

# *Building Compassionate and Joyful Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

## **A Framework of Change for Binkley Church to Flourish and Grow:**

### **A Report of the Reimagining Binkley Committee**

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### ***Background and Introduction***

**Fall 2020:** A Reimagining Binkley Committee was conceived and formed by the Binkley Church Council.

**Winter 2021:** The charge was given to the Reimagining Binkley Committee by the Moderator of the Church Council, Joe Templeton: To develop a framework of changes for Binkley Church to flourish and grow into the twenty-first century.

**Winter/Spring/Summer 2021:** The Reimagining Committee met every other Sunday to deliberate on their charge.

**Late Summer 2021:** A Summary Report was presented to the Leadership Team and to Church Council from the Reimagine Binkley Committee with suggestions for ways to flourish and grow in the coming years.

The Reimagining Committee goals for a new Binkley are ambitious; the Committee does not envision a Binkley facelift or a refresh or simply tinkering around the edges of our church. We seek fundamental change as the stakes are too high given what is known and observable about the unprecedented decline in church attendance and membership, especially by younger people, across America – and at Binkley!

There is widespread rejection of what is felt and often verbalized as hypocrisy, anti-intellectualism, racism, sexism, and homophobia in too many white Christian denominations. The preeminence of “Jesus as our personal savior” over living out His message and work rings hollow for many as well.

Binkley aspires to be a different kind of Christian church, one that humbly, but steadfastly confronts the most urgent issues of our time: the poor, the disenfranchised and cast-aside populations living among us and around the world, the wanton disregard and destruction of our Living Earth, endless wars, and the spirit-draining morass of hyper-consumerism. We are inspired to action by the life, work, and way of Jesus of Nazareth.

While our aspirations are high, it would be folly for us at Binkley Church to think that we are immune to the larger societal trends impacting the rapid decline in church attendance. Indeed, we have evidence to the contrary.

### ***What do we do? Where do we start?***

One place to start is to recognize where Binkley is in its own development as a church, one that was spurred into existence by the determination to be supportive of racial justice and welcoming of black membership. At the time we were ‘birthed’ as a Southern Baptist Church, yet Binkley has continued to evolve in its understanding, openness, and acceptance of gender roles and of sexual orientations. These changes came at the cost of internal church conflicts, loss of some members (but a gain in new ones) and Binkley’s exclusion from our Southern Baptist denomination leading to the active participation in the relatively new ‘accepting and affirming’ Alliance of Baptist.

Brian McLaren’s book, *Faith After Doubt*, as introduced to us by Rev. Marcus McFaul in early 2021, lays out four broad stages of church and congregational development: 1. Simplicity, 2. Complexity, 3. Perplexity, and 4. Harmony. As one reads the descriptions of McLaren’s stages, it seems Binkley is best described as a Stage 3 church that is exhibiting some of the characteristics of a Stage 4 church.

*As a Stage 3 [Perplexity] church, we have acknowledged the grief and pain that is real in our world, we refuse to turn our backs on the world condition or accept easy answers, and while we can be angry (sometimes with God) we are refusing to let our anger consume or immobilize us. As a congregation, we have not given up hope for a better, more just world.*

*As a Stage 4 [Harmony] church, we are working to see more clearly what is before us and act without judgement and without needing to defend or justify or even fully comprehend where the spirit is leading us. We are looking beyond old dualities like them/us or good/bad to find common ground. We are more capable of ‘being’ with ourselves, our neighbors, with God, and all creation in harmony and love as we seek to connect to a greater whole.*

From research literature and from our own experiences, we know there is a yearning, especially among young people, for something deeper and more authentic in our lives and in our ever-secular world. There is a desire for community, for acceptance of who we are and where we are on our own spiritual journeys, for learning and spiritual development, and for creative expression. There is also a desire for purpose, engagement and shared ‘witness’ and to work for things that matter, like racial and economic justice, ending sexual and gender discrimination, addressing the global humanitarian crisis, concern for mental health, caring for the Earth and all of its living creatures, and increasing the joy and satisfaction derived from working together for the common good.

In this report, we are not suggesting a shallow focus on doing whatever it takes to drive up church membership and attendance. Nor are we suggesting turning away from what Binkley has been and still is to this day. Rather we are suggesting a full embrace of our historical past and our ever-creative presence to radically embrace reforming and redefining some of our practices and to create a vibrant platform for a Binkley Church “heartsong” to share with a broader audience of young adults, families’ retirees, immigrants, and others moving into our growing town and region.

### *The Church in the Marketplace*

The forward in the 1973-1974 Binkley Directory/Yearbook, titled *The Church in the Marketplace*, reads as follows:

*Suddenly, Binkley Church finds itself in the middle of the “new” Chapel Hill. With the moving of the main Post Office to the vicinity and the building of the University Mall, the center of gravity of the town has shifted and puts the church in a new kind of situation. The proximity of all this challenges our church to new dimensions of ministry. In the months ahead we will be giving more careful consideration to the kinds of problems and opportunities afforded by our changing neighborhood.*

On September 23, 1973, Rev. Bob Seymour delivered a sermon also titled “The Church in the Marketplace.” It was inspired by the construction of the new University Mall. In his sermon on the 15<sup>th</sup> year after the founding of Binkley, our founding pastor urged a full embrace of the opportunities for service and witness the mall and surrounding developments offers to Binkley Church.

Now, almost 45 years later Binkley Church finds itself in the middle of the major reconstruction and revisioning of the old University Mall into the new University Place. The developers have designed and are now approved to build a new kind of gathering place that will be more outward facing, more accessible to bikers and walkers, with some high-rise living spaces and a permanent home for the Chapel Hill Farmer’s Market. Several other very large apartments and condominiums have recently been completed and others are under construction along Fordham Blvd. close to Binkley.

Beyond the changes in the community around Binkley, the challenge to Reimagine Binkley comes at a time when historians and social commentators say our nation is divided like no time since the Civil War. In the last 19 months we have witnessed:

- The May 2020 murder of George Floyd witnessed around the world and the rise of Black Lives Matter protest and vigils across the nation and globe and at Binkley Church.
- A COVID-19 pandemic that has taken close to 700,000 lives in the United States since January 2020 and a large percentage of Americans still refusing to take life-saving vaccinations or even wear protective masks.
- The rise of extreme political polarization and embrace of ‘fake news’ culminating in a violent insurrection at our nation’s capital on January 6, 2021, spurred-on by a then-president who has yet to concede his loss for re-election, and an alarming rise in far-right activism.

Given the demographic changes underway in our nation and the political and social divisions, all reflected in the communities around Binkley, how do we reach out to our many new neighbors? What will be our appeal to them?

Note: *The book, Faithful Presence, the Promise, and the Peril of Faith in the Public Square, by Bill Haslam, former governor of Tennessee is a relevant read. He begins by talking about the divisions in our country as a lead into a discussion of what the church and Christians should/could be doing at this important juncture in times. Also see, Redefining Church in the Post-Quarantine Era: What is Church Now? by Christina Colón, Sept/Oct 2021 Issue of Sojourners*

## *Creating a 21st Century Faith Space at Binkley*

### **The Vision**

**Binkley is a spiritual church without borders**, a progressive voice that seeks to impact the local and global community. We aspire to be a beacon of hope and inspiration to the spiritually alienated, to those seeking an authentic and joyful community of seekers and believers, and to those searching for ways to apply their faith and passions in a world beset by war, greed, and environmental destruction. We commit to stand with victims of prejudice, racism, discrimination, violence, and injustice and to serve those in need of food, shelter, and compassionate care.

Four integrated frames capture Binkley's highest aspirations as a church well along the path of reimagining itself to its vision and to be relevant in a community and in a world that is undergoing rapid change. How vigorously we pursue these aspirations will determine the future viability of Binkley Church.

- I. **Binkley is love and community in action** where young and old deepen our compassion and acceptance of the differences among all humanity, where we seek to transcend differences, find our common humanness even with those whom we disagree, love more deeply, and reach out to those hurting and in need.
- II. **Binkley is open, active, and radically welcoming** as a spiritual learning and teaching center that is hands-on, and relevant to youth, young families, the LGBTQ community, diverse populations, and others. Binkley is a 'working church' with a platform for witness personal and spiritual development and interfaith explorations through teaching, learning, and activism. We are a place to grow our faith and our witness in the world. (We are *The Binkley Center*.)
- III. **Church is not just Sunday; church is every day at Binkley** and a 'heartbeat' of action and energy for young and old not just in the Sanctuary and not just on Sunday morning. We desire to fill every corner of the building and church grounds with everything we do and offer to our congregation and everything we do for and with the larger community. We embrace different forms of worship that 'speak' to different audiences, including young families, new members, aging and sometimes grieving adults, immigrants, and others.
- IV. **Binkley is about 'being and seeing' a good sermon.** We seek to take what we learn from sermons, classes, symposia, book clubs, etc., about Jesus' transformative message of acceptance, justice and inclusion and apply it in our daily lives. We aspire to 'walk the walk' and 'be the change' we wish to see in the world as we grow spiritually from youth to adults. The Humanitarian Crisis Working Group, BLM vigils, Bail Bond, Earth care and mental health initiatives are collective examples of what we mean by 'being and seeing' a good sermon.

### *A Reimagined Binkley*

The Committee identified eight components of Binkley Church life that must be strengthened or addressed for us to reach our goal of a reimagined Binkley. No one church could likely do all the programs and activities described below. However, we hope these ideas can stimulate discussion within the congregation and lead to actions that build on the many good things already underway and create some new practices as well. Two important notes are included in the Addendum following this section of this report.

The eight components are:

1. **STUDY AND EDUCATION:** Building on a Binkley Strength
2. **FELLOWSHIP:** Christianity expressing itself in love by building compassionate and joyful community
3. **WORSHIP:** It is not just on Sunday and it's not just one way
4. **MUSIC and ART:** The organ, piano, fiddle, saxophone, harp, and different artistic expressions
5. **TECHNOLOGY:** Embracing the 21st Century
6. **MESSAGING AND OUTREACH:** Let our light shine!
7. **BY THE NUMBERS:** Measuring what we value
8. **CHURCH BUILDING:** Facing realities of an aging facility for the space we need

#### **1. STUDY AND EDUCATION FOR ALL AGES: Building on a Binkley Strength**

- **Binkley -- a Learning Center/Campus with classes throughout the week** - not just on Sundays.
- **Adult Classes - A Binkley Strength:** Binkley has become a place for intellectual stimulation, and we seek to continue offering classes which encourage us to think and reflect on topics relevant today: social justice heroes and sheroes; the meaning of 'Progressive Christianity'; Racism and Structural Racism; Native American wisdom; Celtic Christianity; and other interesting topics.
- **Classes for Children and Youth:** Binkley seeks to provide a safe and nurturing environment for our children to grow and foster an understanding of their relationship to God through a variety of learning opportunities.
  - The curriculum for children might include stories from the Bible coupled with teachings from contemporary sources that focus on an authentic relationship with God. Activities designed to stimulate the 5 senses could reinforce the message: cooking for our neighbors; caring for God in nature; making a joyful noise unto the Lord are a few ways to explore and deepen that relationship.
  - The youth group for 6th-12th graders could feature Wednesday night classes in sign language, puppetry, and drama; a youth choir; a much-updated Binkley

facility might include a small basketball court. Minimally foosball and pool tables would be in the youth lounge of the church. The youth would be more integrated into the life of the church and (for example) hold spaghetti supper fundraisers, car washing fundraisers, participate in services through puppet shows, drama, and music, and represent the church in the community. There would be annual or semi-annual youth mission trips to repair and paint homes and a continuation of the tradition of summer Baptist Youth Camp. Adults from the church would accompany youth, including youth with mental or physical challenges, on these trips.

- This and more will require at least a half-time young and dynamic youth leader.
- **Class Delivery and Format: make class delivery methods as inclusive** as possible: combinations of ‘in person’ and zoom for gatherings in a post-COVID world and be **mindful of radical hospitality** and the importance of relationships, so making time for around the room check-ins and introductions is valuable and important.
- **Create a hub/platform for Action Groups:** Bail Bonds Initiative, a Health Care Working Group and emergency medical practices team organized by Health Ministry (think planned activities + information fairs) all with weekly/monthly meetings advertised for inclusion to the community. Can expand to include groups who were originally formed outside of Binkley.
- **Mentoring and Tutoring Collaborations:** Link with the Chapel Hill’s Community Connections initiative to help young people in public schools and colleges. Become a gathering space for volunteers to work with students. (e.g.: Blue Ribbon Mentor-Advocate program in the CH-Carrboro school system).
- **Gardening/Landscaping Groups and Classes:** Bring in community involvement with Binkley’s green spaces and highlight our different community supported agriculture relationships (Anathoth Community Gardens and others) and feature them at Binkley in a visual way.
- **Seymour Symposium - streamlined with more frequent offerings:** Offer this opportunity annually. Develop partnerships between Binkley’s current outreach groups to work together to offer speakers and workshops open to the public.
- **Book Groups:** Offer a variety of book opportunities: topic-based; semester-based; short-term commitments vs. traditional model of continuing book groups that meet regularly. Offer On-line or in-person book groups with a process for selecting books and facilitating discussions.
- **Consider ways to offer any of the above options to the greater community:**

- Identify locations in apartment common areas to do some of the book/study groups. For example, offer another class on Brian McLaren's *Faith After Doubt* or Diana Butler Bass' *Freeing Jesus* that could be outside, picnic style somewhere on UNC campus or an apartment common area.
- Consider joint study/class projects with other area churches.
- Widen the breadth of some classes to include writing, reflections, and other actions that could be done in small groups.

## **2. FELLOWSHIP: Christianity expressing itself in love by building compassionate and joyful community**

- **Weekly Meals:** Provide face-to-face meal opportunities for church members as well as the local community, friends, families, neighbors, and other faith groups. Some possibilities might include:
  - Wednesday Night Dinner & Program Series
  - Food Truck Night on the Lawn (in conjunction with music concert)
  - Monthly community garden agriculture dinners (work with faith based Anathoth Community Gardens)
  - Meatless Monday
  - Picnic Night
  - "Around the World Night" (featuring food from our immigrant communities)
- **Family Game Night or Family Movie Night**
  - A weekly series could include separate programming for children and youth where children learn ways, they can be involved in the church through the music ministry and through participation in church mission projects.
  - Perhaps the lesson from Sunday is reinforced during the Wednesday night dinner/program series. They experience the theme each Sunday through a different focused activity or "workshop." Workshops include drama, storytelling, cooking, art, music, and games
- **Community Gathering Space:** The Church in the Marketplace/The Binkley Center could be anchored around a *Sacred Grounds Café*, a space for incorporating Binkley into our daily lives as well as a space for welcoming our neighbors.
  - Create a space that could become a shared workspace, offering friendly hospitality, good internet, comfortable seating (along the lines of a coffee shop or modified café serving coffee, beverages, muffins, snacks, etc.).
  - Staff *Sacred Grounds Café* with volunteers--develop a training program for high school youth with a focus on at-risk youth, offer internships for young adults, develop training for rehab-to-work candidates, establish a program for employing differently abled employees, engage retirees for mentoring and supervision)

- Staffed Indoor and Outdoor children’s play spaces on campus while parents have a coffee in the cafe in the main gathering space
- Interior and exterior gathering spaces where folks can sit “in community” with others
- Concierge Lounge for invited speakers, weekly thematic talks, and series
- **Food Pantry and Community Kitchen**
  - For regular distribution to local families in need and the ever-increasing homeless student population; pre-qualification not required.
  - Teaching Kitchen--Coordinate with local community college culinary programs to network with young adult student teachers
  - Back-to-work programs
  - Healthy eating program--How to provide healthy options for a family
  - Cooking on a budget program
  - Demonstrations-for parents and caregivers (concerted focus on young adult and sibling caregivers)
- **Emergency Community Dinners (reference the Dale Osborne/Maria Palmer project)**
  - Possible modeling of *12 Baskets Café* (a program of the Asheville Poverty Initiative, a nonprofit that aims to end the social injustice of poverty in partnership with those on the margins).
- **Dinner Groups/Potluck Groups:** To promote fellowship in small groups, encourage formation of lunch/dinner groups (like the recent potluck “PoD” groups) around shared interests (climate change, social justice, immigration, mental health, physical disabilities, LGBTQ+, golfing, book clubs, coffee & conversation class, parenting, racial justice/equity, bible studies).
- **Organized Children and Youth weekly activity groups**
  - Scouting Group
  - Sports Teams
  - Martial Arts Class
  - Dance and Music Classes
  - Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, & Math (STEAM) Class
- **Binkley 101 + Plus:** Have a planned “follow-on” mini–Sunday School class for members who have completed Marcus’ Binkley 101 class, so that for the remainder of that semester, the group engages in more conversation and lunch gatherings after the morning worship hour. Invite members of all committees and work groups to engage with this group and elucidate volunteer opportunities. Schedule at least one potluck.
- **Retreats**
  - Women’s Retreat
  - Family Retreat
  - Youth Retreat
  - Men’s Retreat



- Baptist Youth Camp
- **Expanded Small Group Platform:** The creation and presence of many active and diverse small groups is key to Christianity expressing itself in love; key to building a compassionate and joyful community.
  - Increase the numbers and diversity of small group configurations at Binkley.
  - Identify and continue with successful weekly, monthly, and periodically meeting small groups.
  - Develop a plan for engaging UNC students.
- **Extend “Radical Hospitality” on Sundays**
  - Create a space for meeting and greeting guests and visitors on Sundays (before and after worship hours).
  - Add multiple sitting areas in the Narthex
  - Hospitality Lounge—utilize the glassed-in front office space
  - Outside sitting spaces on the circular patio area off Narthex
  - Encourage robust visiting and talking inside the Sanctuary after the benediction. Currently we ask folks to move to the Narthex to fellowship. Consider altering the perception around the post service organ ‘postlude’ or relocate it within the service.
  - Leave lights on, doors opened and unlocked until everyone is gone.
  - Have lots of greeters (more inside, more outside) to extend welcome and direction to visitors.
  - Have youth greeters several times a year.
  - Host a regular open lunch group staffed with 2 deacons (buddies) as escorts.
  - Host a once/month or quarter family-friendly luncheon
  - Re-institute the Coffee Gathering Hour(s)—open the Sacred Grounds Café.
  - Have a team on-duty for reaching out to visitors after services.
  - Have a deacon on-duty for the occasion when someone joins.
  - Improve directional signage on the exterior and interior of the facility.
  - Post a readily visible “Communications Board/Center” in the Narthex for visitors to quickly see the week’s activities at The Binkley Center when they visit on Sundays.

### **3. WORSHIP: It is not just on Sunday and it’s not just one way**

- **Create different worship experiences.**
  - The “11:00 church service is a time-honored ‘traditional’ and should be continued.
  - Early Service on Sundays would be designed with parents of young children and youth to be a more informal and participatory service for members and visitors.
  - A weekly spiritual-meditative service would be offered on days other than Sunday.
  - Interfaith services would be scheduled weekly or monthly.

- Celtic worship services would interest some in the church and in the wider community
  - Friday night Vesper's worship would become a new tradition at Binkley.
  - Services addressing health including mental illness, would be included across the variety of services offered at Binkley.
  - The pastors cannot be expected to staff all of these or other options. Lay members of the congregation would be expected to lead some of the additional services.
- **Speak boldly and prophetically in troubled times.**
    - While we do not advocate becoming overtly political, we need biblical guidance in these exceptionally divided times on how to bridge the gaps among people.
    - Insight on how to practice love and accept in the way of Jesus, rather than judge and hate is a growing contemporary challenge Binkley should address with youth and adults.
- **Routinely share the pulpit.**
    - Guest pastors and others of different genders, ethnicities, races, perspectives, and faith communities should be routine visitors to the Binkley pulpit to challenge and enrich our experiences as a congregation.
    - Create more opportunities for youth to be part of the 11:00 Worship.
- **Care for the Children:**
    - To accommodate and support young family engagement at all church activities, assure there is easily accessible childcare for all service/study and that it is easily understood by new members/visitors about how, when, and where to access that care.
    - Implement weekly 2+ hour childcare for young families to shop/lunch or have a movie time out.
    - Congregational members will have the opportunity to volunteer themselves for childcare on Sundays and/or during the week. This would be one of the finest expressions of "radical hospitality" we could extend to young families. Let our inner grandparent flourish!

#### **4. MUSIC AND ART: The organ, fiddle, saxophone, harp, and different artistic expressions**

- **Build on our strengths.**
  - Binkley has one of the finest church organs in the area. Quarterly or twice-yearly resident and/or guest organ and string concerts would attract congregational and community interest. Talent could be drawn from faculty and students at UNC, Duke and other nearby colleges and universities.
  - We also have a fine choir that enjoys singing and performing. Either as a part of the concerts mentioned above, or not, we could invite other choirs from

other congregations to sing with the Binkley choir, sometimes in our facility, sometimes in theirs. The joint choir sings might also be with congregations of different dominant racial and ethnic makeup than Binkley.

- **Talent Shows.**
  - Schedule a family fun night that features (but is not limited to) the amateur and expertise of congregational members and youth in the church and their friends.
  - Continue the evening jazz and cabaret musical events at Binkley and expand church-related fundraising attached to these happenings.
- **Expand our musical offerings for outreach fund-raisers.**
  - Chapel Hill is the hub of some of the nation's most talented musicians. Local recording artists and amateurs are engaged in a wide range of musical offerings: rock, jazz, blues, classical, old-time, and country. Members of our congregation are connected to some of the artists. We could build on those relationships to offer serious concerts, fun concerts, fundraisers, and community outreach events, such as “Thursdays on the Lawn,” featuring at different times all the musical varieties mentioned above. Each of these could be free events but requested donations to support important outreach activities approved by the Church Council.
  - Musical events might be staged to raise funds for specific needs of our church, such as a state-of-the-art sound and video system for the Fellowship Hall.
- **Promote more opportunities for visual and auditory expressions**
  - Expand opportunities to both develop and display artistic creations by church members and friends of Binkley
  - Host storytelling hours for the community

## **5. TECHNOLOGY: Embracing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

- **Invest in boosting the church website search results.** Binkley’s website needs work to enable improvements in the web search engine results. This is commonly referred to as Search Engine Optimization and is key to having a specific website return higher in the search results shown to the person who is searching for something on the internet.
- **Expand the use of video services.** As of early 2021, Binkley has invested in and implemented a live stream of the Sunday morning 11am services. Expand the live stream coverage to other events and measure the effectiveness by capturing viewing stats from the various streaming platforms.
- **Upgrade the internet capacity** to provide service to the various groups that use the facility for meetings. They have had internet access since 2016 when we last upgraded the service, but with the current environment these groups will be doing hybrid meetings, combining ZOOM and other technologies with in-person meetings.

- **Offer live streaming of family events** for costs that will cover the staff needed to support the event live stream plus either reduce the cost to the church of having the internet access, and if possible, monies to fund other projects.
- **Offer the capability to have internet-based communications groups for various subjects.** This includes having groups to discuss books, cooking, and other shared interests that are available from the internet and/or social media-based platforms.

## 6. MESSAGING AND OUTREACH: Let our light shine!

- **Create a more active social media presence** that clearly shows Binkley's values
  - Share clips of the sermons from our ministers that showcase Binkley values in reaction to current events of the nation and world
  - This includes using Facebook for more than streaming services and starting an Instagram account
  - Will likely require staff position/time
- **Share more publicly about Binkley:** it's service initiatives and community connections (i.e., bail bond project, humanitarian crisis works, Christmas House, IFC, etc.)
- **Highlight or create transportation options to Binkley** - some churches provide free transportation from UNC, for example, to their Sunday services. Do we want to be involved in helping to create some sort of ride share program for interested students or do we focus our energies on creating a Binkley presence on the UNC campus?
- **Have a presence at community events** like Fall Fest at UNC where students can learn that Binkley is an option
- **Engage with new residents to the area.** Work with the Post Office and Chamber of Commerce for new businesses/new apartments and ways to engage with those moving into our area. (e.g.: coffee/donuts welcoming new businesses and new apartment building tenants.)
- **Create a Binkley listserv** and possibly make it available to the community. A delivery method that will provide quick action/requests without going through layers of 'church process' to get information out to the community. Work with neighborhood listservs to communicate our messages. This requires careful consideration of listserv rules.

## 7. BY THE NUMBERS: Measuring what we value

Our current focus is only on capturing attendance at the Sunday worship hour. But we should measure engagement at other events as well. We could track our progress in creating the new Binkley by the numbers of events created and hosted, church members and community visitors engaged in Binkley events, people served, membership growth, money raised and donated to support outreach programs at

hosted events, and participation in vigils, like BLM, etc. These data would not necessarily determine what we do but could help us know the relative impact of church activities.

## **8. CHURCH BUILDING: Facing the realities of an aging facility**

### **This old house.**

One of the rapidly approaching realities we must face is the aging of our church facility. Though the Reimagining Committee has not conducted a formal “audit” of the church building, the age and state of repair of the entire structure (other than the sanctuary), the overall energy inefficiency and the limited technology infrastructure, the inefficiency of the kitchen, etc. are such that to try to continue to maintain the current facility to get us through the 21st Century would be prohibitive.

We need redesigned spaces to accommodate a coffee house-based ministry and support the different church-supported functions described in this report.

If these assertions are reasonably accurate then Reimagining Binkley will require reimagining the church building itself. The choices seem to be to either sell the very valuable property we occupy and leverage that money to build elsewhere OR to explore a joint financial venture with private equity to rebuild on the current property.

We do not want to divert the conversation of Reimagining Binkley into a conversation consumed by the question of our future facility. Nor do we want to ignore a near-future reality about our aging church facility.

### *Summary*

The suggestions and possibilities listed under the eight components are meant to help stimulate our thinking about our future church and achieve the vision of a Binkley without borders that extends into the community and world and our strengthens our viability in the four critical areas:

- being a loving community in action
- being open, active, and radically welcoming
- being church every day at Binkley
- being and seeing a good sermon

### *Addendum*

Note 1: There are financial implications for many of the suggestions contained in this document, but we do not think we should shy away from creating some exciting new possibilities at Binkley. Just as we need to think and act more creatively about what we

want to be and do in this 21st Century, we will need to be more creative in thinking about ways to finance our desired future. Without going into detail in this document we list here some of the possible ways to create the additional funds needed:

Crowdsourcing, using an on-line platform like GoFundMe (like the very successful fundraiser in 2016 for Binkley's 50 solar panels), but not limited only to Binkley Church members.

- Form public-private partnerships to help create and operate the Sacred Grounds Coffee shop.
- Host Benefit concerts or free concerts but solicit donations for specific church needs or to support church outreach activities and organizations.
- Seek small grant funding for outreach activities, like homework helpers, Bail Bond, humanitarian activities or other functions.
- Explore venture capital and/or public private partnerships in-lieu of a 'capital campaign' to raise the significant dollars needed to replace or upgrade our church home.

Note 2: The name Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church arose repeatedly in our conversations over the 6+ months of our bi-monthly meetings. The word Baptist in our name is a barrier that we are constantly having to overcome, given the automatic association people have with the Southern Baptist Church. We have not addressed what to do other than to wish we could simplify the name to Binkley Church and add whatever subscript to that name the congregation wished to create, like "Historical OT Binkley Baptist Church" or "In the Progressive Baptist Tradition." Perhaps like others, we are tired of 'explaining' that Binkley Baptist is not like the Baptist Church people think we are. It is a problem the church does not need.

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