



Preparing for 2020:

**First†Metropolitan: A Vital & Vibrant Centre
for Spiritual Growth & Active Discipleship**

**The First Three Years: Strategic Plan for
First†Metropolitan 2011-2013**

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Introduction

The Strategic Planning Committee, with the support of the Executive Council developed this plan containing our vision, mission, values and strategic direction of First+Metropolitan. It provides a ten-year roadmap to enhance our journey for spiritual growth and active discipleship. The Council and staff will review progress quarterly and will review and update the plan annually as needed to ensure that we stay on course to 2020 Vision.

This plan was developed with broad involvement and guidance from the Council, congregation and staff. The staff collaborated in the planning process and provided important support and analysis to complete this plan.

The Strategic Planning Committee included Council members and staff. The Council reviewed the vision, mission, core values and assumptions underlying the Church's approach to its work. Information forums were held with the Congregation to enrich the planning decisions. These meetings set the stage for a work session of the full Council during which the Church's strategic direction was refined.

In addition to the reports of the Joint Needs Assessment Committee (JNAC), Stantec and financial reports, an organizational assessment and environmental scan make up the background information reports.

The process has culminated in this strategic plan, which outlines the 2020 Vision:

"First Metropolitan will be a vital and vibrant Centre of Spiritual Growth and Active Discipleship in Greater Victoria"

Executive Summary

First+Metropolitan stands at a critical juncture in its future. It has demonstrated in the past the ability to adapt to changing realities while remaining true to its guiding principles. It has the potential to again to be proactive in renewing and redirecting itself to achieve its vision.

Like many mainstream churches, First+Metropolitan is grappling with changes in its congregation demographics, aging infrastructure and diminishing financial capacity. However, First+Metropolitan is better positioned than many to take advantage of emerging opportunities. This strategic plan is designed to address ways in which we can use this potential to sustain and grow First+Metropolitan for the next 10 years.

While the vision is targeted for 2020, the Strategic Planning committee will identify key areas of focus in **three-year increments**. Each Church committee, in consultation with the Strategic Planning committee will develop annual work plans to ensure that there is continuity and congruence with the areas of focus. As we move forward to 2020, each year will help crystallize the programs and projects for the next and ultimately define the 2020 Vision.

The key elements of the plan are that we ensure that our commitment to spiritual growth and active discipleship at First+Metropolitan are supported by strong staff & volunteers, buildings and finances.

This document is designed to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the process that First+Metropolitan will need to undertake over the next ten years in order to remain vitally engaged in its vision. The interpretation of the background information should enable the reader to understand the rationale for the decisions taken in the first stage of the strategic plan.

The document will outline the key goals & objectives that will be set, the strategies that will be developed to meet the goals & objectives and the criteria that will be used to evaluate outcomes.

The primary benefit of having a written, well-constructed strategic plan is that it provides clarity and direction for everyone involved in decision-making. The overarching aim is to create a plan that is consistent with our vision & mission. We hope that this document reflects the commitment of the congregation to the vision of First+Metropolitan.

Vision Statements

Vision: First+Metropolitan United Church

A Centre of Spiritual Growth & Active Discipleship

Mission:

To be a community called to live our lives as witnesses to God as known through Jesus. To invite others to share the Christian journey as we seek to be a transforming presence in our city and the world.

Values:

- To love one another unconditionally as God loves us.
- To value each person's uniqueness and the gifts of community.
- To actively care for and live with respect in Creation through energy and environmental stewardship
- To nurture Christian spirituality and justice seeking in ways that foster personal growth and creative interaction.
- To be an alive, welcoming and inclusive Christian community for all ages.
- To enter into worship that draws us closer to our Creator, enabling us to be active followers of Jesus in our communities.
- To nurture transformation through spiritual practices and learning that reconnects us to our Source and empowers us to be salt and light in the world.
- To reach out with compassion and respect, seeking justice and healing within our church, our community and beyond

Interpretation & Analysis

Internal Factors

Strengths:

- First+Metropolitan has a history of passion for spiritual growth and active discipleship
- First+Metropolitan is a large, well-established, inner city church located in Victoria, BC that serves a diverse, far-reaching, multicultural community.
- The congregation has demonstrated commitment and support to being an active and vibrant church.
- We have built solid relationships with other faith communities and other cultural groups and are poised to broaden these relationships.
- As the result of its strong leadership, First+Metropolitan is seen locally and nationally as a centre of innovation and vision. We have continued to build on successful endeavours but are also willing to review and adapt where necessary.
- Through various programs, First+Metropolitan demonstrates a strong capacity to build & sustain relationships. Our open door of hospitality is intrinsic to our belief in inclusiveness and respect.
- Our music and Pastoral Care programs are core to our reputation.
- Both staff and volunteers have been instrumental in creating an open heart to embrace a diverse range of spiritual practices. There is an acceptance & encouragement for those who wish to offer their expertise in supporting Christian Education. Programs are well attended and received.
- As the result of strong commitment to social justice, our congregation has incubated numerous programs and continued to support them as they graduated to independence. In offering an open hand, we have enabled collaboration within the local community on numerous advocacy issues to effect change.
- First+Metropolitan recognizes the importance of supporting children and youth by building a strong intergenerational community.
- The Victoria Foundation has called First+Metropolitan "*a hub of belonging and leadership in the community*"
- Due to careful attention and management, First+Metropolitan buildings have the potential to serve the congregation into the future. The Sanctuary and Chapel are integral to the spiritual life of the congregation.

- A commitment to sound stewardship of resources has provided the capacity to respond effectively to financial need. As a result, there is potential to renew and reaffirm the commitment to future growth.
- The First+Metropolitan Foundation has some capacity to support long term planning decisions.
- First+Metropolitan has been proactive in using an array of communication techniques, such as print, visual and electronic methods. There is an emerging expertise among the staff in technology and a keenness to improve on communication methods.

Weaknesses:

- The mean age of the congregation has stabilized for now but failure to grow a younger member base will mean the demise of the church as there is no potential for renewal and regeneration.
- In an era of too many charities and too few donors, First+Metropolitan finds itself scrambling to preserve and extend its donor base
- Staff changes over the next few years are inevitable, given the age profile. The need to provide for seamless staff transitioning is great. The invaluable expertise that exists among First+Metropolitan staff needs time and support to transfer to others in order to maintain continuity and vitality.
- Many of our volunteers have served dutifully for many years and now want to hand over the reins.
- Our volunteer capacity has been weakened due to the lack of a comprehensive volunteer recruiting & training program common in other vibrant organizations.
- Volunteer patterns are changing and organizational practices will need to be more responsive to supporting volunteer choices. The energy and vibrancy that these volunteers bring to First+Metropolitan can enhance the overall life of the congregation.
- The buildings and equipment, while in good repair, need to be maintained and upgraded to ensure continued usefulness. A defined maintenance program and replacement program should enable the infrastructure to be functional well beyond 2020.
- The congregation is changing and continued attention needs to be paid to the needs of many different groups both inside and outside the church.
- A more strategic, visionary model of governance needs to be considered that can be responsive and adaptive to changing times.

- The financial resources of the congregation are subject to numerous pressures. Failure to attend to the financial trends will undermine any future plans.

External Factors

Opportunities:

- As the result of emerging gaps in the inner city faith community and in other United Churches, First†Metropolitan has the potential to take on an expanded role in both the faith community and the broader community.
- The downtown core is changing rapidly with increased housing density, increased attention to homelessness and increased civic involvement,
- We have the potential to increase our connections with young people, "nomadic" boomers and marginalized inner city residents.
- The explosion of virtual programming provides First†Metropolitan with the potential to "go to its congregants"
- The connection and collaboration with ICA offers the possibility to broaden our outreach ministry and strengthen our financial base.
- The changing directions of the United Church in Mission and Service offers opportunities to build closer relationships with developing countries.
- St. John the Divine is undergoing a similar transition process and is interested in exploring shared opportunities.
- Closure of Queenswood Retreat Centre opens up the possibility of exploring a role for First†Metropolitan as a downtown retreat centre open to all spiritual faiths and practices.

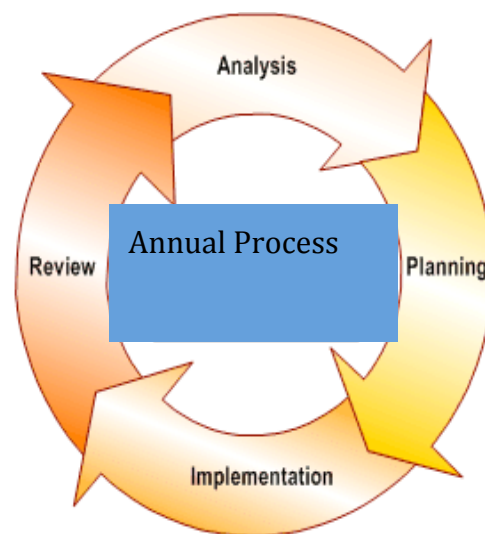
Threats:

- First†Metropolitan relies heavily on the Inter-Cultural Association (ICA) to support the operating budget. A long-term relationship is needed that enhances the mutual benefit of both organizations. Failure to develop such a relationship with ICA may result in ICA acquiring new premises which may cause serious financial difficulty for First†Metropolitan as a consequence of the attendant loss of letting revenues.
- The housing market in Victoria means that young families have little disposable income.
- Longevity in the older population can mean that people may spend their last years unable to actively participate in Congregational life.

These comments reflect the external and internal appraisal we carried out. In doing this review, we determined that maintaining the status quo would, in all likelihood, lead to the same outcome facing so many other faith communities- extinction.

However, unlike many other churches, First+Metropolitan has the personnel, infrastructure and financial potential to overcome the challenges before it. There is much work to be done and commitment needed by all members of the Congregation. We hope that by providing clear direction, we maintain the confidence and support of the congregation.

We used the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis technique (SWOT) to help clarify the choices we might consider. By examining our choices in the SWOT framework, we will plan to maximise the strengths and opportunities and minimise the weaknesses and threats.



Plan

The Council of First+Metropolitan United Church has adopted the following two strategic directions to be addressed over the next 10 years:

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1.0 Program Development that supports Spiritual Nurturance and Christian Education

KEY PRINCIPLES:

- Believe that relationships are an underlying premise of all programs
- Believe in loving one another unconditionally as God loves us.
- Believe in an alive, welcoming and inclusive Christian community for all ages and spiritual journeys.
- Believe that spiritual growth is vital to all members of the community

STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2.0 An Enhanced Culture Of Active Discipleship in our communities

KEY PRINCIPLES:

- Believe reaching out with compassion and respect, seeking justice and healing within our church, our community and beyond
- Believe in nurturing Christian spirituality and justice seeking in ways that foster personal growth and creative interaction.
- Believe we should collaborate with others to support the needs of the community
- Believe we can partner with kindred spirits, including those who do not identify as being Christian
- Believe we can be a diverse community in which a range of viewpoints can be honoured

These strategic directions will be achieved through following four strategic goals:

GOAL 1.0 To Promote Mission, Ministry And Programming That Lives Out Our Calling In Christ And Meaningfully Engages Both Our Congregation And The Broader Community.

GOAL 2: To Retain & Recruit An Effective Staff And Lay Workforce

GOAL 3.0 To Maximize Resources To Maintain Financial Viability

GOAL 4.0 To Ensure That The Building Infrastructure Meets The Needs Of Our Community

Council Executive has developed the following Objectives to achieve each goal:

GOAL 1.0 To Promote Mission, Ministry And Programming That Lives Out Our Calling In Christ And Meaningfully Engages Both Our Congregation And The Broader Community

Council Objectives:

- 1.1 To ensure ministry committees and groups promote spiritual nurture and active discipleship.
- 1.2 To ensure that the work of Council, non-ministry committees and staff support and enhance our desire to be a centre for spiritual nurture and active discipleship.

GOAL 2: To Retain & Recruit An Effective Staff And Volunteer Workforce

Council Objectives:

- 2.1 To implement the JNAC recommendation to seek a full time Minister
- 2.2 To continue to move towards a strategic, visionary governance model
- 2.3 To initiate the development of a strong lay leadership program
- 2.4 To enhance leadership & mentoring training & support

GOAL 3.0 To Maximize Resources To Maintain Financial Viability

Council Executive Objectives:

- 3.1 To establish a joint operating committee with ICA
- 3.2 To support ongoing Stewardship Pledge programs
- 3.3 To support the development of a financial plan that will ensure the sustainability of both the ongoing operations and proposed infrastructure development
- 3.4 To increase engagement with the Congregation regarding the staff and infrastructure needs
- 3.5 To dialogue with the congregation about the impact of United Church of Canada decisions regarding Mission & Service programs and support.

GOAL 4.0 To Ensure That The Building Infrastructure Meets The Needs Of Our Community

Council Executive Objectives:

- 4.1 To continue the dialogue regarding development opportunities for First Met and the broader community through the establishment of a Task Force
- 4.2 To support the implementation of the Building Condition Assessment (Stantec) report's critical elements and ICA needs
- 4.3 To begin preparations for a Capital campaign that takes advantage of 2012 anniversary celebrations
- 4.4 To ensure the development of an ongoing building development and maintenance program
- 4.5 To strive to reduce the building energy consumption for current operations and for any planned development(s)

Furthermore, each Church committee will undertake their own work plan, which will demonstrate how they will contribute to achieving the goals. In this way, everyone will be working together to ensure a common approach to successfully moving forward.

The Objectives Work plan for each committee can be found at the end of this document.

Implementation and Evaluation

The implementation process, which is to begin in 2011, includes the development of action plans, including objectives, timelines, criteria employed to evaluate progress, assignments of responsibility, and budget plans.

The planning cycle will include annual assessment and analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation & review. This continuous process will help ensure success in meeting the 2020 vision.

Objectives established by each committee will be congruent with the overarching objectives of Council

In 2012, we will be prepared, as the result of 2011 actions, to clarify decisions related to staffing and volunteers, First+Metropolitan's relationship with ICA and the second phase of the building requirements.

The expectation is that by 2013, we will have begun implementation of major decisions regarding these three areas. Communication and engagement with the Congregation will be key to ensuring success and relevance of the decisions.

Monitoring and evaluation will be a part of the strategic planning process. This will allow us to gauge progress and to determine if changes in the strategic plan or any of its components are needed. Each year, the evaluation process will focus on whether we are on track to reach the 2020 Vision.

Bringing It All Together: Examples of Key Decision Points

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Assessment & Analysis	JNAC Stantec Budget SWOT	Future of M&S, Outreach, Fellowship Hall Succession Needs		
Key Objectives		New Minister Sanctuary Improvements Leadership Development Closer Involvement with ICA	Plan for Succession Plan for Fellowship Hall Capital campaign	Fellowship Hall redevelopment starts
Monitoring & Evaluation		Review of Action Plans for Congregational Approval	Review of Action Plans for Congregational Approval	Review of Action Plans for Congregational Approval

Outcome

By 2020, the vision is that First+Metropolitan will be ***a vital and vibrant Centre of Spiritual Growth and Active Discipleship in Greater Victoria***, well poised for continuing its Vision and Mission into the future.

Related Documents

1. Committee Objectives for 2011
2. Background document
3. 2011 Budget
4. JNAC Report
5. Building Condition Assessment Report (Stantec)
6. 2010 Annual Report