

Redeeming The Crisis Fueling the flourishing of our Mission City

Towards a proposal: The following document is presented by FPC elders endorsed by the Session on April 22, 2020, to prayerfully prepare a proposal for dutiful direction of our congregation and leaders towards to a faithful response to the casualties cascading from the COVID19 crisis in our church and city. This document is an invitation for your prayerful participation in the process of proposal formation.

“Many plans are in a person’s heart, but the purpose of the Lord will prevail.” Prv.19:21

The sanctioned team of elders has sought to be dependent on the Lord, open to the direction of the Holy Spirit. The current team has prioritized *discerning* the greatest needs for our church and city, *discovering* where God is working and how we can participate, and *developing* a proposal towards faithful participation in God’s work.

The goal of this team of elders is

- 1- To propose a long-term task force to lead FPC in faithful participation in God’s work of *Redeeming the Crisis* (RTC) and
- 2- Providing direction for a plan.

The FPC Session will commission the proposed RTC task force through 12/31/2021 and it will report to the Session through the Local Mission Committee. The LMC will remain a working committee and continue regular FPC benevolence for local ministry partner sustainability as the chair reports on RTC to the Session..

We propose the RTC be funded with an initial amount allocated by the Session, anticipating further proposals as opportunities arise and ministry grows. The initial funding will open for covenant partners and other entities to participate, too.

“Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me.” Exodus 25:2

Redeeming the Crisis: *Nehemiah’s response (chapters 1-2) after hearing of the devastation of the walls of Jerusalem points the way to our greater Redeemer and Restorer, Jesus Christ, and informs our response to the impending crisis in San Antonio.*

Nehemiah helps us see:

- 1- Intercessory prayer is foundational (1:4-2:8)
- 2- Inspection is essential (13, 15)
- 3- Inspiration comes with vision (2:17)
- 4- Initiate with Innovation (2:18).

Note- Nehemiah used people and resources arising from the rubble.

Our finest hour- The casualties coming from the COVID19 crisis will summon the finest hour of compassion our congregation has demonstrated in our 175-year history. Every person in San Antonio will be impacted and every person in our FPC family will have a role in participating in God's work of redeeming the crisis.

On June 18, 1940, Winston Churchill implored leaders in a speech saying, "Let each man search his conscience." He declared the future of Christian civilization was at stake as the enemy wanted to sink the world into the "abyss of a new Dark Age." Churchill closed by stating that if England succeeded, they would be judged by history with these words: "This was their finest hour." Likewise, FPC leaders today must search our conscience for God's direction and desire for our church as we face the greatest crisis of our generation.

The Crisis: The health and economic crisis of the COVID19 global pandemic is fracturing systems in San Antonio. The food lines reported today are the beginning of the hardships for greater numbers of people tomorrow. San Antonio will flood with casualties from loss of connection, rising domestic violence, spiking addiction, silent victims of abuse, exponential rising joblessness, floundering family finances, and mental health issues including depression, anxiety, grief, and suicide.

The Call: God has prepared First Presbyterian Church to boldly lead in our city during such a time as this. The Lord is calling us to march into the finest hour of our 175-year history. By God's grace, the foundation of our heritage will fuel our faith and empower the legacy we leave for the next generations in our church and city.

The acting team of elders will propose the RTC lead with resolve matching the urgency of the hour, demanding listening and acting in faith run tandem. This will take the form of *Two Waves of Participation* for Kingdom flourishing in San Antonio:

1- During the Storm- Two priorities

- A- Assess gifts and passions of FPC family
- B- Strategic food support & Immediate impact opportunities

2- After the storm- Five focus areas.

- A- Job training and placement
- B- Holistic health including mental, physical, spiritual and financial.
- C- Marriage, Family, and children.
- D- Neighbors and neighborhood(s).
- E- Optimizing Impact through the Body of Christ

1- Kingdom Flourishing During the Storm- Two priorities

A- Assess gifts and passions of FPC family

¹⁰*As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 1 Peter 4:10*

- 1- Deploy the Time & Talent survey to the congregation through officer calls and FPC communication, collecting data on spreadsheets. The FPC director of Mission and Mobilization will work with FPC Connections Committee.

B- Strategic Food Support & Immediate Impact Opportunities:

So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. -Acts 11:28

- 1- Identify hunger needs or supply chain support. Beginning close to home we prioritize:
 - a. Neighborhood (appear to be covered in the short term).
 - b. Covenant and Ministry Partner community needs.
 - c. Holistic food banks such as Daily Bread Ministries.
- 2- Mobilize resources as necessary for food donation and distribution for Covenant and Ministry Partner community connections.
- 3- Prioritize short-term investment for long-term impact.
- 4- Prioritize access to ministry partner expertise for help and hope of our congregation and community. (i.e. NAMI mental health training over ZOOM)
- 5- Provide need based childcare scholarships for parents re-entering the workforce.

We will propose the work begin with a long view, acknowledging many of our partners currently have access to special COVID19 funding through government, SA Area Foundation, and a fresh push for donor support. The RTC will work with the LMC to walk with ministry partners to discern when they will need a fresh infusion of financial support, anticipating 2021 to be worse than 2020. We will support our frontline ministry partners with surprising generosity throughout this process, both financially and relationally.

For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,⁴ begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—

2 Corinthians 8:3-4

Heidelberg catechism, Lord's day 21

55.Q. What do you understand by *the communion of saints*?

ANSWER- First, that believers, all and everyone, as members of Christ have communion with Him and share in all his treasures and gifts. Second, that

everyone is duty-bound to use their gifts readily cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of others.

2- Kingdom Flourishing After the storm- Five focus areas:

A- Job Connections

Do honest work with your own hands, so that you may have something to share with anyone in need. Ephesians 4:28

- 1- Form a FPC job team. The chair will recruit a team to empower work with both FPC Covenant Partners and the community. The team will be responsible for (at least):
 - a. Prayer, counsel, and care for people looking for jobs.
 - b. Developing a network for job placements on various professional levels. The specific work with our neighbors will be in partnership with SA Hope and the KRL.
- 2- Resource existing capacity for job training and readiness through the expertise of SA Hope and the KRL. One example of an opportunity is the existing eight hours of job training and readiness available in the KRL be expanded to a full time position, forty hours a week.

B- Holistic health including mental, physical, spiritual and financial.

... A faithful envoy brings healing. Proverbs 3:17

- 1- Strengthen Steven Ministry for personal and holistic care of our FPC family, especially with grief, anxiety, and families struggling in loss. **Please see APPENDIX A** for more information.
- 2- Strategically enhance NAMI's role in our church and city. Beginning with close church partners we will enhance mental health readiness, trauma care, and equipping the Church for works of ministry in mental health.
- 3- Develop a financial health team. This team will lead financial health in our church and community. Through classes, seminars, tools, and financial discipleship this team will provide paths for financial flourishing. FPC currently has leaders for *Financial Peace University* (Dave Ramsey) and *Crown Financial Ministry*, as well as other tools.
- 4- Leverage the expertise of congregational care through hiring a part counselor for our congregation and community. Part of the responsibility will be to help establish and cultivate mental health, or GRACE GROUPS.
- 5- Establish GRACE GROUPS, lay led support groups for FPC family wrestling

with mental health. (<https://mentalhealthgracealliance.org/the-team>)
And substance Abuse and recovery response, including enhancement of recovery groups offered at FPC and support of ministry partners working in this space. This may include programs such as Celebrate Recovery.

C- Marriage, Family, and Children

"... and through you all the families of the earth will be blessed." **Genesis 12:3**

- 1- Marriage Enrichment & Enhancement: Financial difficulties will deepen strain on struggling marriages, especially younger marriages. We will enrich marriages through strategic help and equipping. This will include leveraging the expertise of ministry partners and networks.
- 2- Skills for Parents and Family: Discover and Deploy best practices and tools for equipping families with gospel help and hope, Biblical tools for flourishing during this season. This will include leveraging the expertise of ministry partners and networks.
- 3- Caring for children of San Antonio: FPC will lead San Antonio in response to the casualties to children in our city including those from the fracturing foster care system, silent victims of abuse, children disconnected from safe school environments, suffering from financial hardship, and those who are lonely. Through the FPC L.O.V.E. initiative we will work collaboratively with STAFO, School Connect, the Mayor's compassion office, Decade of Family, STCH ministries, CHOSEN, and various ministry partners for the welfare of children in San Antonio.

The wellbeing of our city will be directly tied to ensuring every child and every family has basic needs met, particular needs available, and special skills for flourishing accessible. For more see <https://www.decadeoffamily.org>

D- Neighbors and Neighborhood(s).

³⁰ *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.* ³¹ *The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."* **Mark 12:30-31**

- 1- Enhance KRL impact through deepening partner assets, thereby leveraging collaborative power in job training, mental health, social work capacity, recovery, physical health, teen moms, and women's health. This will include deepening our mental health investment in the KRL.
- 2- Redefine the "Corridor of Light" on McCullough Avenue through empowering catalytic collaboration with key neighborhood partners and business. The McCullough corridor will be a place of grace as we strategically listen, link together in collaboration, and launch the re-definition for redeeming the crisis in our neighborhood from the FPC

parking lot.

- 3- Endeavor to enhance current ministry to persons who are incarcerated and empower former prisoners released to society through vocational skills training, spiritual development, and other holistic empowerment.

E- Optimizing impact through the Body of Christ

¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many... ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." 1 Corinthians 12:14, 27

This team acknowledges the RTC will work collaboratively with neighborhood and partner churches. FPC will lead in catalyzing Church collaboration through modeling unity and moving forward together. Every category has corridors to enhance this essential portion of *Redeeming The Crisis* in San Antonio.

What will the Redeeming the Crisis Task Force look like?

RTC Team Leader: Teresa McCaleb (proposed)

- 1 - Diaconate member(s)
- 2 -Session member(s)
- 3 -1 Communications (STAFF)
- 4 -Strategic Food Support chair +1
- 5 -FPC neighbors and neighborhood chair +1
- 6 -Jobs chair +1
- 7 -Holistic health chair +1
- 8-Marriage, Family, and Children in our city chair +1
- 9 -Body of Christ chair +1
- 10 - Associate for Mission and Mobilization (STAFF)
- 11 -FPC Mission Pastor (STAFF)
- 12 -FPC Senior Pastor (STAFF)
- 1 FPC Prayer Rep (liaison)

**Chairs on RTC committee will form teams to work with them on their area.*

*The Lord of hosts has sworn: "As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." **Isaiah 24:11***

Lord, please give us faith to follow You. In view of Your mercy please give us eyes to see your providence, ears to hear Your voice, and hearts sensitive to the leading of Your Spirit. Please give us wisdom in how we can faithfully steward what You have entrusted to us. Please use this process to have your Kingdom come, your will be done, in our church and in our city as it is in Heaven.

Appendix A What is Stephen Ministry?

Stephen Ministry is a one-to-one lay caring ministry where lay caregivers are equipped through a 50 hour training class and empowered to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting.

Currently FPC's Stephen Ministry (which began in 2008) has 8 trained Stephen Ministers serving members of our congregation. There is one Stephen Leader (Rev. Scott Simpson) who oversees the ministry. Over the past twelve years, our Stephen Ministers have served people who experienced divorce, grief, mental health issues, marriage problems, loneliness, and more.

Is there a way to enhance FPC's Stephen Ministry? Absolutely! What is needed to substantially enhance the ministry is to recruit and train more Stephen Ministers and recruit and train more Stephen Leaders to serve and lead the ministry. Simply put, our Stephen Ministry does not currently have the capacity to reach all the needs of our congregation. It needs a shot in the arm with people and their love for people!

The Blessings of Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministry multiplies blessings throughout the church and community.

- Congregations receive a practical and powerful way to respond to Christ's commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12 RSV).
- Pastors have a *team* of gifted, trained, and committed lay caregivers ready to minister to hurting people.
- Laypeople nurture and use their gifts in meaningful ministry, growing spiritually as they serve others.
- People who are hurting have a compassionate companion—a caring Christian friend who provides emotional and spiritual support.

Appendix C What is the Job description of an RTC Chair? R.E.D.E.E.M.

- 1 -Recruit a team and clarify roles.
- 2 -Establish goals in alignment with overall vision
 - A- 1,000 job placements by the end of 2021
- 3 -Develop steps in reaching the goal(s)
 - A- 1,000 job placements by the end of 2021
 - a. Identify key partners and resources

- b. Identify FPC Covenant partners to participate
- c. Survey opportunities and connections
- d. ...
- 4- Evaluate effectiveness including strengths and weaknesses
- 5- Excavate stories
- 6- Move forward in faith! With as many people as possible from FPC

Appendix D

Helpful resources

Benevolence in an Economic Crisis: Chalmer's Center

<https://chalmers.org/benevolence-in-an-economic-crisis/>

Reflection on leading a church after 9/11 in Manhattan: Tim Keller,

<https://www.christianpost.com/news/tim-keller-churches-will-be-challenged-to-do-more-with-less-in-aftermath-of-covid-19-236501/>

Stories of God drawing people to Himself after 9/11:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/god-sustained-me-911/>

Approaching development from an asset based, relational, and dignifying perspective:

<https://www.unicitysa.org/sastories/episode/c070fc36/sa-stories-season-1-story-3-of-20special-guest-michael-rhodes-co-author-the-kings-economy>

Leading beyond the Blizzard (PRAXIS):

<https://journal.praxislabs.org/leading-beyond-the-blizzard-why-every-organization-is-not-a-startup-b7f32fb278ff>

Appendix E

Difficult data:

Mass Casualty Incident- Downstream effects:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/gracemarieturner/2020/05/22/600-physicians-say-lockdowns-are-a-mass-casualty-incident/#2f054bfc50fa>

Rise in Child Abuse:

<https://www.sanantoniomag.com/child-abuse-is-on-the-rise-during-covid-19-heres-how-you-can-help/>

<https://www.checkupnewsroom.com/spike-in-severe-child-abuse-cases-likely-result-of-covid-19/>

Rise of domestic violence:

<https://www.sacurrent.com/the-daily/archives/2020/04/07/san-antonio-records-domestic-violence-increase-during-coronavirus-crisis>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/police-see-rise-domestic-violence-calls-amid-coronavirus-lockdown-n1176151>

Rise of unemployment:

<https://www.expressnews.com/news/local/article/San-Antonio-s-unemployment-rate-could-peak-at-27-15234936.php>

Rise of mental health issues, including diseases of despair (depression, anxiety) and suicide:

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-05-30-the-next-pandemic-mental-health>

<https://www.texasstateofmind.org/uploads/whitepapers/COVID-MHSUDImpacts.pdf>

https://theconversation.com/new-study-shows-staggering-effect-of-coronavirus-pandemic-on-americas-mental-health-137944?utm_medium=email&hsmi=88285485&hsec=p2ANqtz-9M9KxiNF6XqW9BAscyblEkP6mExqcV1cGjh4f_puouOAHQ1IHtWIm6Jf3y7GQRMmgNQnxb28z1NUTlvLOB8XkcYUyAwA&utm_content=88285485&utm_source=hs_email

https://fee.org/articles/a-years-worth-of-suicide-attempts-in-four-weeks-the-unintended-consequences-of-covid-19-lockdowns/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2020_FEEDaily

<https://www.christianpost.com/voice/dear-pastors-covid-19-related-depression-is-real-and-needs-attention-237096/>

Marriage:

https://dailycitizen.focusonthefamily.com/is-covid-19-pushing-marriages-to-the-brink-divorces-may-increase-post-covid/?refcd=873402&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=culture_2020&utm_content=article&fbclid=IwAR0H7DejuN7zUlcUyGsGhZfo8-v_ZtBN1CCIBdQZ0PMRUkucbHI2I3Q1sYI

Teen pregnancy in Bexar county is third highest in the state, a state leading the country. There will be more teen moms in nine months, not less:

<https://txcampaign.org/teen-birth-data/>

Deterioration of foster care system- Silent Victims: <https://vimeo.com/407591553>

Difficulties for families flow downstream from this difficult data- A fracturing system needs to be redeemed to flourish in God's design!