



epiphany
FOR A BETTER WORLD

An initiative of
First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, GA
August 2018

Executive Summary

First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta (“FPC”) is a **community** of humble followers of Jesus Christ who choose, by God’s grace, to live by **love**, seek continual **transformation**, and equip all to be **servant leaders** in Atlanta and throughout the world. In 2017, FPC launched a Long Range Strategic Plan (“On the Way to 175”) to map out our congregation’s participation in God’s mission as we move toward our 175th anniversary. With that plan, we set as a goal the establishment of a **social entrepreneurship initiative** that will promote individual economic empowerment and live out—in a new way—our identity as the Atlanta church that balances spiritual conviction with tangible compassion, challenging and serving people in our city and throughout the world.

While FPC has always been committed to the sharing of the Gospel with our city and the world, we perceive that God is calling us to do a new thing. **God is calling us to a moment of EPIPHANY—a moment of illuminating discovery.** Historic moments of epiphany are revered—like the Magi visiting Jesus, or the revelation that Jesus was the Son of God, or even the moment when Einstein articulated the theory of relativity while traveling on a train. An epiphany is an “Aha!” moment—a moment when a great idea is brought to life. Epiphany is revelation. Innovation. Guidance. Light. And the world needs an epiphany now more than ever.

Epiphany is FPC’s social entrepreneurship initiative, born out of our commitment to community and compassion, seeking to fulfill the goal of our Long Range Plan to empower others and involve our congregation in fresh opportunities to love and to serve. **Epiphany** is an “incubator” for entrepreneurial ideas, **based on the belief that empowering entrepreneurs who seek to address social challenges can transform how we participate in God’s mission in and for the world.** Epiphany will solicit nascent ideas for innovative ministry, equip the entrepreneur, refine the idea, and prepare both for launch and greater impact through access to capital and community resources. Participants will undergo a challenging process designed to enhance their project ideas through hands-on business coaching from a team of experienced mentors recruited from FPC’s membership. **Semi-finalist entrepreneurs** will participate in a weekend workshop with marketplace and city leaders. **Finalists** will then “pitch” their refined venture ideas to a panel of judges. Grant recipients will then be launched with start-up funding and financial and business planning assistance in partnership with First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, allowing our congregation to share our epiphany and the ideas of others with a world that needs them.

In addition to bringing important, innovative social ventures to life in the community, **Epiphany** will create a means for FPC members to use their skills, networks, connections, and experiences to help advance those ideas that are “incubated.” People are most engaged when they feel a sense of shared purpose, belonging, understanding, connectivity, familiarity, and relationship for the common good. It is our hope and prayer that the **Epiphany** initiative will result not only in the successful launch of new ventures and fresh ways to share the love of Christ, but also create a hunger and appetite among our members to live holistic lives of mission.

Why “Epiphany?”

Epiphany: (noun) epiph·a·ny\ i-ˈpi-fə-nē \ (1) A usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something; (2) an intuitive grasp of reality through something (such as an event) usually simple and striking; (3) an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure; a revealing scene or moment

The word “**epiphany**” captures the heart of this initiative. Our congregation has discerned God’s call for us to do a new thing. We are equipped to help nascent dreams and innovative ideas spark and take shape. We want to leverage our collective intellect, networks, connections, treasure, time, passions and love to launch those ideas so that they can change our city and the

world for the better. This is our epiphany—to receive the ideas of social entrepreneurs and to nurture them into life—a new way for us to live the call we receive from Jesus Christ to share the Gospel good news with a hurting world.

We serve a God who is "making all things new" (Rev. 21:5). God is lifting up the lowly, feeding the hungry, releasing the captive, breaking down the walls that separate, reconciling all. God calls us to take part in that work of renewal and restoration, too, sending us as messengers into the world to preach the good news. With Epiphany, we can share the Gospel good news in a new way. The **mission of Epiphany is therefore to support and encourage entrepreneurs whose bold visions for new initiatives seek to transform our world.**

We hope to encourage:

- Conviction and compassion leading to action
- Entrepreneurial proposals that reflect the values of love, community, transformation, and servant leadership
- Engagement in socially-minded, city-focused initiatives which empower individuals, promote renewal, and point to the transformational work of Jesus
- Hunger to see lasting impact at scale
- Innovative ideas that compel church-wide action and involvement
- A deep desire to embody the Gospel in work and every other life context, reflecting biblical stewardship of our time, talent, resources, and relationships
- Extravagant and joyful giving

Success for Epiphany will be to accomplish these LRSP values:

- **Direct impact on our community** in ways FPC would not otherwise have imagined; new ways of lifting up the lowly, feeding the hungry, reconciling people, and sharing love
- **Exponentially broader reach** to our vulnerable neighbors
- **Creation of new opportunities** for FPC to serve Christ and build community
- **Deeper faith engagement for our community**, connecting weekday work and worship in new and creative ways
- **Identification and development of leaders** within the congregation
- **An entrepreneurial church culture** where people consider risk-taking for the Gospel to be important and valuable
- **Church orientation outside our own walls:** deepening understanding of what it means to participate in God's mission, *being* the church, rather than simply *attending* church
- **Hospitality** from our congregation to all individuals who seek a spiritual home
- **Expanded partnerships with** civic, commercial, religious, and secular organizations that expand our capacity to show the love of Christ in the city.

Epiphany Operating Model

Process Overview and Who is Involved?

The distinguishing characteristic of Epiphany is the unique organization of the process from start to end, based on task-oriented, time-bound, laity-led sub-teams.

The success of this process depends on the time and commitment of sub-teams made up of FPC members. Each sub-team will have two co-leaders who will be responsible for organizing the sub-team, setting appropriate dates and milestones, defining deliverables and outputs, and submitting their plans to the Epiphany Steering Group for endorsement and approval. The sub-teams of FPC members are described below in general order of their chronological role in the process of incubating and launching a social venture:

1. **Prayer:** Praying regularly for our city and world, for the social entrepreneurs who submit applications, and for wisdom in discernment for all involved in the Epiphany initiative

2. **Publicity:** Promoting the competition among social entrepreneurs for the sake of inviting and receiving proposals
3. **Screeners:** Reading initial social venture proposals and identifying a pool of semi-finalists
4. **Navigators:** Mentoring and coaching individual applicants through the incubation process; navigators will participate with semi-finalists at an "Immersion Day" workshop
5. **Navigator Trainers:** Training navigators about available resources and the process for selecting candidates
6. **Judges:** Reviewing semi-finalist proposals, hearing final pitches, and selecting finalists
7. **Skills Coaches:** Coaching semi-finalists on specific topics, bringing expertise in areas related to entrepreneurship and business planning, project development, mission and business, etc.
8. **Immersion Day:** Planning and designing the "Immersion Day" event with skills coaches from the congregation
9. **Incubators:** Planning and designing the long-term engagement model with FPC for winners through specialized seminars, workshops, networking and personalized coaching, etc.; assisting social entrepreneurs in building relationship connections at FPC and guiding them toward successful launch of social ventures

Epiphany Timeline

Late August 2018: Announce the project to the congregation; build enthusiasm and buy-in. Recruit and train mentors, coaches, screeners, and judges from FPC membership. Members will hear about Epiphany multiple times, so that they can understand, get involved in, and be excited about this initiative.

August-October: Mobilize the *entire* congregation in pursuit of publicity to attract applicants. Even if members don't serve in an official capacity, we will invite them to reach out to neighbors, extended family, co-workers, college students and their network of connections to generate interest among social entrepreneurs.

Early October: Applications due. Using the fall for the intensive part of the program ensures that the congregation is engaged when fewer members are traveling.

Late October 2018-January 2019: Invest in the finalists and deeply engage the congregation in the work of incubating social ventures.

February: Final pitches and judging. **Reveal Sunday (02/24/19)**

February and beyond: Develop the long-term relationship objectives of all launched ideas! (Where the really hard work begins!)

FAQs

Q: What kinds of ideas are we looking for?

We're looking for ideas that reflect our conviction that the Gospel calls us to a life of tangible compassion. Successful ideas will further the values of love, community, transformation, and servant leadership. We want to invest in entrepreneurs who seek to use their ideas to transform our community and the world and whose ventures will be brought to life through the sharing of resources, knowledge, experience, and gifts from our own congregation.

Q: Do applicants have to be Christian?

Epiphany is an initiative of First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, created to live our call to participate in God's mission in and for the world. While adherence to the Christian faith is not required for an applicant's proposal to be considered, proposals should further the Christian values of love, community, transformation, and servant leadership. Such ideas will pursue

authentic diversity, offer radical hospitality, provide mutual care, seek restorative relationships, reflect bold humility, model just generosity, and reflect a commitment to missional living.

Q: Does this mean that we will stop supporting our current mission partners and community ministries efforts?

No. The Epiphany project will not replace any of FPC's existing partnerships or commitments. It is born of the belief that God calls us to new ways of participating in mission and reaching outside our own walls into the community. It is also born of the belief that our congregation has gifts and resources that have not yet been shared with the world and that we can have an even greater impact in our community by empowering social entrepreneurs who need our gifts and resources in order to effect change.

Q: How many ideas are we going to fund?

Relying on the generosity of our congregation and using other revenue wisely, we hope to have a total of \$250,000 available for awards in 2019. The number of ideas we incubate and ventures we help to launch will depend on the applications we receive and what resources they require. The Judging team will develop objective criteria and will have full discretion as to how many ventures to launch and how to allocate the money.

Q: Are there award minimums and maximums?

There are no set parameters for how much the judges may award to one individual or project. However, the judges will select multiple "semi-finalists" who will be mentored. From that pool of projects, finalists will be chosen to receive award money.

Q: What happens to people who don't get funded?

They will still have access to our mentorship, skills coaches, and navigating teams. While we will not be able to fund all the applications we receive, we hope the sharing of other kinds of gifts will help even those entrepreneurs whose projects are not funded bring their ideas to fruition.

Q: Will we only allow ideas that impact the city/area/region of Atlanta?

Not necessarily, but we will require that applicants reside in the Atlanta area so that they can fully participate in the incubation process.

Q: Is there an age requirement or limit for applicants?

No. Our Screeners will consider applicants even if they have limited entrepreneurial experience.

Q: What are the benefits to an individual whose idea is accepted into this incubator?

Beyond the possibility of grant money, there are other benefits from participating in the **Epiphany** process—benefits we believe can be even more compelling than award money.

Prospective entrepreneurs will:

1. Undergo a rigorous process and receive constructive feedback on a project or venture they have wanted to pursue but for which funding/assistance/technical know-how have been unavailable. The process of applying for the Epiphany project will force social entrepreneurs to hone their ideas and strengthen their plans.
2. Receive hands-on coaching from a team of mentors with a wealth of successful experience in a variety of business and entrepreneurial endeavors. Develop and improve a venture idea for judging by a panel of experts.
3. Gain experience and feedback on how to pitch and communicate a venture, not just for the sake of Epiphany, but for other future opportunities as well.
4. As a semi-finalist, participate in a one-day workshop with marketplace and city leaders as well as other semi-finalists to build relationships, receive encouragement and further refine ideas, then "pitch" their venture to a panel of judges.

5. As a Finalist, present their winning idea to our Judging Team and the FPC congregation, and if selected, receive further consulting, financial and business planning assistance, and funding awards.
6. Receive advanced mentoring on topics critical to organizational development.
7. Develop relationships with an ongoing group of advocates and connectors ready to help ideas and new businesses thrive beyond the program.

Q: It seems like the basis for getting through the screening process is "idea focused." What about the individual? How do we distinguish between the idea and the person with the idea? Will there be criteria applied to accepting individuals?

There are three layers of vetting:

1. Initial Screening Process: this will be a systematized, efficient review of submitted ideas and proposals by a team of screeners dedicated to developing a healthy pool of screened ideas that fit our high-level criteria:

- Is the idea compelling?
- Is the idea feasible?
- Is the idea a "fit" with FPC? Does it further the values that are our foundations?

2. Once the initial proposals are objectively reviewed according to those criteria, the accepted screened pool will move on to the Navigation team: one-on-one mentors who will be matched with each accepted idea. The Navigators will meet with all applicants and select **"Semi-finalists."** This layer of screening will involve the "person" more than the "idea" and will require Navigators to select the social entrepreneur and corresponding idea that are best matched with their passions and skills. Navigators will be trained in what to look for in an idea, what questions to ask in interviews with social entrepreneurs, and more, enabling them to make decisions that reflect not only their preference towards working with someone new, but also a well-thought-out list of qualities to look for to evaluate the likelihood for success.

3. The final layer of vetting involves the Judges, who hear the pitches and award the funding to **"Finalists."** The judges can ask questions related to the proposal and idea as well as the ways in which the individual plans to live out foundational values in running the venture, etc.

Q: Does First Presbyterian Church want to own any of these ideas or future organizations?

No. First Presbyterian Church is interested in accountability but not ownership. Our desire is to serve our city and world, through the power of encouraging social entrepreneurs who want to share love, build community, seek transformation, and model servant leadership.

Q: Are applicants required to become FPC members in order to be funded?

No. Epiphany is a new way to reach beyond our walls to share Good News with the world. That said, the Epiphany project should model for applicants and any whom they seek to serve the radical hospitality to which we are called. Any who seek a spiritual home would be welcomed in the FPC community.

Q: What is the long-term support model for finalists after funding is awarded? How do we ensure we are truly being stewards of the money, effort, ideas and individuals that are brought into the process?

Determining the appropriate support model and engagement with the selected finalists who receive funding will be one of the formal jobs of the "Incubator" team. It is not enough to simply help launch the ideas. We want to prepare social entrepreneurs for long-term success. This does not mean that FPC would commit any financial resources beyond an Epiphany grant to a finalist, but we will endeavor to provide a solid foundation and abiding relationships that will enable our finalists' ventures to flourish. Specific answers to this question will depend on the entrepreneur and social venture and will be developed through the incubation process.

Q: How will the prize money be awarded?

We anticipate awarding prize money in grant form. If a social venture calls for another type of award, that will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Q: Do we distinguish between non-profit and for-profit ideas?

We want to encourage all ideas. We expect that most applications will present ideas that have not been incorporated and are not the property of any legal entity. Our skills coaches, judges, and incubators will help evaluate and give proper guidance as to the most desirable vehicle for an individual idea. However, both non-profit and for-profit ideas will be considered.

Q: Who designed this process? Do we have any support from someone else who has done this?

Epiphany is based on a process designed and successfully carried out by Colonial Church in Edina, Minnesota. Their initiative is called "Innové," and led their Mission Pastor to start a non-profit in order to guide churches into new ways of participating in God's mission. After two rounds of applications (giving \$250,000 per round (\$500k+ total) over the course of five years), Colonial Church has used this framework to successfully launch eleven social ventures, all of which are still operating and bettering their community. First Presbyterian Church of Houston, TX successfully adapted Innové's model to reinvigorate their community ministry, which they call "Project Flourish" (<http://projectflourish.org/>). Our Session voted to engage Rev. Brian Jones of Innové to act as a consultant for FPC as we seek to answer God's call to do something new and create a social entrepreneurship initiative. Leadership at FPC Houston/Project Flourish has also provided information to help us successfully launch Epiphany here at FPC Atlanta. For more information, see www.innoveproject.org.

Q: Is this a one-time, year-long event?

Our formal process will begin in August 2018 and our first social ventures will be launched in early 2019. While that is our initial commitment, our prayer is that this will be the start of a new way of engaging in God's mission as a congregation, and that, by the Holy Spirit's leading, we will generate the interest, desire, results and passion to lead to successive rounds of seeking, incubating, and launching innovative ideas to solve the challenging issues faced in our community and our world.