

The Power of **We**

Member Congregations of the Interfaith Mission Service

Strategic Plan

2022-02-17

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1.0 Introduction Summary

The purpose of the IMS Five Year Strategic Plan is to establish the long-term goals, and strategies to reach those goals, that will be the foundation for the IMS Annual Plan. The Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Directors and the IMS Leadership Council.

The Interfaith Mission Service (IMS) is a multi-faith organization whose member congregations seek to grow and maximize their capacity to meet human needs, promote religious, racial, and cultural harmony, and participate in the public forum to improve our community.

IMS is committed to creating a religious discourse based on the core values of each religion, The Beloved Community and The King Philosophy – Nonviolence 365 (<https://thekingcenter.org/about-tkc/the-king-philosophy/>), The Charter of Compassion (Karen Armstrong, <http://CharterForCompassion.org>) and the Golden Rule, which is found in various forms in all of the major traditions; *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

The purpose of the IMS organization is to represent the affiliated religious community areas of service to the Greater Huntsville Community; to demonstrate to all concerned parties that social concerns emanate from religious understanding and maturity; and to conduct programs that promote interfaith understanding.

IMS conducts training sessions and workshops, initiates community service projects, unites and coordinates with projects of the religious community, and participates in community activities. IMS strengthens and enhances our member congregations' capabilities to meet human needs, participate in the public forum, and promote religious, racial and cultural harmony. IMS addresses the causes of poverty, hunger, and homelessness; replaces racism in all its forms with a spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood; resolves disputes through peaceful, nonviolent means; and alleviates obstacles to economic justice and equity.

The IMS five year plan is built on fifty years of experience working as an interfaith cooperative. This plan contains three pillars of service upon which IMS's vision is built. IMS is a:

Resource Center - IMS provides member congregations and others in the region and world with education, training, information, collaborations, event coordination, service learning opportunities, and interfaith dialogue and gatherings. IMS connects people and organizations with referral agencies and expert sources.

Source of Compassion - IMS continues to provide direct service (e.g. FOODLine, support for schools, First Stop) for those in need. IMS seeks to be a resource of compassion and healing for the on-going suffering due to homelessness, mental health, suicide, grieving, white supremacy, and other forms of suffering.

Community Leader - IMS continues to build relationships with city, county, and state governments, industry, community organizations, and other groups to establish a caring community that welcomes and accepts all people, all religions, all economic and cultural groups, and removes obstacles that inhibit the growth and development of the beloved community.

2.0 Overview and History

In 1969, Neil Armstrong made “...one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” During the same year, twelve Huntsville congregations took steps to form a grassroots interfaith cooperative that would bring the faiths together to respond to human needs and promote racial, religious, and cultural harmony. The events of the previous 20 years created an atmosphere of anxiety, mistrust, and divisiveness. These congregations had the vision to heal wounds, build bridges, and provide assistance to those in need regardless of race, religion, or national origin.

For 50 years, our cooperative has been an incubator for many well-known agencies. IMS nurtured them to independence, and today they continue to serve our community. These include HELPLine, Crisis Services of North Alabama (formerly HOPEPlace), The Community Counseling Center, the Care Assurance System for the Aging, the initial Hospice program, and FirstStop. The member congregations provide the leadership needed for the Leadership Council, the Committees, and the four Ministry Areas. Operating funds come from Congregation, Individual, and Industrial/Commercial membership fees and donations.

Regional alliances include Alabama Arise, Alabama State Council, Appleseed, Greater Birmingham Ministries, and Interfaith Ministries of Calhoun County.

IMS is a cooperative of 31 member congregations including:

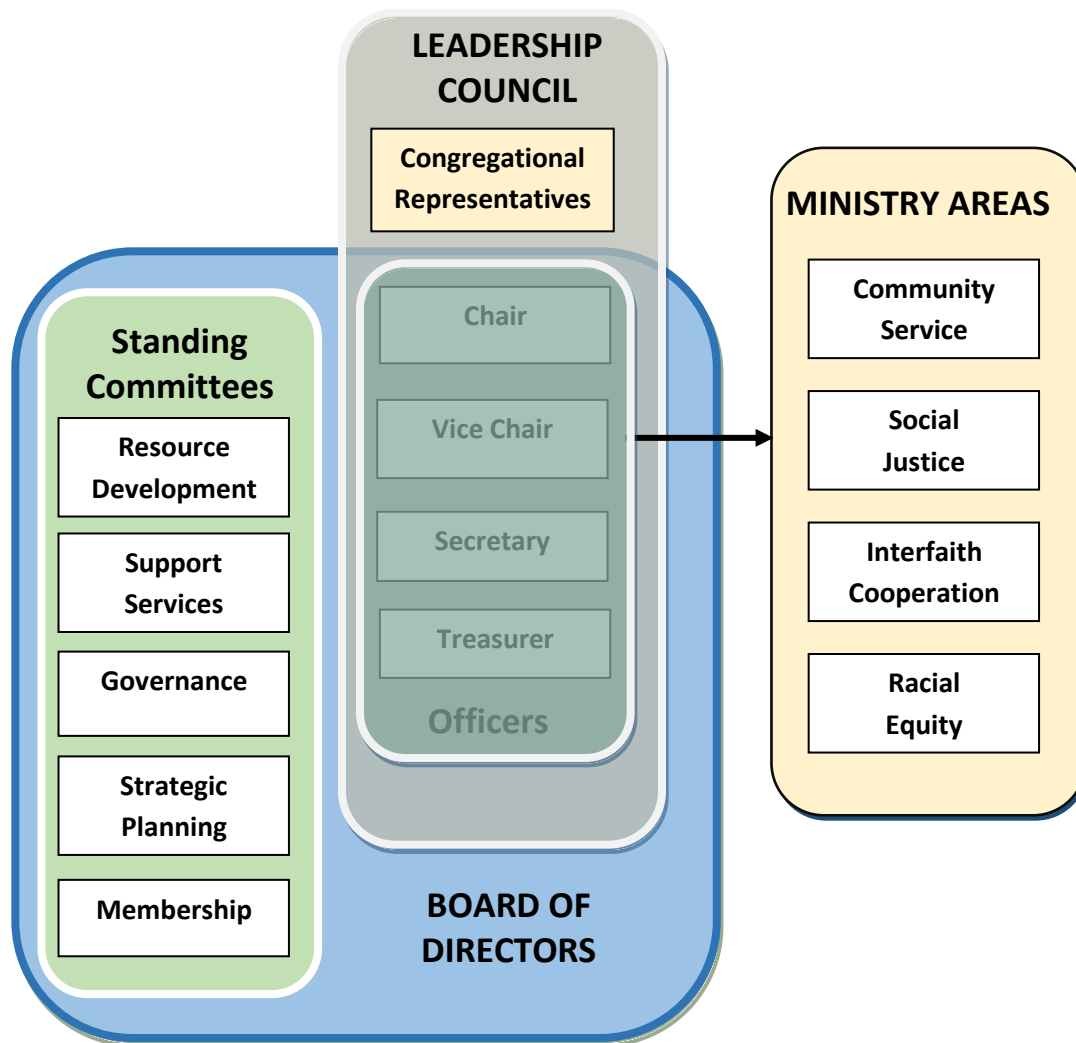
All Saints Lutheran	Messiah Lutheran
Baha’i Faith	North Alabama Islamic Society
Contemplative Interbeing	Episcopal Church of the Nativity
Covenant Presbyterian	Monte Sano United Methodist
Epworth United Methodist	St. John’s African Methodist Episcopal
Etz Chayim	St. John the Baptist Catholic
Faith Presbyterian	St. Thomas Episcopal
First Christian	St. Stephen’s Episcopal
First Missionary Baptist	Sikh Sangat of Alabama
First Seventh Day Adventist	Temple B’nai Sholom
First United Methodist	Trinity Presbyterian
Hindu Cultural Center of North Alabama	Trinity United Methodist
Huntsville Area Friends	Unitarian Universalist
Huntsville Islamic Center	United Church of Huntsville
Latham United Methodist	Unity Church on the Mountain
	Weatherly Heights Baptist

IMS has local working alliances with:

City of Huntsville & Madison County	REACHsv
Chamber of Commerce	Southeast Clergy
Global Ties – Alabama	Greater Huntsville Interdenominational Ministerial
City of Huntsville Human Relations Commission	Local Colleges and Universities
Office of Multicultural Affairs	United Way of Madison County
Huntsville India Association	AshaKiran

3.0 Organizational Structure

IMS is a member-based organization with board of directors as described in the IMS by-laws. (See the by-laws for a full description.) The following organizational chart summarizes the structure of IMS: representatives of member congregations with board officers form the Leadership Council; board officers, standing committees, and at-large positions form the board of directors; and ministry areas managed by a team lead by the vice chair. (Note: The Strategic Planning Committee is responsible for updates to IMS strategic and annual plans.)



4.0 Organizational Vision, Mission, Principles and Values

4.1 Vision Statement

The vision of IMS is to be recognized as a leader in creating a beloved community. In the Beloved Community:

- Poverty, hunger, and homelessness are not tolerated because international standards of human decency do not allow it.
- Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and prejudice are replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.
- Disputes will be resolved by peaceful conflict-resolution and reconciliation of adversaries instead of force through a mutual determined commitment to nonviolence.
- Alleviate economic inequity and achieve economic justice.

4.2 Mission Statement

The IMS Mission is to strengthen and enhance our member congregations' capabilities to:

- Meet human needs,
- Participate in the public forum, and
- Promote religious, racial and cultural harmony

4.3 Guiding Principles

The following five Guiding Principles will help us measure the appropriateness of our decisions:

- **Embrace diversity** in all our contributions to social justice, racial equity, and interfaith pluralism.
- Contribute positively to humanity and our communities with an **ethic of love**.
- Serve and collaborate with **integrity** always holding ourselves **accountable**.
- Contribute to and uphold principles and structures that **put people first**.
- Stand with and **advocate for the disadvantaged**, poor, hungry, homeless, and oppressed.

4.4 Values

With our members, congregations, and communities, we live the values of the golden rule, unity, nonviolence and justice:

- **Personify the Golden Rule** by treating everyone with compassion, transparency, dignity, and respect.
- Create a **culture of unity** by embracing, protecting, and maintaining diversity with an infinitely generous love.
- **Apply nonviolence** as it is the only way to address the causes and impacts of violence.
- **Act for justice** to remove all forms of human oppression.

5.0 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis addresses the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (see Appendix 1 for detailed definition). The IMS Strategic Planning Handbook describes the methods for conducting a SWOT analysis, including but not limited to understanding needs analysis, community feedback, regional and national influences, formative and summative evaluation, and leadership council feedback of organization effectiveness.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values derived from the core teachings of a significant number of faith traditions Is a recognized caring service organization within the Huntsville community and beyond Support of other interfaith organizations 50+ years of experience and successful community improvement programs History of promoting racial relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ineffective and untimely communication to members and community Inadequate accounting of resources required for mission accomplishment Membership congregations not sufficiently engaged and lacking a sense of ownership Poor recruiting and training of volunteers, new members, and leadership positions Inadequate funding for programs and operations Unable to attract younger generations Lack of organizational and mission continuity Inefficient planning process
	Opportunities	Threats
External	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term relationships with major funding donors Wide-range of available grants Several organizations available to build formal and informal strategic alliances A growing recognition of need for racial and social justice Federal government agenda changes open doors to expand programs By 2050, the US will be a 'majority-minority' country Afghan Resettlement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundamentalism and religious nationalism Increase in polarization and dehumanization COVID-19 Increase in mental health issues Increase in white supremacy and domestic terrorism and Anti-Semitism Declining food security Decreasing membership and funding in congregations

6.0 Strategic Goals and Objectives

The IMS strategic plan, goals, and objectives are developed according to the methods described in the IMS Strategic Planning Handbook. The strategic plan committee collaborates with community and IMS members by evaluating needs and available resources. See the IMS Strategic Planning Handbook for methodology details. (Note: Each objective is followed by a goal number (G#) to indicate general connection of goal and objection, although an objective may support more than one goal).

6.1 Goals

- G1.** Address the causes of poverty, hunger, and homelessness
- G2.** Promote equality, social and economic justice
- G3.** Promote anti-racism and racial equity
- G4.** Promote interfaith pluralism and cultural harmony
- G5.** Promote use of nonviolence and peaceful resolutions to disputes
- G6.** Enhance faith communities' capabilities to serve
- G7.** Establish collaborative relationships with religious communities and support agencies
- G8.** Evaluate and report community needs and develop solutions
- G9.** Expand the membership and leadership involvement

Each Ministry Area is specifically focused on one of the first four Goals. The last five goals are general organizational goals.

	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7	G8	G9
Organizational goals					X	X	X	X	X
Community Service Ministry Area (CSMA)	X								
Social Justice Ministry Area (SJMA)		X							
Racial Equity Ministry Area (REMA)			X						
Interfaith Cooperation Ministry Area (ICMA)				X					

6.2 Objectives

The organization and each ministry area has adopted specific quantifiable objectives to measure progress against selected goals.

6.2.1 Organizational Objectives

- Improve tracking and statusing of IMS activities **(All)**
- Increase the number of IMS programs and activities that are offered by 2 a year **(G7)**
- Increase number of volunteers by four each year **(G9)**
- Increase congregational membership, including leadership, by one each year **(G9)**
- Increase number of IMS leaders under age 50 by two each year **(G9)**
- Improve application of nonviolence with one or more events each year **(G5)**
- Update By Laws and Operations Manual to encompass all major organizational activities. **(G9)**
- Reimagine the IMS vision and mission to align with strategic planning best practices, current interfaith resources, and a post COVID world **(All)**

6.2.2 Community Service Ministry Area (CSMA) Objectives

- Increase number of 'Catalog of Services' inputs by 20 each year **(G6)**
- Increase number of CSMA volunteers to two by 2023 **(G9)**
- Increase the number of FoodLine pantries and clients **(G1)**
- Increase number of FOODline Food Pantry Network volunteers by two each year **(G1)**
-

6.2.3 Social Justice Ministry Area (SJMA) Objectives

- Increase number of congregations with an active involvement in one or more social justice topic by three each year **(G1)**

6.2.4 Racial Equity Ministry Area (REMA) Objectives

- Increase number of congregations involved in REMA by two each year **(G3)**

6.2.5 Interfaith Cooperation Ministry Area (ICMA) Objectives

- Increase participation in "The Discovery Project – Compassionate Huntsville Faith Encounter" by four congregations each year (Note: The Discovery Project integrates pilgrimage and dialogue) **(G4)**

7.0 Evaluation

IMS conducts periodic evaluation of its plans in order to assess progress, improve performance, make corrections, and improve procedures and methods for future planning.

7.1 Formative Evaluation

An evaluation of the annual plan shall be conducted at the six months midpoint. The summative evaluation of the annual plan will serve as the formative evaluation for the strategic plan. Other operational and action plans shall be evaluated at appropriate periodic intervals.

7.2 Summative Evaluation

An evaluation of the Strategic Plan shall be conducted every five years. The summative evaluation will be based on relevant data as designated by the plan. Comparison to available needs analysis shall be used where applicable. The annual plan shall be evaluated periodically as described in the applicable manual. Other operational and action plans shall be evaluated upon completion.

Appendix 1 - Terms

Common Good

Contribute to the principles and structures that groups benefit from and people generally agree they have a collective interest to uphold.

Dignity

Recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every person—honoring justice, equity and compassion in human relations.

Evaluation (assessment)

(a) *Formative evaluation* – conducted at periodic intervals during the process; (b) *Summative evaluation* – conducted at the end of the process or plan period.

Goals

(a) Broad statements describing a future condition or achievement, without being specific about how much and when (b) Define the changes required to move toward vision (c) What the organization will be doing to address critical issues (d) Strategic goals define the changes required to move the organization toward its vision. They are long-range performance plans that are consistent with an organization's mission, usually requiring a substantial commitment of resources and achievement of supporting plans mid-term and short-term. (Key words: support, expand, strengthen, reform, achieve, attain, reach, establish)

Golden Rule

Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful; Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Guiding Principles

The values and philosophy of an organization that guide behavior of its members. Guiding principles reflect the values of the organization. They are a set of statements about how people in the organization relate to each other and to their external customers and suppliers.

Inclusive

Accept, encourage, and support each other in a spirit of belonging and family.

Love

An understanding and creative, redeeming goodwill for all.

Mission Statement

An enduring statement of purpose. Describes what the organization does, who it does it for, and how it does it.

Nonviolence

Nonviolence doesn't just mean not doing violence, it's also a way of taking positive action to resist oppression or bring about change.

Objectives

(a) Specific statements of conditions or achievements (b) describes what will be done to accomplish goal (c) describes who will do what by when (d) includes end results to be accomplished within [annual] time limits. (Key words: increase, decrease, reduce, improve)

Planning Assumptions

A belief based upon past experience and knowledge about how current and future events, both internal and external to the organization, are likely to affect the achievement of desired results.

Pluralism

Energetic engagement with diversity toward a positive end; active seeking of understanding across lines of difference, and encounter of commitments (not relativism) holding our deepest differences in relationship to one another, and a commitment to being at the table—with one's commitments.

Strategic Planning

The purpose of strategic planning is to improve the quality of today's decisions in light of future developments and to optimize the organization and its systems (Hershey, AMA, 1992). The purpose of a strategic plan is (1) to set direction and priorities, (2) to get everyone on the same page, (3) to simplify decision-making, (4) to drive alignment, and (5) to communicate the message.

Strategy

A strategy explains how the goal will be achieved, and an objective describes who will do what by when.

SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

Strengths and Weaknesses (knowledge, skills, abilities, resources, etc) refer to positive and negative influences within the organization including: what you do well, what resources you have, what could you improve, what should you avoid, limited resources, lack of skills or technology. Opportunities and Threats (demographics, culture, politics, technology, etc) refer to anything outside the organization that impacts its future (e.g. actions by Congress or a pandemic) that if changed would alter business or create a different operating paradigm. Opportunities and threats include: what opportunities do you hope to benefit from; political, cultural, economic, and demographic factors; what requirements are changing; loss of clients; changing technology.

Tactics

(a) Identify who, when, what, how, and measurable outcomes (b) also referred to as Action Plans describe specific steps to accomplish objectives which align with goals.

Unity

Diversity embraced by an infinitely generous love (unity is neither uniformity nor conformity); regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, nationality, appearance, or social class.

Vision Statement

(a) An idealized view of where and what an organization would like to be in the future (b) A definitive statement about a desirable state of the organization 3+ years in the future.



Revision History

Date	Description
2021-03-16	Adopted new template, Simplified and reworked Core values, principles, Goals, and Objectives.
2021-04-03	Added an objective for G5, nonviolence
2022-02-13	Annual update for presentation to the BOD