activities, results and proposed strategies for increasing the effectiveness of our church. A time of discussion allowed anyone to ask questions, clarify points or suggest alternatives in a given area. The session was closed with a time of prayer for our leaders and our church.

At this point in the process, the challenge was to prioritize, consolidate and integrate the recommendations from each team into several strategic initiatives for our church to pursue. In preparation for a meeting with the entire congregation, the results from each team were summarized on two or three slides. In May, the SLT members were assembled one more time to review the final presentation and ensure that the key results in each area had been effectively captured.

On Sunday evening June 1, the congregation was invited to a special meeting to see an overview of the SLT process and hear the recommendations being proposed. Although each Implementation Team only had a brief time to present, the goal was to illustrate the breadth of the topics that had been studied and summarize the plans for moving forward. After each set of presentations, the congregation participated in a season of prayer focused on those strategic areas.

Implementation Phase

With all of the intensive SLT sessions now behind us, and the recommendations from each Implementation Team presented to the church, it was critical to keep the momentum going during the summer months and through the implementation process. A Summer Leadership Team was formed to ensure that the key initiatives were developed into reality. This team consisted of key leaders from existing church ministries (e.g. Children's Ministry, Student Ministry, Women's/Men's Ministry, Worship Ministry etc.) along with representatives of the key strategic focus areas (Outreach, Discipleship, Mobilization, Facilities). Each month during the summer, team leaders provided status updates on how the initiatives were being developed and the results to date.

In the area of Outreach, a review of all current ministries was documented in a master plan to help coordinate all of our outreach efforts. A strategy was developed to put more focus on reaching our community with large, church-wide events such as the Easter Carnival along with age-targeted events such as Good News clubs. To emphasize the need for evangelistic awareness, a class was developed to provide practical tools and increase sensitivity to the spiritual condition of people around us.

In the area of Discipleship, the Life Groups concept was developed by investigating the various models that other churches are using and deciding what would work best for Meadows. The projected impact on existing ministries was discussed and coordinated among the teams involved. A decision was made to launch the effort in September 2014 and a process was setup for identifying and training leaders.

In the area of Mobilization, an online tool for Spiritual Gifts Assessment was chosen and tested by the team. The tool was then introduced to the entire congregation and a sermon series on spiritual gifts was developed to coincide with this emphasis. The new member orientation process was enhanced to ensure that people fully understand our church's beliefs, processes and opportunities for service.

In the area of Facilities, the improvement projects that had been prioritized as most urgent were begun. A new coffee station for the atrium was constructed and installed. The carpet in the Preschool area, which was stained and well-worn, was replaced with new multi-purpose flooring. While some available funds were identified in the church budget, there was not enough to fully cover these priority projects. Thus, a special offering was held where the congregation was invited to participate in this effort. Through this offering, the Lord provided more than enough for these needs.

Meanwhile, in other areas, efforts continued to further develop the results of the SLT process. In the area of Communications, a new church logo was designed and incorporated into a new worship guide along with the mission statement and core values. In the area of Staffing, a team investigated our current church polity, evaluated other models, and made recommendations for the future. The Finance team looked for ways to revise our planning and budgeting process to better support the new strategic focus.

During the time that the SLT had been meeting, a worship pastor search committee was formed and began the process of finding the right person for that important role at Meadows. The search team was invited to meet with the SLT one month in a joint session to envision the future

of Worship at our church. In another example of God's perfect timing, the search team found a man in Tim Groves who garnered their unanimous support and he was called to Meadows during this season of excitement and anticipation for the future.

Key Results and Benefits

There were over 40 recommendations and initiatives that grew out of the efforts of our ten Implementation Teams. Many of those initiatives have already been employed and executed to great success, while others are still in the developmental stages of launching and still others are long-term objectives that will be further developed in the future. Below is a summary of the major benefits and results of our Strategic Envisioning process.

Internal Process Improvements

- We have established a precedent for the thorough, biblical and strategic assessment and planning for Meadows.
- We created a church growth leadership team representative of our ongoing ministries that will meet quarterly for vision crafting, ministry calendaring and strategic evaluation.
- We have created a new system of recruitment and service for the placement of our people on ministry teams.
- We have developed a spiritual gift assessment strategy to help people discover their gifts and employ them in service for the Lord.
- We have developed a new strategy for new member orientation.
- We have recommended revisions to our church constitution to better guide our church governance and to better protect the integrity of the church's reputation and identity.

Enhanced Communication & Message

- We created a fresh version of our church logo, core values and mission statement to help imprint our true identity upon our hearts as well as upon our community.
- We integrated the new branding both internally and externally via an updated website, worship guide, T-shirts, bumper stickers, cups, etc.
- We updated our online presence to better draw people into the Meadows experience.
- We called a new worship pastor whose gifting complemented and supported the direction of the strategic envisioning process that will help us reach and develop a new generation of worshippers and disciples.

Sharpened Ministry Focus

- We created a third core level of our disciple-making process to include Life Groups that were launched in September 2014.
- We prioritized a commitment to community outreach and impact that is helping us permeate all of our ministries with an evangelistic intentionality and mindset.
- We produced community events, such as the Easter Carnival and Fall Festival to bring hundreds of people onto our campus and provide a fun, enjoyable experience.
- We expanded age-targeted events such as Good News Clubs, which are now in four elementary schools (Dooley, Meadows, McCall and Forman), and PESH Free-Lunch Wednesdays that now impact hundreds of students each week.
- We have created an evangelism equipping class to provide various practical tools for developing relationships with those around us in order to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Facility Improvements

- We renovated the preschool and workroom area with new flooring to improve the appearance and image of our childcare facilities.

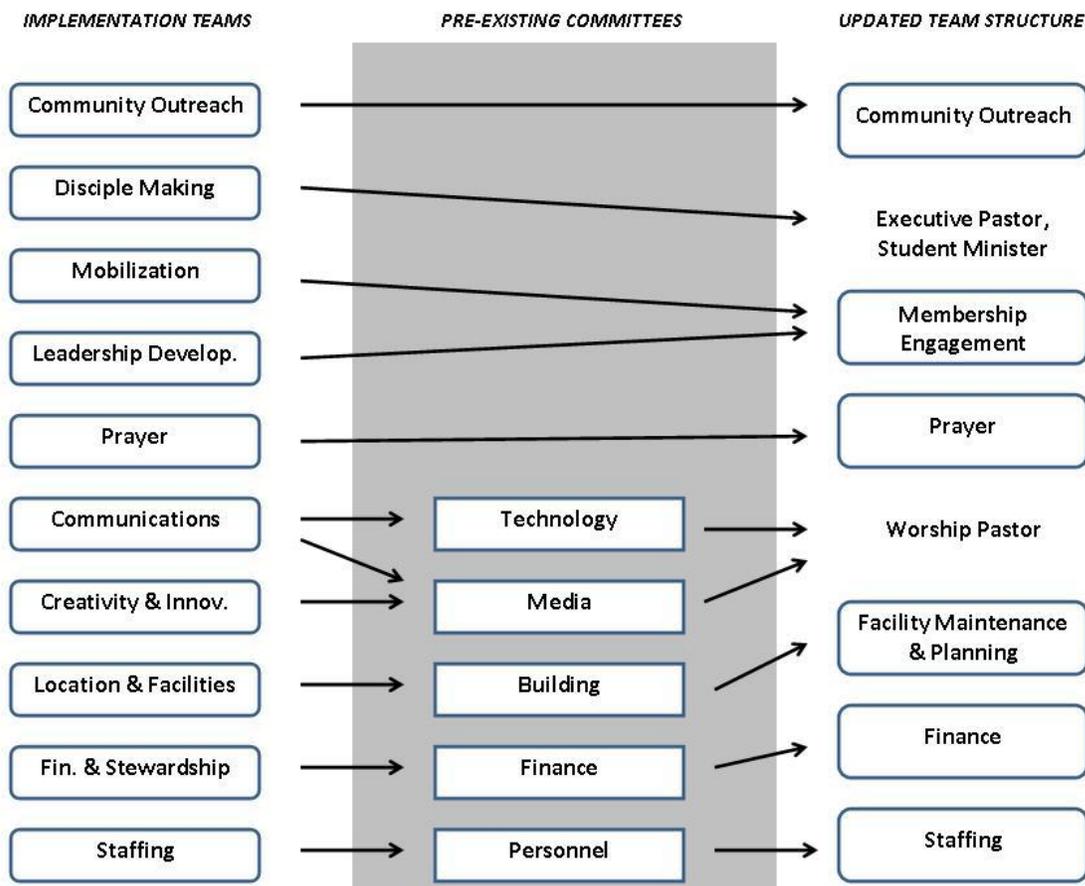
- We introduced a new coffee station in the atrium to enhance our hospitality toward visitors and members alike.
- We are installing security cameras throughout the preschool, children and student areas as a heightened level of accountability and security for our ministries.

Coming for 2015

- We have created a Campus and Facility Expansion team to evaluate and recommend the next phase of building for our church.
- We are evaluating changes to the Sunday morning schedule for Bible Study and Worship options to accommodate growth.
- We are developing a ministry for English language classes to engage a segment of our community that may otherwise be unreached.

Envisioning the Future

With all that has been accomplished to date, plans are now in place to maintain the strategic focus moving forward. While the formal phase of Strategic Envisioning has concluded, the process of seeking God’s vision for what our church can and should be will continue until Jesus returns to call us home. Each of the ten strategic areas that were the focus of the Implementation Teams has been mapped to specific staff or lay leaders. The diagram below illustrates how this mapping will allow us to continue to grow as a church as we develop great disciples of Christ.



As we look to the future, please take a moment to reflect on the following.

God has a vision for Meadows Baptist Church and we are forever seeking his face and his heart and his word that we might grasp more fully what that marvelous vision is and experience the transformational power of the Holy Spirit to become the church of God’s dreams. Throughout our Strategic Envisioning process, we have seen glimpses of the glory that God envisions for Meadows; to borrow from the Apostle John and his Revelation . . .

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a growing church. One that was constantly growing for the glory of God, growing in faith, growing in love, growing in devotion, growing in diversity and growing in numbers; a church who gathered over 1,000 people every weekend to celebrate the greatness of God, the reality of eternal life and the preeminence of Jesus Christ! I saw a church grounded in the non-negotiable convictions that Sundays are sacred, the Bible is God's Word, and Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life! I saw a church where the presence and power of God were manifest through vibrant worship and the transformational truth of Scripture.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a relevant church; a church that was salt and light, transplanting the positive and healing power of the gospel into the community, the culture and the entire country! I saw a church creating a signature imprint of community impact upon schools, businesses and government. I saw a church inspired by the blood sacrifice of Christ for the lost; a church that empowers its people to cross any barrier necessary to reach every person possible with the transforming message of the gospel in the marketplaces where they labor, on the school campuses where they learn and in the neighborhoods where they live! I saw a church operating as a mighty mission force empowering its members to go global with the gospel. I saw a church governed by the great commission of Christ to send out mission teams to the ends of the earth and to cooperatively support thousands of missionaries on every continent of the planet.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a church of empowered ministers! There were anointed pastors who were faithful shepherds and who poured their lives into equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. The result was an empowered church family enthusiastic about ministry service, engaged in ministry strategy and empowered by the Holy Spirit to discover and develop their spiritual gifts to accomplish God's divine purpose in the lives of people!

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a family church; a church marshaling its resources to strengthen the family; a church where marriages were enriched, parents were empowered, children were inspired, singles were celebrated, widows were remembered, broken hearts were healed and lives were elevated!

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a disciple-making church! Every action, every activity, every available resource was harnessed to the compelling vision of partnering with God to transform lost people into fully-devoted and fully-developed followers of Jesus Christ. I saw a church where the biblical path to spiritual maturity is clearly defined and passionately pursued; a church filled with powerful examples of disciples at every stage of spiritual development: spiritual babes newly converted, spiritual adolescents discovering their identity, spiritual adults fulfilling their purpose and spiritual giants who walk with God so intimately they bring the invisible realm of eternity to our doorstep!

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a unified church; a church where grudges lost their grip; where hurts lost their hold; where selfishness could not stand; where pride had no pull and where pettiness had no power. I saw a church quick to listen, sure to forgive and ready to embrace; a church who could walk hand in hand even when they did not

always see eye to eye. I saw a genuine church, transparent and real; the kind of church that made you feel welcome and wanted, at peace and at home. I saw a church where people were eager to gather and reluctant to leave. I saw a church filled with first-time guests who had come by a member's invitation and because of the church's reputation.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a praying church. A church that practiced praying down the divine power of God and binding up the destructive power of the Devil. I saw a church that saturated every decision, every initiative, every effort in prayer; a church that prayed people into the kingdom of God and propelled them further along the path of great discipleship; a church that prayed great prayers, prayers that moved the heart of God, healed the brokenness of people and changed the course of history.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a creative church; a church that worked hard to stay fresh and impactful; a church that was willing to try new methods and new models while holding firm to the non-negotiables of the gospel. I saw a church that could exegete the culture as well as the Scriptures and who refused to put God in a box; a church that respected the past but embraced the future.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a giving church; a church that recognized God's ownership and celebrated faithful stewardship; a church that practiced storing up treasure in heaven and invested finances for the expansion of God's kingdom.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a communicating church; a church committed to using every medium possible to invigorate its God-given mission; a church willing to harness the newest advances in communication while mastering the traditional forms as well; a church that was fully informed and enthusiastically engaged; a church that communicated effectively within the body and within the community as well.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a uniquely situated church; a 27 acre oasis of hope and healing and truth and grace that invited people into the richness of intimacy with God; a church with facilities that were welcoming, inviting and well-cared for; an acreage that brought them to Christ not just to church.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was Meadows Baptist Church; and when I looked through the eyes of faith, I saw what God sees and I saw what we could be. I saw a magnificent church, a church after God's own heart!

I saw heaven standing open and there before me I saw you. I saw who you could become by the grace of God and I saw the vital role you have been called to fill in this God-inspired vision called Meadows Baptist Church. The question is: do you see it? The challenge is: will you embrace it?