



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2021

## THANK YOUS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Governing Board would like to thank all the Kickoff weekend participants and those who participated in the appreciative inquiry process for your thoughtful responses, ideas, time, and patience in helping us collect important information for the Strategic Planning process. The Governing Board also wishes to acknowledge the many FC staff members who helped us navigate the technical challenges of virtual meetings, social distancing, and working from home, especially Bobbi Mueller, Stewart Pitchford, and Pam Jameson.

Thank you to the Strategic Planning Team for their dedication and countless volunteer hours. Each brought their perspectives, experiences, and talents to the table.

We also want to thank Rev. Sarai Schnucker Rice for her leadership and insight in guiding us through the Appreciative Inquiry Process.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM MEMBERS

Pam Shisler, Chair  
Catherine Adams  
Terry Davis  
Alice Finley  
Tanner Gaerke  
Jamie Greene  
Cydney Philbin  
Jodi Patton  
Glen Miles  
Carrie Schwab  
Paul Anderson

## BACKGROUND

Today First Community is a robust Christian community with thousands of members, strong worship offerings across three locations, and numerous effective missions and ministries. We offer meaningful experiences, whether in worship, at Vesper Hill at Akita, or providing food to Heart to Heart, or feeding the homeless. These are just a few examples of all First Community has to offer. First Community's open theology and our acceptance of all is the cornerstone of our mission of One Community.

The First Community Governing Board is responsible for generating and developing future and long-range plans for our ministries. It is anticipated that First Community's Strategic Plans will provide Mission Imperatives as areas for focus by the staff and lay leadership for the coming 12-36 months.

Why do we need a strategic plan? While so much is positive today with First Community, there is serious work to do to provide for the continued development of our ministries and to assure our long-term viability. The process aligns the needs and desires of the congregation with the oversight of the Governing Board. A focused Strategic Plan will help guide First Community to ensure our future for the next generations.

## OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Strategic Planning Team (SPT) employed Rev. Sarai Rice to guide us through an appreciative inquiry process. More in-depth details about the appreciative inquiry process are available on the FC Governing Board website.

The SPT conducted research, interviews, surveys, and one-on-one meetings to gather information to help form our Mission Imperatives. The research included:

- The SPT interviewed 23 local community leaders involved in education, government, business, real estate, and philanthropy to discover what trends they believe will be impacting our community in the next 3-5 years.
- We conducted 25 appreciative inquiry small group meetings with church members and collected feedback from almost 300 FC members, about 10% of our membership.
- The SPT has collected and reviewed significant trend data relating to national church and religious affiliations, and trends within our own organization. We have also collected and reviewed other resources, including editorials, articles, research materials, polls, and other publications.
- FC Governing Board members observed worship at other churches and gathered other information about those churches. The Governing Board also solicited non-members to visit First Community’s worship services and provide feedback.
- A review of all four of our First Community campuses: North, South, Akita, and Online

## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Central Ohio’s population is continuing to grow. The local communities we serve are getting younger and more diverse. Couples are waiting to get married, if at all.

Our communities, Hilliard, Dublin, Grandview, are experiencing population growth and a growing diversity in many ways.

Our local communities are experiencing, and will continue to experience social service needs, such as food deprivation, mental health issues, diverse family structures and inadequate housing.

Political polarization is creating a great divide. Various forms of inequality are being identified in all areas of our community.

National trends for the mainline Christian church have shown declining membership and participation. Recent information is reflecting some change to this trend.

The communities we serve are growing and getting younger. Family dynamics are changing. Young people seem to prefer smaller group engagement and have less emphasis on being a member.

First Community’s pledging units continue to decline. We have less participants in our Youth program. Our Sunday worship attendance, which has shown a 25% increase during the previous 4 years, is still less than it was at its peak, a few decades ago. We are engaging more people via social media outlets and less in-person attendance.

**THEMES IMPORTANT TO FC MEMBERSHIP AS IDENTIFIED THROUGH THE APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY PROCESS**

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Embrace Social Consciousness         | Small Group Activities   |
| Community Engagement                 | Facilities Management  |
| Commitment to Youth and Young Adults | Adapting worship to connect with the community in a way that is spiritually meaningful |

**OTHER KEY AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- Church Governance
- Finance
- Stewardship
- Music
- Burkhart Center

Next Steps.....Development of Strategic Planning Mission Imperatives

## 2021 FIRST COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLANNING MISSION AND OPERATIONAL IMPERATIVES

### MISSION IMPERATIVES

*As One Community, First Community will:*

1. Design multiple worship and other spiritual growth experiences that engage our members in new ways and reach others beyond our membership. Creativity, ingenuity, and new spiritual paradigms will be encouraged. In addition to Sundays, other days and styles will be explored and developed.
2. Prioritize resources and staffing to enhance a full ministry to children, youth, and families of all kinds.
3. Broaden and emphasize its social consciousness with special attention to working toward racial equality, ending gun violence, and creating a sustainable natural environment within the Columbus metro area.
4. Engage neighboring communities by creating connections, creating listening opportunities for their insights on specific concerns and issues, and designing new ways to partner with them.

### OPERATIONAL IMPERATIVES

*The First Community Governing Board will:*

1. Determine next steps for our physical facilities with a special focus on First Community South. Time for completion: December 31, 2021.
2. Review current First Community stewardship practices, study thriving church stewardship practices in similar congregations and recommend changes to current stewardship practices to assure responsible, sustainable stewardship. Timeline for completion: December 31, 2021.
3. Streamline our ministry governance system from councils to ministry teams and short-term, time-limited task forces. Time for completion: September 30, 2021.
4. Review the organizational structure of the Burkhart Center, the Spiritual Searchers, and the Adult Learning council to create an adult education model that aligns the important work of these ministries together under one organization. Timeline for completion: September 30, 2021
5. Assure adequate budgetary resources for evangelism (marketing) to the Columbus metro area to tell of First Community’s good news and purpose of welcoming all.

## **WHAT NEXT?**

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The First Community Governing Board approved the 2021 Strategic Plan as presented by the Strategic Planning Team at the June 23, 2021, Governing Board Meeting.

Under the direction of our Senior Minister, Rev. Glen Miles, the Program Staff and Clergy will develop action items for the coming 1-2 years that will support the Mission Imperatives.

The Governing Board will form task forces to discuss further and develop outcomes for the Operational Imperatives.

The FC Governing Board will conduct semi-annual evaluations of progress towards these Mission Imperatives and Operational Imperatives.