

Foreword: In 2011 our church set out on a Strategic Spiritual Journey that, in 2013, culminated in a document called *Our Future Story**: a narrative set in 2023 that looks back and describes the preceding decade of our church's life. It was always intended to be an open-ended document, subject to periodic assessment. Just as one might stop along the way on a physical journey, we have paused five years into our story to celebrate progress, to refine the future itinerary and to address new insights and changing needs. *To access the 2013 Future Story, go to <https://www.bcob.org/future-story>

Undergirded by prayer and positive critique from the church body in early 2018, we utilized members selected by the original People of Passion who have joined us on the journey in the last five years to update our Future Story and guide us in the next segment of the journey. Always in the forefront was this question: *based on the current narrative, how can we assess the signs of health and strength within BCOB and what are our dreams for the future?*

The document you hold attempts to show where we are as well as describe a future direction that incorporates your dreams for BCOB. As before, a writing team from the update core group will develop an Implementation Map based on this document: specific action plans that will develop goals, strategies and assignments to move us along the path. Our hopes are that this update will be as instrumental in giving direction and purpose to BCOB over the next five years as the first edition was these past five years and that it will inspire us to recognize God's hand reaching back and drawing us into the good future of Christ's work here at BCOB. Thank you for your important role in the story!

The Future Story of The Baptist Church of Beaufort Updated May, 2018

“The purpose of our church is to reach people for Jesus Christ and help them to become like Him. (Matthew 28:19-20)” (Purpose statement from our Constitution)

Since we began our strategic visioning process over ten years ago, we have reaffirmed who we are as The Baptist Church of Beaufort (BCOB). We continue to proudly hold to the historic Baptist beliefs that define who we are as expressed in our Constitution. We made our identity a prominent feature of our new member orientation, our ongoing discipleship for all members, and periodically in our worship services. This common sharing of our fundamental principles has brought us together with a unity that binds us to one another, to the wider church community in Beaufort, and to the Baptist community around the world. The spread of the gospel has flourished in such a way that not only has our membership grown, but churches all around Beaufort are thriving as we live into our purpose.

This expression of our **identity** continues through our emphasis on **missions**. Being missional has been part of our heritage for generations. We continue to send mission teams locally, nationally and

internationally. We are known in our community through continual intergenerational hands-on missional engagement such as Inasmuch Day, Habitat for Humanity Faith Builds, our Daufuskie mission and more. Building ecumenical and racial bridges has also increased BCOB's reputation as a church that loves God and loves all people. We have begun to see our young people called into full time Christian service as missionaries and ministers, continuing the legacy of our church.

In addition to missions, through focused events, activities, and technology, we engaged in effective **outreach** that has drawn our community into the life of the church. Visitors were welcomed by friendly greeters and helpful ushers while an effective "GROW" team connected prospects to discipleship opportunities. Many of our Child Enrichment Center families as well as local college students and those new to Beaufort have joined us and are inviting others as our congregation grows in faith.

This emphasis on intentional and purposeful outreach led us to the next aspect of our vision, the vital importance of **assimilating** members into church life: the process by which new members are incorporated into fellowship, discover gifts for ministry, become active participants in missions, outreach and ministry endeavors and grow in spiritual maturity. New members saw BCOB as their church home where they found acceptance, friendship, opportunity, meaning, value and were not overlooked. In addition to a gifts and interests survey, ministers utilized one-on-one orientation and twice yearly "BCOB 101" group sessions to orient members not only to our identity and our Bylaws, but also to develop their spiritual gifts. Friendships quickly developed through an adoption/mentoring process where new members were paired with established members for a period of time.

Newly assimilated members were encouraged to follow Jesus through lifestyles of **discipleship** that reflect our core purpose and identity. BCOB clearly communicated to every member opportunities such as Sunday School classes that teach scripture, intimate discipleship groups that deepen spiritual friendships, midweek programming and discipleship development events. With deacon assistance, the

staff oversees all discipleship offerings, which are enthusiastically sustained through invitation, training and rotation so that members' gifts are effectively utilized. Special emphases were weaved into all areas of discipleship to teach members about BCOB's identity. Emphases included baptism, the Lord's Supper, spiritual disciplines, theology, tithes and offerings, missions, Stephen Ministry, how we conduct business, the importance of corporate worship, and more. All discipleship participants, from our preschoolers, children and youth to our adults and senior adults, feel they are connected to our purpose of knowing Jesus and making him known.

As we grew in our discipleship, we strengthened our care for one another through our Christian **ministry** with the goal that no members are overlooked in their need and all can easily discover ways to care for others. A refined deacon body helps support our ministries. Examples include an expanded Stephen Ministry, an active prayer team, various women's and men's groups, vibrant children and youth groups, and a variety of retreats for youth, adults and families.

A stronger sense of unity developed out of our care for one another and resulted in increased **fellowship**. Improved gathering spaces unified the campus physically while events provided time for friendships to develop between members from all stages of life. Gathering around refreshments, relationships were strengthened before and after worship on Sundays as classes mingled and congregants lingered. Wednesday dinners brought the church family together on a weekly basis as did other special events such as Thanksgiving and Homecoming. Meet and greets for committees and teams were conducted at least annually to make sure everyone felt connected in conducting the work of the church while sports leagues and family days reminded us of the importance of the church at play.

By these strengthened church connections, all generations at BCOB felt fully valued and invested in the overall life and growth of the church, all of which was reflected in our weekly corporate **worship**, an activity central to our time together as a family of faith. We have seen our congregants, both young and

old, participating and leading in our weekly services as we humbly accept that worship is not defined by how it makes us feel, but how it shapes the call of Christ in our lives. With biblical proclamation at its core, the worship team endeavored to craft timeless services that reflected our purpose and identity. With our history and the space of our sanctuary in view, they also recognized how understanding globally changing worship styles and trends, presented with creativity and diversity, had the potential of deepening our devotion. Opportunities to build stronger relationships have grown through fellowship around our weekly services as well as shared worship events throughout the Beaufort community. The greatest hope is that everything we do in worship will glorify God.

To support all of these changes, we provided the **administrative** support and organizational structure necessary for their sustainability. In 2020 we became debt free after the conclusion of our 2017 Capital Campaign. Undergirded by a deliberate maintenance plan, short term projects such as increased handicap accessibility and structural work to shore up our historic sanctuary were quickly completed. While continuing facility upgrades, we renewed a Strategic Master Plan for the next ten years of anticipated growth. Plans for new buildings are now in progress that will address the need for additional space and greater connectivity throughout our campus. That connectivity is also reflected in the administrative support and organizational structure of the church, with sustainable leadership in committees and teams working in sync alongside deacons and staff to insure continuity. We revised our staffing plan to meet the challenges that came with growth and to strengthen the connections to our purpose and identity by adding support for our children, youth, adult, and senior adult departments.

Who is the Baptist Church of Beaufort?

BCOB is a 21st century church with 18th century roots; a church with a rich heritage and a vibrant faith. As we grow into the future God has in store for us, we seek to be obedient representatives of Jesus Christ to our community, nation and world until he comes again.