



**The Appreciative Inquiry Process**  
**First Presbyterian Church, San Luis Obispo, CA**  
**2010 – 2011**  
**A History**

James R. Blades  
Pastor – Head of Staff

**Practical necessity** was the motive for my first interaction with the Appreciative Inquiry Process. I was consulting with a church in its “interim” between pastors that was using Ai as its moderm for re-envisioning its future and healing the divisions of its past. In the midst of that conversation, I got hold of what seemed to be the consummate textbook on the subject: *Appreciative Inquiry* by Watkins and Mohr.<sup>1</sup> Studying its contents over the space of several weeks, I was fascinated by Appreciative Inquiry’s whole approach to organization transition and change: not rooted in an organization’s weakness looking for ways to shore up those weaknesses in the future, but rooted in the organization’s strengths, looking for a way to nurture those strengths for the future.

Not only did the approach of Ai fascinate me in theory, I recognized a number of its components that I had already used, intuitively, in previous “visioning” processes with good success, while I also recognized the gaps in those previous processes that the Ai process was now filling in for me: the gathering of information by the telling of stories in response to strategically thought-out questions, the listening for dominant themes in those stories, and the idea of a *shared* process of future-dreaming and making.

My encounter with Ai during the summer of 2009 was timely. The church I served as Senior Pastor was now at the end of its previous “five year vision,” having accomplished much that, those five years earlier, we had envisioned doing.

When I came to First Presbyterian Church in 2004, the first thing I set about doing with the congregation was leading it through a season of self-reflection of its unique identity, and of dreaming of what kind of future this particular congregation

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Magruder Watkins and Bernard J. Mohr, *Appreciative Inquiry* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001).

might envision for itself. In October 2004, as many congregants as wished to participate were invited to attend one of three visioning sessions. At each of these sessions, six typical church ministry themes were stationed around the room: Worship, Evangelism, Mission, Education, Community Service and Social Justice. At each station, six rotating groups were invited to write on newsprint their dreams for each. All that was written at each station was then shared and celebrated in the large group. Then each participant was apportioned a number of stars which they were invited to go around the room at will and paste by the dreams and ideas they thought were most important to them.

All the newsprint with all its information was gathered from each session and typed onto 8.5x11 sheets.

Next, all the ministry leaders of the church were invited to come to a day retreat to sort through this information to identify the main themes. We were seeking to answer two essential questions:

1. Who were we as a congregation? What about our identity made us unique?
2. What was our unique mission and how could that be articulated in a short memorable statement?

The leadership day retreat produced more notes of reflections on these subjects along with lots of dreams of what our church could accomplish for the future.

At this point, a team of five was chosen by the Church Council and commissioned to put all these findings into words. Over the next five months, I and some of the better wordsmiths of the congregation hammered out a first draft of two complementary documents: *Our Mission* and *Who We Are*. These were brought to the leadership for discussion and recommended revision, and then presented to the

congregation with the same invitation. In the fall of 2005, the following finished product was rolled out before the church (as if anything is ever really finished, since we have since made numerous clarifying revisions, particularly to the "Who We Are" statement).

Mission

Our Mission is to glorify Jesus Christ  
and to be instruments of God's healing, reconciling, life-giving presence in the world.

Who We Are

We are a vital and growing downtown church. We gather in an inspiring century-old sanctuary where worship that is lively, energetic, and relevant is the heart of our congregational life.

We seek to understand and apply the teachings of God's Word because we believe the careful study of the Bible can transform lives.

We are a diverse congregation in our theological and political views but are united in a common purpose: to grow together into all that God calls and equips us to be.

We strive to be a safe place where the stranger can find welcome, the wounded can find care, the skeptic can ask questions, the lost can seek God's way, and the oppressed can find a voice.

We are a forward reaching church, willing to adopt ministry styles that address modern-day needs.

We are multi-generational church, enriched by strong and growing numbers across the age span.

We are a university church, with a vital ministry to two college campuses.

We are a socially active church, which not only prays for peace in the world, justice for the oppressed, relief for the needy, but works toward making these ideals a reality.

We seek to encourage and cultivate God's gifts in every person, regardless of their history, age, gender, culture, or social status.

The reasons I reflect on our church's 2004-5 visioning process are two-fold: First, to show how typical our first process was to such "visioning" processes, and how different it was from the Ai process we used five years later and, second, to show how the Ai process really built on the first because, in the hearing of congregants' stories and identifying the dominant themes among those stories, we found rich re-affirmation of our earlier "Mission" and "Who We Are" statements.

What the Ai process gave us in 2011 that the visioning process of 2004 did not was all the rich stories of personal and life-changing encounters people had had across the years, and decades, with First Presbyterian Church, San Luis Obispo. Also, aside from a Mission and Identity statement, we now had from the Ai process four dominant themes that would be our church's guiding light for ministry for the next five years to 2016.

What follows is an account of the Ai process we used in our 2010-2011 visioning and how we implemented it.

### **Stage One: Initiate<sup>2</sup>**

*Introduce key stakeholders to Ai theory and practice. Create temporary project structures (core group) and educate core group in Ai theory and practice. Determine overall project focus. Develop preliminary project strategy (timing, participation, resources, etc.)*

At our church's annual business meeting of January 2010, I set out the following challenge:

As I approach the seventh year of pastoral leadership of FPCSLO, looking back, we have accomplished much together. Many if not most of the goals we set together back in 2004-5 have been accomplished. We are a different constituency than we were then with a new staff and more than 150 new members joining our ranks. It occurs to me that now is the time, in 2010, to go through the listening process once again, of sounding out the congregation's strengths and passions, and dreaming together of what and where we wish to be in five years.

I am requesting that, by May 2010, our nominating be prepared to recommend names to our session for a Visioning Team. The team will be a fair representation of various constituencies of our congregation, and will lead our church through this visioning process. I recommend the Visioning Team be ready to present new five year goals to the session and congregation for launch by the end of 2010. While this is in process, we will continue to strengthen our many excellent existing ministries.

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<sup>2</sup> Using the Mohr/Jacobsgaard Four I Model

While I already had Ai in mind as the future medium of this 2010 visioning process, I did not yet mention it to my constituents until I had the later opportunity to educate them, beginning with the leadership, as to what the Ai process entailed.

In February and March, I followed up on that piece by doing trainings for our church's key stakeholders, decision makers and opinion makers, on the Ai strategy and process. Though conducting these trainings was a challenge to me in that I was in no way an expert on the subject, the strategy (particularly of gathering the stories of congregants) was well received. In March 2010, the (FPCSLO) Church Council voted unanimously to adopt the Ai process as its medium for the upcoming visioning process and to hire Rev. Dr. Rob Voyle as our Ai consultant. Rob is an Episcopal clergyman and licensed consulting psychologist whose whole consulting ministry is based in the Ai process. (I did not yet know about *Company of Experts* at this point. If I had, I would likely have already signed on for facilitator training, used my church's process as my internship and *Company* as consultant.)

I again proposed that the church's Nominating Committee be charged with selecting the Visioning Core Team (mainly so I could avoid the charge that I cherry-picked the team myself) which should be made up equally of women and men, and fairly representing the various constituencies of the congregation in terms of age, faction (there are always an assortment of these in any organization) and theological perspective (in which our church is quite and happily diverse). Of course, for the Nominating Committee to do its job of selection and recruitment for this team, the committee itself had to be trained in the concept of Ai, and given a job description and

rough time-line which they could communicate to potential Core Team nominees. I therefore did a training for the Nominating Committee, invited their questions about AI, and distributed to them a rough timeline for the process, which follows.

**July and August**

1. Convene as a Core Team
2. Identify the Core Team's Facilitator
3. Set up a telephone conference with Coach Rob Voyle
4. Engage in first teleconference
5. Core Team acquaints itself with AI method
6. Core Team brainstorms on how our church's particular process will be carried out and scheduled. (Rob Voyle will be in SLO to conduct the intensive portion of AI Saturday and Sunday, October 9 and 10.)
7. Second teleconference with Rob Voyle
8. Construct strategy for AI
  - a. Key questions to prompt congregational story telling
  - b. Identify venues in which the story telling will take place
9. Calendar and plan events

**September**

10. Pastor Jim Blades preaches a sermon series September 19 & 26 and October 3 on the third portion of our church's mission statement: "Instruments of God's ... life giving presence in the world." This series introduces the heart of the AI process as identifying, through collective story, the life giving strengths of this particular congregation.

**October**

11. AI process proceeds during October (intensive weekend Oct. 9-10 with Rob Voyle) as Core Team meets to identify and articulate the themes that they hear arising out of #10 above.

**November**

12. Core Team brings presentation to Congregation of those themes for future congregational direction. (If this articulation has been done accurately, the congregation will recognize the themes and give their approval and buy in.)
13. November Stewardship Season draws its energy from #12 above, challenging the church to join, with their gifts and financial support, in bringing the dream to birth.  
January to June, 2011
14. Core Team oversees the implementation of AI directives for the next three years

The recruitment of our Core Team took a more extended effort than we anticipated as many of those invited, weighing the commitment of time and effort associated with the project, declined to serve. I met with our potential recruits at a luncheon at which I spelled out the nature of the commitment. I'm sure I scared some away! But, in my mind, better to have a group of people who know what they are agreeing to do than one who feels "bait-and-switched" that the extent of the commitment was understated.

At the end of the recruitment process, in addition to me, we had nine well qualified and motivated Core Team members.

The Core Team constituency was approved by the Church Council and had their first meetings in early August, 2010. Two of those meetings were phone-conference trainings by Rob Voyle, designed to orient and educate our Core Team members as to the nature of Ai and their task. The Team was led by Rob Voyle to engage the generic questions as they would soon ask the congregants to do. As the Team listened to each other answer the questions, we got an early sense of how the congregation would respond. The Team modified the questions slightly but basically chose the generic questions as the best for our church's situation.

Meanwhile, the congregation had to be informed of the process that was soon to come their way. Publicity! In September, I penned the following letter to the entire congregation, explaining a bit of Ai and introducing the Core Team:

**What Is Appreciative Inquiry?**

Whenever aspiring journalists asked 60 Minutes creator Don Hewitt the secret of his success, he simply replied: **Tell me a story.**

Our stories go to the heart of our identity: as individuals, families and churches. Our stories can also be a strong clue to God's unfolding purposes in our lives.

That is why the heart of our church's re-visioning process during the next two months will be the telling and hearing of our collective stories as congregants at First Presbyterian Church. Young and old, recent and longtime members, first, second and third service goers, **everyone** in our church family will be invited to tell their story of what has drawn them to FPC, what about it has touched their lives. The recurring themes that arise from these stories will then be summarized into expressions which will help us recognize and focus our future resources upon the enhancement of the life-giving traits that make this congregation unique.

This story-to-strategy process has a name which you will hear a lot more of in the coming months: ***Appreciative Inquiry***. Last winter and spring, our church's Session studied and approved this process and since May our nominating committee has recruited a Core Team that, in collaboration with our church's entire lay leadership, will help guide the church through the *Appreciative Inquiry* process. Following is a brief introduction of our church's AI Core Team.

I look forward to an energizing fall church season.

Yours for the Adventure!  
Pastor Jim

**Appreciative Inquiry Core Team**

**Margaret Bauman** is a board certified adult and child psychiatrist in solo practice in SLO, a single mom to two great kids, and an FPC elder.

**Bud Beecher** currently has a practice in marriage and family therapy, was a faculty member in the history department at Cal Poly for 30 years, and serves our congregation on the Mediation Team.

**Mary Blythe** is a lifelong Presbyterian who has served in numerous leadership capacities in the Presbyterian Church. She is an elder at FPCSLO and a CPA who has owned and operated her own accounting firm in Burlingame, CA.

**Phil Dean** has been an elder and deacon, chair of Pastoral Nominating Committee and Personnel Committee, and was co-founder of SLO Boaters. He is currently a Stephen Minister and active on the Global Missions Team.

**MaryEl Hansen** is a retired Cuesta College counselor who now enjoys an active retirement with her husband, Warren, and counts it a blessing to have been a part of this congregation all of her adult life where she has served in numerous capacities. She is currently a Stephen Minister.

**Tadd Miller** teaches accounting at Cal Poly. Tad has served in many ministry roles, including elder, at FPC where he and wife Patti have been attending for 23 years.

**Sarah Ou** was a 2008 graduate of Cal Poly in Economics and Philosophy, is currently Prevention Coordinator at the Women's Care Shelter and a new FPC elder.

**Amy Stapp** is an economics teacher at Cuesta College, a mediator for Creative Mediation and Peacemaking Ministries, and active on the FPC Mediation Team.

**Bob Whipps** is a former pastor, Stephen Minister, Elder, Human Resources Director, with decades of experience in Organization Development and Team Building.

Every Sunday morning through that September, two of the Core Team took five minutes of the church's worship time to model the story telling process, one interviewing the other in front of the congregation using one of the generic questions.

Meanwhile, the Core Team brainstormed what to call this process besides Ai, to give congregants a sense that this was not just a "cookie-cut" affair but our very own. Lots of ideas were floated. Finally, the one that caught on was "Stories to Build Dreams On." We asked our media design consultant to design a logo to go with the tagline, and here was the final product.



The Core Team worked on a suitable schedule for the interviews to take place, arranged for interviews with those who (because of age or disability) could not attend, set a date for Rob Voyle to come to SLO to do an afternoon and evening Ai Summit, and worked on a publicity brochure. The brochure was mailed to the entire congregation in late September 2010 with a cover letter from the team (Appendix A).

Groundwork having all been laid for the process, now came the next stage.

### **Stage Two: Inquire**

*Conduct generic interviews. Develop and customize interview protocol. Maximize possible number of client system members are interviewed.*

Before engaging the congregation at large in its “stories” sessions, the Core Team did its first session with the church’s more than thirty officers. This served three purposes:

1. It further familiarized the church’s leadership with what we were doing,
2. It gave the Core Team as sense of the leadership’s disposition toward the generic questions and process, and
3. It gave the Core Team a “dress rehearsal” for the meetings that were soon to be conducted with the rest of the congregation. Immediately after this first session, the Core Team met to assess any weaknesses in our presentation or approach. Several modifications were made.

Across the month of October, some 150 congregants, roughly a third of our congregation, mostly its active constituents, came to tell their stories. About midway through the month, feedback circulated to the Core Team that a number of congregants had stayed away from the sessions because they (particularly of the GI Generation) feared they would have to disclose too much about themselves. Up to this point the Core Team had decided NOT to disclose to the congregation what questions they

would be asked to respond to. The rationale for this choice was that participants' responses might be more straightforward if they did not have the chance to prepare how they would answer in advance. But at this juncture, the Core Team assessed that this approach had been a mistake, leaving more "private" congregants to imagine all sorts of frightening scenarios of having to disclose their deepest secrets. Every effort was made to reassure our more frightened congregants that the questions were simple, that they would not be asked to "drop their pants," and that they would not be interviewed in front of a whole crowd but only by one fellow congregant. This seemed to assuage some fears, but not all.

At all the "story-telling" sessions, Core Team participants took notes of themes and words that appeared repeatedly and prominently. As the Core Team continued to meet weekly, all notes were compiled and were collated into the list Appendix B, ready to be unveiled at the coming November 7 Summit.

### **Stage Three: Imagine**

*Collate and share interview data and locate life-giving themes that appear in the stories and select topics for further inquiry. Develop provocative propositions (a grounded vision of the desired future). Consensually validate the provocative propositions with as many members of the system as possible.*

On November 7, Rob Voyle led nearly 100 of our congregants on a half-day journey of identifying, together, the themes that had been prominent in the story-telling process, and imagining, together, our church's shared preferred future.

First, participants were invited to recount the themes they had heard among their story-telling groups. Notes were taken, once again, of themes and words that appeared prominently. See the compendium of those notes on Appendix C.

Then, participants were invited in groups around tables to draw pictures of the kind of church and future church they envisioned us being. Some tables had better artists than others! But the visual themes (Appendix D) once again showed dominant features. Numerous groups drew open doors, explaining that their vision of the church was welcoming and inclusive. Several others drew pictures of hearts, explaining their vision of the church as a place where religious ritual and God talk were not the main feature but where people's hearts could be genuinely touched by God and each other. Another prominent theme was water and the idea of wholeness. Yet a fourth theme was of trees growing together, symbolizing the common-rootedness and interrelatedness of this particular church family.

The closing exercise of the Summit was a brainstorming of whatever ideas came to participants' minds of what things our church might specifically do in the future to pursue these themes (see Appendix C).

From the November 7 Summit through the rest of that month into December and January, the Core Team worked to condense all they had seen and heard of the Ai process into a summary statement of *Guiding Themes* for the church's future direction. Meanwhile, the following memo was sent to the congregation to keep them informed of the continuing process.

*Stories to Build Dreams On*  
**What's Next?**

**It was an energizing process!** That's what we heard from many of the 150 congregants who shared their stories in the October sessions, and the nearly 100 who engaged in the November 6 Summit and Dinner.

The Visioning Core Team has a lot to think about now as we reflect on the stories we've heard and the dreams we've collected.

So what's next?

1. **Our next task** as a team will be to identify the life-giving themes and dreams that have shown themselves prominent during the past months' process and to put those themes and dreams into words that accurately portray this congregation's unique spiritual imprint and purpose.
2. **It will be our goal** to continue nurturing a culture of storytelling in our church family; of providing opportunities for the fascinating stories to be told: of how God has worked in our lives and how our lives have been touched by each other.
3. **It will be our goal** to draw together the threads of our church family's individual stories into a tapestry of provocative proposals of what we can envision accomplishing together in the next five years.
4. **It will be our goal** to present these proposals to you the congregation at our January 30 annual meeting for your study, to consider recommendations for revision, and for Session approval by the end of March 2011.
5. **It will be our goal** to assure that our themes and dreams continue to be celebrated and that our church continues to be guided by their light as, together, we co-create with God our church's future.
6. **It will be our goal** to begin collecting videos of the stories of our elderly folk, how their lives have contributed the story of this church.

**Thank you** to all who have participated in this process and shared stories with each other. We are honored to have walked on this sacred ground.

Your FPC Visioning Core Team

At the January 2011 annual congregational meeting, I presented my annual report (Appendix F) followed by a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix G) created by one of Core Team's more PowerPoint-conversant members, The report and PowerPoint presentation recounted the course of the Ai process over the past year, what steps would come next, and, most importantly, set out *Four Themes* as guiding lights for our church's future. The entire congregation was invited to examine the Four Themes and offer feedback at our website as the themes were published through numerous media to the entire church body. Those that were interested to know more of how the themes emerged from the gathered information, were invited to pick up a copy of "Themes

Supporting Material" (Appendix H). Some recommendations were offered for the refinement of the "Themes" document and further such revisions were made.

In February 2011, our Church Council voted to adopt the Four Themes of our 2010-2011 Ai process as guiding lights for the direction of our church's next five years of ministry. That month of February 2011, I finally had the chance to attend Company of Experts Ai Facilitator training in Summerlin. Perhaps I could have done a more effective job facilitating our church's Ai process had I been trained first. But perhaps it was just as worthwhile that I had the chance to evaluate what we had done in light of the seminar's training. At all events, the training was excellent for me.

#### **Stage Four: Innovate**

*Engage maximum possible number of members in conversations that enable exploration of and commitment to whatever actions, new roles, relationships, or design modifications (i.e., the social architecture of the organization) are seen as being important to support the implementation for the provocative propositions.*

This is the stage we find ourselves in the midst of now at First Presbyterian Church SLO. So far, the Core Team has taken a number of tacks to foster innovations that will help the congregation reach for the future it has envisioned.

First, in terms of organization, most churches, including Presbyterian, are ordered on a hierarchical structure, layer upon layer, with some form of Church Council at the top. Under the Council, typically, are half-dozen main committees which in turn have subcommittees. For instance, a church may have an Education Committee which *oversees* ALL the education ministries of the church. But though the Education Committee oversees all the education ministries, it cannot manage them all. For that the

committee needs subcommittees: Nursery, Children's Ed, Children's Church, Vacation Church School, Adult Ed, Small Groups Studies, etc.

With this hierarchic model, if someone has the idea for a new approach to education ministry, she must figure out which subcommittee it fits under, then move the idea from that subcommittee through the structure, getting permission each step along the way. Because of this, most innovative new ideas get buried in most churches' structure before they ever see the light of day.

Our church has, for the most part, abolished the hierarchical *committee* structure in favor of a "roundtable" of mutually accountable *teams*.

While our church still retains its Church Council (such trustees of the organization's property and business are legally necessary for its function) and several standing committees whose role, by nature of their function, needs to remain fixed like (Budget and Finance and Personnel), every other ministry group in the church's structure is a *team* whose function is specifically focused on a particular ministry. The teams do not report upward through a committee to the Board; rather, their leaders all meet once a month at our "Team Leaders Roundtable" to report to each other. At present, the church has nearly thirty teams. Numerous of these teams have been started by a handful of congregants who have had a passion to do something and formed a team to do it. All that is needed for a new team to start is a few people of like passion, a team charter, constructed by the people themselves, describing their team's mission and method, and Council approval that their effort fits the overall mission of the church.

The team approach is frankly unnerving to some of the folks in our church that are steeped in the older model that is, granted, more neat and tidy; where everyone is accountable to someone above them. They are uncomfortable with the creative chaos of new people and new ideas getting a chance to start *unsupervised*, or more accurately, *uncontrolled*, by a few at the top of the hierarchical system.

Actually, our church adopted the team strategy of ministry soon after I came in 2004. But the Appreciative Inquiry Process has served to reaffirm this “cha-ordic” method, as congregants have told their stories of being able to pursue their gifts and passions at First Pres. The team concept is also a perfect fit for what may develop next as a result of our church’s Ai “themes and dreams” results.

In this regard, the Core Team, Council and staff now see our role as *midwife* rather than *creator* of innovation and life-giving change. We see our role not so much as starting fires of innovation, as looking for embers to fan; not so much as *making* waves, as *riding* them when they come in.

In our church’s Ai process, many new ideas for ministry in our church were brainstormed. Folks among our staff and lay leadership naturally started to worry: “Who is going to implement all these things?” I have answered these worries with the following assurance: “It is not the business of the church’s leadership to implement the dreams to make them come to reality. It is the leadership’s job to clear the way for those who are moved by these dreams, to provide them the encouragement and freedom to pursue them.

So far since our 2011 Ai process, several new teams are at some stage of coming into being. One team is mostly made up of younger adults that have expertise in video production, who have set it as their goal to record the stories of the more elderly folk of our congregation, and to bring those stories in short entertaining video productions, to the rest of the church body. They have just completed their first five minute production which had its first run in September 2011. (The video can be viewed at this link: .)

Another effort has been instigated by one of our older retired congregants who want to put together and present a seminar for those heading into their elder years – what to prepare for and expect. Yet another effort is afoot to bring together a team of our church's various medical professionals to advise congregants in medical situations, where to seek professional help. This fall of 2011, another effort is in motion, based on theme #4, *Practice Christ's Radical Hospitality*, to make our church more intentionally welcoming and affirming of Gay and Lesbian Christians who want to become part of our church family. All these efforts have grown out of the root system of our Ai process.

The challenge that now lies before us as church staff, Core Team and Church Council, will be to constantly reaffirm and highlight our Guiding Themes, to be constantly on the lookout for new innovative ideas that can be encouraged and nurtured, to continue the culture of storytelling and story hearing.

To this end, the Core Team has set aside one Sunday a month when members of the team will present a short spot in worship on Ai values and our church's progress, after which members of the Core team will be in the church's courtyard, inviting people

to tell their stories of how FPC has made a life-giving difference in their lives, and to share their dreams for the future.

The biggest mistake most churches – indeed, most organizations of every variety – make in the engagement of mission studies or visioning processes, is that they drop the process as soon as the interviewing is over and the result is created.

The biggest challenge that therefore now lies before us is to keep the Ai process and its story-telling values in front of the congregation until it becomes less a “program” and more the fabric of our church’s very culture.

**Appendix A**  
**Introductory Letter and Brochure**  
**See Separate Folder**

## **Appendix B**

### **Prominent and Recurring words and themes from stories**

Key words and themes from stories:

Appreciations:

- 1) Intergenerational
- 2) Support
- 3) Congregational care
- 4) Youth activities
- 5) Worship, special services
- 6) Sense of community
- 7) Theological diversity
- 8) Missions opportunities
- 9) Role of women
- 10) “marker” events (weddings, etc)
- 11) Acceptance
- 12) General diversity
- 13) Role of small groups
- 14) Social concerns
- 15) Quality nursery
- 16) Sermons
- 17) Intellectuality
- 18) Music – both as participants and as aspect of worship
- 19) Raising children

Dreams:

- 1) New organ
- 2) Expansion of the sanctuary
- 3) Expanded adult education
- 4) Preschool
- 5) Expanded global mission
- 6) Expanded diversity
- 7) Expanded outreach and in-reach opportunities
- 8) Provision for hearing impaired in Wilson Hall
- 9) Sanctuary open regularly for prayer, meditation
- 10) Intergenerational story telling opportunities

Other words and themes:

- 1) Family support
- 2) Intergenerational
- 3) Wholeness
- 4) “in-reach”
- 5) Using church facilities to welcome in community
- 6) Outreach to community and globally
- 7) Adult Education
- 8) Record stories of members
- 9) Music growth as outreach

**Appendix C**  
**Shared Dreams for FPCSLO**  
**Summit November 6, 2010**

1. 1<sup>st</sup> Pres. Community Center TEAM
  - Coordinate use of property/Hart Building
  - Marriage Counseling?
  - Invite more twelve step groups
  - Day Care Center
  - Enhance worship through music – more often
  - Family focused programs/events
  - MOPS (Mothers of Pre-schoolers)
2. Sister church in another country
  - Volleyball team
  - Writer's group/Bible study ( Lectio Divina)
  - Active family support
  - Interfaith community interaction
    - Congregational self-awareness (strengths and weaknesses)
  - Hiking group
  - All church retreat
    - backpacking trip
  - Cooking breakfast for the homeless in March
3. Daycare/Nursery School
  - Continue opportunities here for involvement
  - More service to homeless and young families (support, programs)
4. Pastor visit/support for hospital
  - Church Exchange/Open House
  - Wednesday night dinners
  - Help with Jr. High programs
  - Stephen's Ministry for college students
5. Singles groups (age appropriate)
  - Small Covenant groups
  - Wednesday nights again
  - Homeless solutions
  - "Feed My Sheep"
6. Open church facilities to a multitude of needs, internal and external
  - Preschool
  - Music for all ages
  - . . . and more
  - Expand outreach in community and globally
    - Green Pastures
    - Support groups
    - Contribution of time and money
    - . . . and more
7. Strengthen adult education
  - Enhance build on workshop experience
  - Evangelism
  - Church supported pre-school

8. Service to members (repairs/finance)  
Record stories of members (shut-ins)  
Music participation (congregation)  
Awareness of Deacon discretionary fund
9. Dreams for our church  
Ecumenical interfaith  
Music growth for outreach  
This church to establish a known presence of compassion  
Promoting: Outreach, Peacemaking
10. Yoga class  
Singing at assisted living  
Outdoor service  
Women's theology group  
Mentor youth/college groups

#### Community

- Acceptance, Never feeling judged, loved, cherished
- Intergenerational
- Safe, welcoming, empowering
- Connected
- Makes it easier to be with people (not on guard)
- Shared passions
- Diversity
- Cherished in our weaknesses, not just our strengths
- Awareness that God's love is great
- Valued, people are eager to know you (beyond tolerated to valued)
- Valued for your contribution and there are many opportunities to contribute (There is always a place for you in this church where you can work for the glory of God.)
- A place for help and resources for solving problems
- A place of respect, where people's dignity is being respected
- Encouragement by the pastor to serve
- 
- What do we have to give to the community?
  - Time
  - Resources
  - Support
  - Food
  - Lodging
  - Prayer
  - Worship, Sanctuary
    - Get in touch with God
    - Joy
    - Fills our empty cups
    - Takes us out of ourselves
    - Hope
    - Growth
    - Teaches patience

- Humbles us
- Gives us permission to accept what is and imagine what might be
- Gives us perspective and shifts it from weekly concerns to God
- Spiritually uplifting
- Calling us back to what really matters
- Appreciation of all that we've been given
- Downtown church, prime location
- Serving our community

**What we would love to be part of developing:**

- Recording the stories of shut-ins
- Volleyball team
- Hiking group
- Outdoor services
- Physically help people with needs
- Open church facilities to a multitude of needs
  - o Preschool
  - o Music for all ages
  - o Wear this building out
- Find ways to come together and celebrate each other (Have a unifying principle that guides all of us.)
- Shared sense of ownership
- More congregational participation in music (Do music with people rather than at people.)
  - o Deeper engagement with singing and worship
- Steven Ministry support offered to college students

**Appendix D**  
**Table Drawing Works from Each Table**  
**Nov. 7 Summit**  
**See Separate Folder**

**Appendix E**  
**Pastor's Annual Report**  
**January 2011**

Dear Church Family:

At last year's annual meeting, I verbalized the following leadership goal for 2010:

*As I approach the seventh year of pastoral leadership of FPCSLO, looking back, we have accomplished much together. Many if not most of the goals we set together back in 2004-5 have been accomplished. We are a different constituency than we were then with a new staff and more than 150 new members joining our ranks. It occurs to me that now is the time, in 2010, to go through the listening process once again, of sounding out the congregation's strengths and passions, and dreaming together of what and where we wish to be in five years.*

*I am requesting that, by May 2010, our nominating be prepared to recommend names to our session for a Visioning Team. The team will be a fair representation of various constituencies of our congregation, and will lead our church through this visioning process. I recommend the Visioning Team be ready to present new five year goals to the session and congregation for launch by the end of 2010. While this is in process, we will continue to strengthen our many excellent existing ministries.*

Here is how that process unfolded in 2010.

In March, our church's session approved a new visioning process for 2010 and selected the Appreciative Inquiry Process by which to conduct it.

In April and May, the church's congregational nominating committee began the selection process of nine individuals from across the congregation to form a Visioning Core Team. The team was to be a fair representation of both younger and older, male and female, first and second service, newer and longer-term congregants. They were to be individuals known to be careful listeners, who would hear the stories of the congregants without prejudice and fairly verbalize those stories into themes of emphasis for the coming years.

As is normal in any selection process, numerous congregants who were approached about being on the Core team declined, and so the recruiting/sorting process continued through July. By August, the Core Team was finally complete and began its work by soliciting the coaching aid of Dr. Robert Voyle, an Appreciative Inquiry Trainer, Episcopal clergyman, and psychologist. Session approved contracting Dr. Voyle's consulting services.

During September, the Core Team consulted with Dr. Voyle by teleconference and worked intensively to prepare the *Stories to Build Dreams On* process for the congregation while beginning to get the word out.

During October, for four Sundays, congregants were invited during the Sunday school hour or after a noon luncheon, to share their stories with each other of how the First Presbyterian Family had been life-giving to them. Elders and Deacons were also led through the process, as were many of our home bound

congregants. On November 7, nearly 100 congregants engaged in a half day "Summit" retreat to summarize the process and brainstorm dreams for this congregation's future.

During November and December, the Core Team gathered, collated and reflected on all the information that came from the process to identify the main themes that seemed dominant throughout. The Team identified four basic themes, then appointed a sub-team of their number to put those themes into accurate and compelling expressions. The whole Core Team then reviewed the sub-team's work, recommended further revisions and submitted the document to Session and staff for feedback. The latest revised draft of our Themes document follows.

So what happens next?

The congregation is now invited and encouraged to offer its input on the Themes document by Monday February 7, 2011. They can do this by e-mailing recommendations to [feedback@fpcslo.org](mailto:feedback@fpcslo.org) or by putting them in an envelope to the church office. The core team will make final revisions based on this feedback to be submitted to the February 15 regular meeting of the Session for approval.

The approved themes will then serve as the guiding light for ministry and mission emphasis and direction for our church's next five years as we seek to fulfill our church's mission " ... to glorify Jesus Christ and to be instruments of God's healing, reconciling, life-giving presence in the world."

I will be attending a training for certification as a trainer in the *Appreciative Inquiry Process* in Summerlin NV February 8 through 12. This will help me as your pastor to continue nurturing our church family in the direction of an "appreciative" culture. Our Core Team will also continue nurturing us in the direction of our themes and as a story-telling culture, for we all have the most fascinating stories to tell of what God has done for us, in us and through us!

Blessings on all our church family as, together, we weave the color-rich tapestry that God has planned for our future.

Pastor Jim Blades  
January 30, 2011

**Appendix F**  
**PowerPoint Presentation to Congregation**  
**Ai Process and Results**  
**See Separate Folder**

## **Appendix H Supporting Materials**

### **FPCSLO 2011-2016 Guiding Themes**

#### **1. Deepen Our Connections with God**

- Strengthen worship and add worship opportunities specific to needs, seasons and themes
- Reach for excellence in music and liturgy
- Involve more congregants in worship leadership
- Preach Biblically based sermons on pertinent and timely issues
- Bring sermons and practice liturgies that apply to practical living and foster growth and hope
- Expand opportunities for Bible study and theological dialog
- Provide opportunities for spiritual growth and reflection: retreats, rituals, outdoor worship, etc.

#### **Stories: Key Appreciative Themes**

Worship, special services  
Excellent sermons  
Music – excellence and broad participation  
New organ  
Tenebrae

#### **November 7 Congregational Summit: Key Appreciative Themes**

Awareness of God's all-embracing love  
More than one worship style  
Excellence and participation in music  
Get in touch with God  
Fills our empty cups  
Takes us out of ourselves  
Hope  
Growth  
Teaches patience  
Humbles us  
Gives us permission to accept what is and imagine what might be  
Gives us perspective and shifts it from weekly cares to God  
Spiritually uplifting  
Calling us back to what really matters  
Appreciation for all we've been given

#### **Summit: Compendium of Dreams**

Enhance worship through music – more often  
More special events and retreats of worship and meditation  
Lectio Divino Bible reflection group  
Outdoor worship services  
Deeper engagement with singing and worship  
Women's theology group

## 2. **Deepen Our Connections with Each Other**

- Celebrate our identity as a truly intergenerational church family. Honor and welcome all ages of congregants. Provide opportunities for intergenerational fellowship, worship and dialogue.
- Acknowledge not only the traditional nuclear family, but the many "family" units, including church family, that reflect the ideals of God's family
- Encourage the development of both large and small groups of every variety to enrich connectedness
- Welcome new team and ministry opportunities that utilize the congregation's various and diverse passions and gifts
- Celebrate our church's rich and meaningful history which contributes to who we are today
- Cultivate, nurture and strengthen caring relationships which become incarnations of Jesus' love
- Support and develop all ages of children and youth in their spiritual growth and journey
- Remember to honor and include our church's elderly population in the church's fellowship
- Communicate and celebrate comprehensive availability of church ministry and mission opportunities to promote greater participation

### **Stories: Key Appreciative Themes**

Intergenerational  
Mutual support  
Congregational care  
Youth activities and involvement  
Front Porch and campus ministries integration with FPC  
Sense of community  
Diversity  
Theological diversity  
Small groups  
Quality Nursery  
Support for parents and nurture of families and children  
Expanded diversity  
Intergenerational story-telling opportunities  
Gather older congregants' stories on video

### **November 7 Congregational Summit: Key Appreciative Themes**

Intergenerational  
Connectedness  
Shared Passions  
Diversity  
Cherished in our weaknesses, not just our strengths  
Valued, people are eager to know you (beyond just tolerated to valued)  
Valued for your contribution and there are many opportunities to contribute  
Encouraged by the pastor to serve

### **Summit: Compendium of Dreams**

Family-focused programs, events  
MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers)  
Active family support  
All church retreat  
Wednesday night dinners return  
Older singles group

Small covenant groups  
 Service to members and community (repairs, maintenance, finance, etc)  
 Record and tape stories of homebound  
 Greater awareness of Deacons ministries and opportunities to support Deacons

### 3. Pursue wholeness

- Promote and teach the Biblical ideal of *salvation* as God's reclamation of the whole person, body as well as soul
- Encourage the development and balance of areas of growth and passion in our lives
  - (Physical) Fitness related groups, Dance, Nutrition, Outdoor Activity, etc
  - (Emotional) Expand Support group opportunities, Wholeness Groups
  - (Relational) Mediation Team, Reconciliation, communication skills enrichment
  - (Intellectual) Forums and dialogs on contemporary issues of moral and intellectual concern
  - (Spiritual) Growth groups, devotional studies, retreats, spiritual enrichment, Bible and book study groups
- Promote and teach the care and healing of God's Creation
- Promote and teach responsible stewardship and holistic use of all our personal resources
  - Intellectual enrichment
  - Expanded adult education, Bible study opportunities
  - Nurture of the whole person
  - Wholeness and support groups

#### November 7 Congregational Summit: Key Appreciative Themes

Celebrate our human bodies as God's good creation  
 Acknowledge the inseparable interconnectedness of body, mind and spirit  
 Provide opportunities as a church family for physical as well as intellectual and spiritual pursuits

#### Summit: Compendium of Dreams

Counseling Center  
 Marriage counseling  
 More twelve step programs  
 Volleyball team  
 Hiking group  
 Backpacking trip  
 Broader offering of support groups  
 Yoga class  
 Ballroom dance class

### 4. Practice Christ's radical hospitality

- Strengthen and expand our presence and involvement as a downtown church in the local community
- Broaden and deepen our global outreach and involvement
- Advocate for the poor and powerless locally and globally
- Welcome and show God's love and our care for those on the margins of power and privilege
- Offer kindness and acceptance to those who have typically felt excluded by the religious community
- Open our doors for more cultural, music and peacemaking activity so that we can be known as a place of sanctuary, growth, involvement and acceptance

- Broaden interfaith and ecumenical dialog and involvement

**Stories: Key Appreciative Themes**

Expanded participation in global mission opportunities  
Welcome and acceptance of differences  
Social action and involvement  
Peacemaking  
Community mission opportunities  
Preschool  
Expanded outreach and inreach opportunities  
Sanctuary open to public for prayer and meditation  
Using downtown location for community outreach  
Music as outreach

**November 7 Congregational Summit: Key Appreciative Themes**

Acceptance, never feeling judged  
Loved  
Cherished  
Safe  
Welcoming  
Empowering  
Connected  
Differences valued, not just tolerated  
A place for help and resources for solving problems

**Summit: Compendium of Dreams**

Daycare center  
Sister church of another country/culture  
Interfaith community interaction  
Cook breakfast for March homeless overflow  
More service to homeless  
Programs of support for community's young families  
Stephen Ministry to college students  
Homeless solutions  
Preschool  
Expand community and global outreach  
Expand Green Pastures  
Music for outreach  
Promote peacemaking ministry beyond church walls  
Welcome the gay and lesbian community to the fellowship of our church family  
Establish this church as a known presence of compassion in the heart of the community  
Singing at assisted living  
Mentor youth and college students