

# A Flourishing Next Generation in DFW

A Report from Move DFW 2020



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## INTRODUCTION

On Thursday, February 27, 2020, we convened a gathering of 200 Pastors and Christian Leaders across DFW for a facilitated discussion designed to identify actionable steps we can take collectively to ensure the holistic flourishing of the next generation and alleviate the systemic poverty in DFW. Mark Matlock, author and President of WisdomWorks, led us through our interactive discussion and online polling. We focused on five key areas of a flourishing next generation with Spiritual being the core area radiating out to Family, Education, Health & Safety and Economic.

To better understand the spiritual side, we introduced a study by the Pinetops Foundation called The Great Opportunity. The study indicated that one million young people raised in Christian homes in the U.S. would disengage with the Church yearly between now and 2050. The study gave clear direction and next steps to help turn that wave of disengagement around.

We also engaged Dr. Nick Pitts, author of the Daily Briefing, to prepare a study on the State of DFW. The paper was first introduced at a Key Influencer Forum we hosted in the Fall of 2019. The study reviewed the latest DFW statistics regarding the Church and key indicators impacting the State of the people in DFW.

Our facilitated discussion drew a great deal of information from our audience that resulted in:

- Top 7 Ideal Indicators of a Flourishing Next Generation in DFW
- Results from the Top 5 Flourishing Categories
- Suggested Measurable Outcomes of a Flourishing Next Generation in DFW

The next steps are to bring together Pastors and Christian Leaders in a variety of local DFW communities to share the results of this study and to affirm the important areas they are willing to work together to improve the flourishing of the next generation in DFW in their community.



## FOUNDATIONS FOR CONSIDERING HOLISTIC FLOURISHING

### Chapter One

#### What is the Holistic Flourishing of the Next Generation

For the purposes of our discussion we have defined the Next Generation as the age group of Zero to 30 years old. Many scholars have done research on the Next Generation and what flourishing looks like. Based on research we have highlighted five core areas:

**Spiritual** – this happens when an individual is filled with the Holy Spirit by their belief in Jesus Christ and exhibits this faith in every aspect of their life. To gain this flourishing, the individual needs to be nurtured and mentored by family, friends, The Church and Christian Leaders. Spirituality is the core of everything it takes to have a flourishing life.

**Family** – the family is the core unit of nurturing a young person as they grow in life. They provide the necessary love, mentoring, leadership and support to ensure a young person has the opportunities they need to succeed in life. In our minds we picture a family of a husband and wife where one spouse works and the other one stays home and raises the family in this picture-perfect world of providing all the love, support, care and needs for their child. But the reality is that many homes are single parent households with the parent working full time and raising the kids. They depend heavily on grandparents and other family members to meet the day to day needs of the child. Today the family unit is impacted by immigration, English language skills, poverty, food insecurity, family mental illness, homelessness, sex trafficking, drugs, physical and sexual abuse.

**Education** – for a young person to have an opportunity to a flourishing life, an Education is essential. One of the key metrics for a flourishing child is to master a 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading level during that year of schooling and then go on to graduate from High School and be skilled for the next phase in life. In DFW, over 275 languages are being spoken across our school districts. Because of the many issues that impact the family unit today and the quality of the school system in their community, the ability of a flourishing individual is compromised.

**Economic** – many of our young people are raised in a financially stable environment while others are impacted by the poverty or working poor families that are unable to obtain a living wage even with multiple jobs being worked. One would think that the financial stable households would provide the stability for a flourishing life, but many of those households have their own challenges in being able to raise young people (drugs, alcoholism, abuse, broken homes, etc). There is no doubt that both wealthy and poor households play a significant role in the ability for an individual to have a flourishing life.

**Health & Safety** - it certainly apparent that every young person needs to grow up in a safe environment and have the opportunity for healthcare for their best wellbeing. While many have the ability to grow up in an environment that is safe and secure with quality healthcare throughout their



childhood and youth, many don't have that opportunity. A number of the immigrant population that is not legal in the U.S. is reluctant to obtain health insurance and obtain regular healthcare. Because of the cost of healthcare, many of our poor families find it out of reach for their families. Not only is healthcare allusive for many, but also is the physical impact of food deserts and food insecurity on our young. Living in a dangerous neighborhood can impact the mental health of our young. Even in a financially stable home, abuse can take place with their young. Youth can live in constant fear.

## Chapter Two

### The Great Opportunity and Spiritual Flourishing

The Pinetops Foundation led by Director and CEO, Josh Crossman, researched what the American Church may look like in 2050 based on current trends. The results were quite dramatic and the report stated that the next 30 years will represent the largest mission's opportunity in the history of America.

Here is what they discovered and what their recommendations are for Spiritual Flourishing:

**The Great Opportunity** – with their most optimistic scenario, Christian affiliation in the U.S. shrinks dramatically, and in their best case, over 1 million youth at least nominally in the church today will choose to leave each year for the next three decades. That means 35 million youth raised in families that call themselves Christians will say that they are not a Christian by 2050. The majority of the unaffiliated believe that the church is of no benefit, and there are many major needs in which the church can play a part to prove otherwise. Many unaffiliated perceive the church to be a social club: “Even the most welcoming and well-attended churches are more club-like than not: Their benefits are enjoyed mainly by a small group and not the public at large.” Given that negative perception, is it any wonder that more and more young people are leaving the church?

Here are the interventions they believe can substantially help address this opportunity:

- 1. Starting New Churches** – Church planting in the U.S. will need to double to triple from current rates to address populations growth and anticipated church closures of older congregations.
  - 4,000 new churches are started each year in the U.S.
  - 3,700 churches close every year
  - A net increase of only 300 churches per year

The net number of new churches is therefore every small, with only 300 additional churches added in the U.S. per year. This is not remotely enough to keep pace with population growth, let alone to reach the increasing numbers of the unaffiliated. Based on Lifeway research, we know that the average well-trained, equipped church plant will grow to an average of 250 weekly participants within four years. Of those, 42 percent, or almost half of the congregation, will come from the previously unchurched – many of those the previously unaffiliated as well. New church plants are perhaps the most effective method for reaching the unchurched.

Recommendations:

- Recruit and unleash more church planters of all backgrounds
- Increase and strengthen multi-platform and virtual training offerings for church planters
- Invest in mixed-platform Apprenticeship models
- Catalyze the necessary funding model for church planting
- Invest in an online hub/app that pulls these pieces together to mobilize church planting

- 2. Mission for Youth** – the church must transform youth discipleship. Too many young people don't think a life with Jesus is worth their time. The models that served us for the last fifty years are empirically becoming less effective in our current climate. The majority of the disaffiliated did not go through a crisis of faith or intellectually reject church teachings. They left because they just weren't interested in the Christian life they saw. Pinetops suggest innovations in youth ministry models that leverage the whole church for discipleship, equip families to walk together with Christ, and call youth to embrace new mission opportunities in a changing religious landscape.

Recommendations:

- Equip and mobilize whole churches to foster youth formation
- Provide parents with tools for teaching their children
- Equip and send youth into missions
- Build a national advocacy movement for youth formation

- 3. Reaching New Audiences** – we must evangelize digitally. Millennials spend over nine hours on technology media consumption each day. Over 1.2 billion people, a seventh of the world population, visit Facebook every day and 50% of 18-24-year-olds check Facebook immediately when they wake up in the morning.

Recommendations:

- Create a strong, outward-facing brand targeted at the unaffiliated
- Invest in a studio that produces high-quality multimedia content to reach the unaffiliated through social networks
- Provide social media resources for thoughtful Christian pastors and public voices
- Improve the online presence of local churches in their neighborhoods

- 4. Care for the Poor** – there is tremendous work today being done by the church in our country, with religious organizations spending \$9.2 billion on social programs annually to generate over \$1.2 trillion of social good. However, 62% of the unaffiliated do not believe that houses of worship contribute to solving important challenges. This is especially true when you see the growing population of the homeless, the staggering number of children living in poverty and food insecure, and one-in-six endangered runaways are likely sex trafficking victims.

Recommendations:

- Increase church-driven care for the poor via better approaches to resource mobilization
- Help the broader society see the good works already being done via awareness building and targeted PR
- Increase the effectiveness of church-driven care for the poor via investments in social entrepreneurship, cross-church collaborations and more effective tools

**5. Building Long Term Witness** – currently 2-5 percent of tenured professors at top 40 universities would self-identify as actively Christian. If we are to see millions of youth come back to Christ or except Him for the first time, we need both a strong ground game of local church ministry reaching one person at a time and a strategic long-term effort to articulate the Gospel in our culture.

Recommendation:

- Invest earlier in leadership development, vision casting, and formation for high-potential Christian undergraduates
- Encourage more Christian scholars to enter join University staffs as a calling



## Chapter Three

### Is DFW Flourishing?

One might think DFW is flourishing if you looked at these Stats:

- 1.3 million new residents since 2010
- 3% unemployment rate
- Corporate relocations have helped drive new job growth and increased wages
- Home to 24 Fortune 500 companies and 42 Fortune 1,000 companies

But there is a dark side to DFW that many don't see that's impacting the core of our community:

- Poverty
  - Dallas has the highest number of people living below the poverty line than any other American city
    - 48% of single mothers in Dallas live in Poverty
    - Dallas is #3 in the Nation in Childhood Poverty
  - Childhood Poverty – 1.5 million children live in poverty in Texas with 269,000 in DFW
    - Dallas County – 21%
    - Tarrant County – 17%
    - Denton County – 8%
    - Collin County – 7%
- Education
  - Only 35-40% of DFW 3<sup>rd</sup> graders read on grade level
  - Adult illiteracy rate – 20%
  - 70% of American inmates cannot read above the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level
  - Comparing other Texas cities, Dallas has the highest percentage of individuals without a high school diploma and the lowest percentage of residents who hold college degree
- Economics
  - 47% of households have no emergency savings
  - 150,000+ are housing insecure
  - 130,000 workers live in poverty
- Health & Safety
  - 1 in 4 children are food insecure
  - Texas ranks as the #2 state in the country in regard to the number of cases received by the Human Trafficking Hotline reporting the sexual exploitation of minors
  - Texas has the highest uninsured rate in the Nation
  - Dallas has one of the highest crime rates in America, according to [Neighborhood Scout](#)
    - Crime Rate in Dallas – 40 per 1,000 residents
    - Crime Rate in Fort Worth – 38 per 1,000 residents
- Family
  - 30% of DFW households are single parent families
  - Texas has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest teen pregnancy in the nation
  - Three Dallas County Zip codes have the highest number of incarcerated individuals in the State



## WHAT WE LEARNED

### Chapter Four

### Findings from Move DFW 2020

Your voice was so important during Move DFW. We've analyzed all of the input we received from you during the day. We've broken your findings down into the following categories:

- **Outcomes from the dreams we have for DFW with seven Ideal Indicators**
- **Data results regarding the needs of the five areas of flourishing**
- **Data results showing the summarized areas of flourishing ideas by category**
- **Overall themes of conversations that were discussed at the tables**

#### **Top 7 Ideal Indicators of a Flourishing Next Generation in DFW**

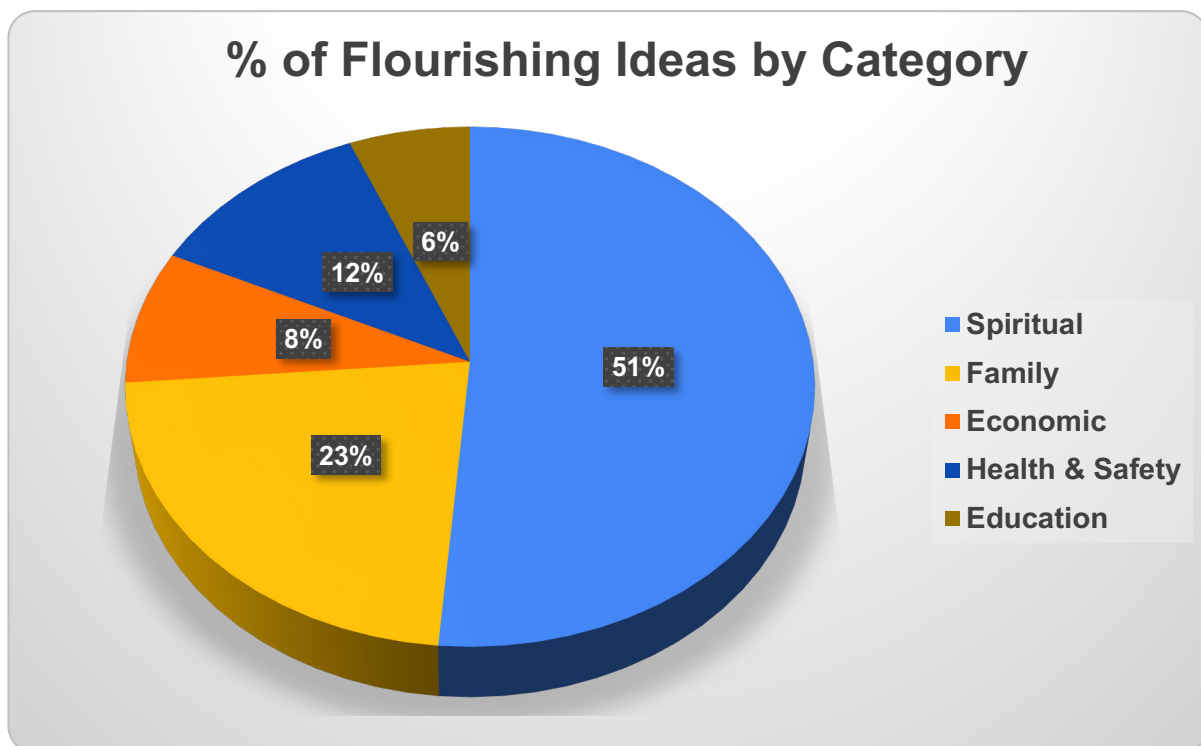
The first area of results were related to the following question – Imagining today's gathering has achieved our goal of helping the Next Generation of DFW to Flourish Holistically.....what has changed? You grouped together and came up with 12 answers to this question that you presented to the audience. Of those 12 the top 7 were:

1. DFW is flourishing because churches and non-profits are creating collaboratives around their unique missions to accomplish measurable outcomes
2. Because the church acted in a city-wide unified prayer movement, the people of DFW are experiencing intergenerational, inter-racial, transformational, missional church bodies
3. Every young adult in DFW is or has been educated spiritually and academically. Trained for a job and has been activated and inspired to live missionally
4. DFW is flourishing because the next generation is being intentionally disciplined, thereby families are strengthened
5. Because the church has acted in relevant and vital ways, the cultural renaissance is being formed where the gospel is being preached, disciples are being made, families are being trained together, and the people of DFW are flourishing
6. Every church in Dallas is partnering with community organizations for the good of their neighborhoods
7. Every school has a church partner and every student has the opportunity for a mentor

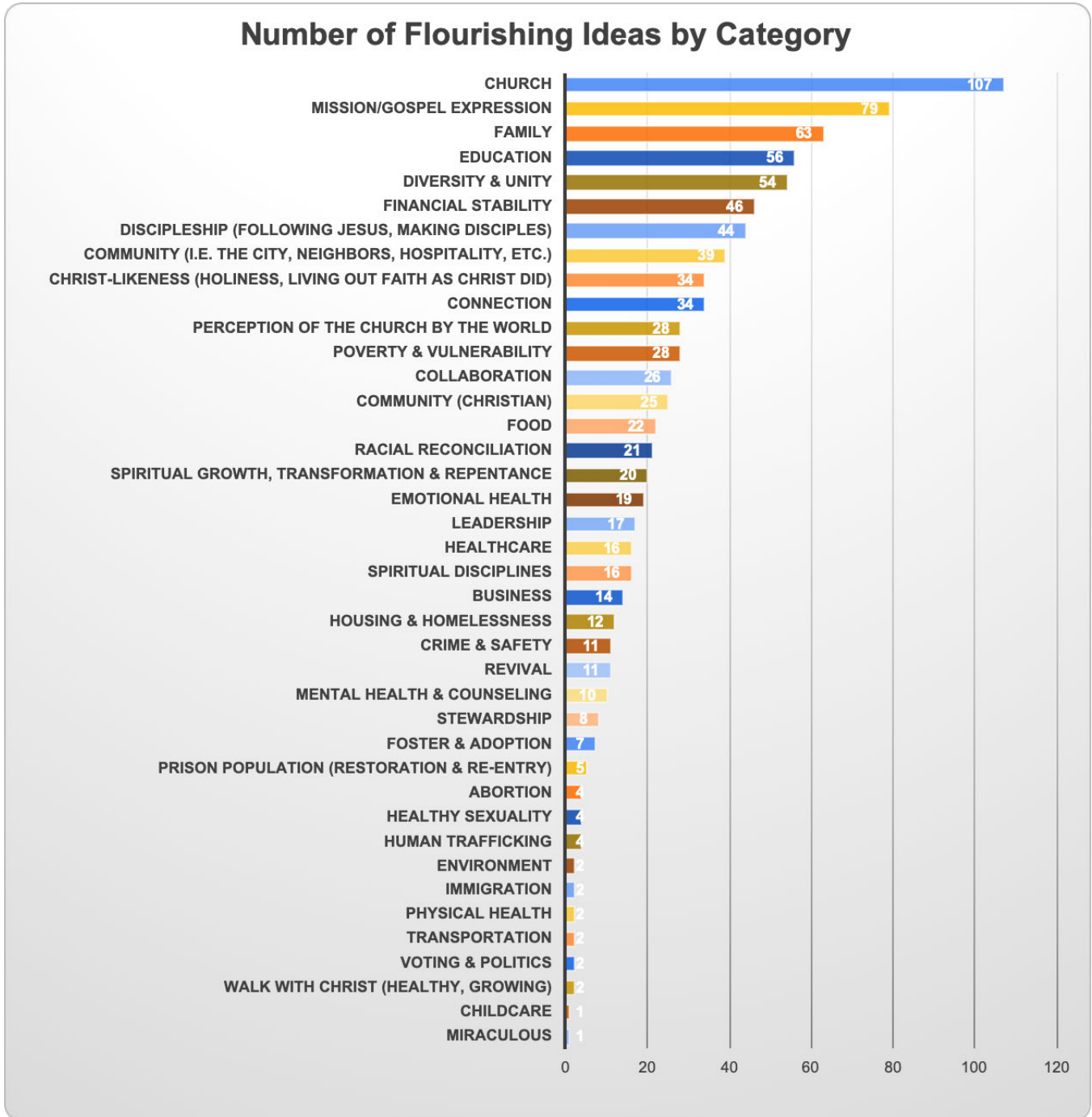
## Results from the Top 5 Flourishing Categories

**Five Categories of Flourishing Results** - We collected 898 unique responses from the audience on the specific areas they felt were needed for a flourishing next generation in DFW. We had stated that the Spiritual Category was the heart of a flourishing next generation. It's not surprising that this category had the largest number of responses. We took all of the 898 responses and linked them to the Top 5 Flourishing Categories which the following results:

- Spiritual - 461
- Family - 201
- Economic – 75
- Health & Safety - 105
- Education – 56
- **Total – 898**



**Importance of Flourishing Ideas** - Of the 898 unique flourishing responses received the data fell into 40 different categories of ways that flourishing can take place. These 40 different category results (as shows below) make up the five flourishing categories in the previous summary chart:



**Important Themes of Conversations** - Some important overall themes of conversation came from the table discussions that supported the five flourishing categories above:

- A healthy expression of church was the most mentioned part of future flourishing: this included ideas around healthy internal church community AND the church powerfully loving and serving externally among their neighbors and city
- For a city to be flourishing, the family must be flourishing (said many)
- Education is seen as the most significant part of people having the opportunity to tangibly flourish: connected to a person's job, hope and stability
- Diversity and Unity including race, generational, gender and socio-economic diversity was seen as important
- For a city to flourish, people must have stable finances (including jobs that pay a living wage)
- It was a high value for future flourishing to include the church being significantly more present in and serving neighbors and the city
- Relational connection is a surprisingly high priority for future flourishing. It seems people feel disconnected from meaningful community
- A surprising number of people prioritized this, that the world would see the church favorably....is this related to the social media world we live in where there is an importance placed on how people view us from afar
- A surprising number of people see collaboration across churches (and other sectors) as a part of future flourishing. Also, despite being middle of the pack initially, 'Collaboration' was the keyword in the statement that was voted #1 by the room at the end of the day...
- Our emotions are a part of flourishing for a higher number of people than expected
- While this was the middle of the pack initially, A "city-wide PRAYER movement" was the key part of the statement that was voted #2 by the room at the end of the day...
- A significant number of flourishing ideas had to do with children and the next generation
- Mentoring, usually from one generation to the next, was a surprisingly important part of future flourishing ideas





## Chapter Five

# Suggested Measurable Dreams of a Flourishing Next Generation in DFW

### **SPIRITUAL**

- Every young adult in DFW has been educated spiritually and inspired to live missionally
- Racism declines in all its forms
- 1/3 of churches working together and collaborating with other sectors
- 85% of DFW are experiencing spiritual revival
- 90% of young people in the church stay engaged because they know the basics of the faith and are inspired to live on mission
- Church leadership includes more women
- Churches are visibly helping the poor
- City-wide unified CROSS-CHURCH prayer movement (in order that souls will come to know and follow Jesus)
- DFW has 10,000 new churches
- DFW is flourishing as 50,000 believers gather to share and pray for our city annually
- Every DFW person has heard the good news of Jesus
- The church exceeds other forms of aid and is the primary vehicle for social services and community transformation
- The HELP provided by the church and non-profits exceeds what is offered by the government
- There is a known network of trusted Christian leaders across denominations, race and politics
- DFW is flourishing because churches & non-profits are creating collaboratives around their unique missions

### **FAMILY**

- Abortion rate cut in half
- Every citizen votes
- The foster care & adoption system is empty. ...And families on the verge of losing kids are being supported
- Hashtag #goodneighbor goes viral
- Lower teen pregnancy
- DFW is flourishing as families are staying together
- Divorce rate reduced to 40%
- Less fatherlessness

### **ECONOMIC**

- Investing in employees leads to higher profits, so companies are incentivized to help employees succeed and move up
- Career readiness has doubled
- Every person has access to affordable housing
- Reduced working poor and child poverty

## HEALTH & SAFETY

- Human trafficking declines because of increase prosecution and decreased demand
- Prisons are empty
- People know where to go for help
- Porn consumption reduced by 50%
- 100% of population has access to mental health, quality healthcare, and zero food deserts
- DFW sees a 75% reduction in violent crime
- Every person has access to quality healthcare
- Food insecurity in DFW no longer exists
- No more food deserts
- Teen homelessness is reduced by 50%

## EDUCATION

- 60% of high school students have been disciplined with a mentor
- Every school has a church partner, and every student has the opportunity for a mentor
- We maintain a list of trusted partners for each issue
- 60% of 3rd graders are able to read at level
- 90% graduation rate
- DFW reaches 85% literacy
- Every person has equal access to education
- Every school has a passing rating
- Preschool available to all



## Chapter Six

### Next Steps

Based on the input we received during Move DFW 2020, the following are suggested recommendations to help drive the Top 7 Flourishing Goals voted on by our audience.

The next step is to bring together Pastors and Christian Leaders in a variety of local DFW communities to share the results of this study and to affirm the top areas they are willing to work together to achieve the Goals recommended at Move DFW 2020.

**Goal #1** - DFW is flourishing because churches and non-profits are creating collaboratives around their unique missions to accomplish measurable outcomes

- Recommendations
  - Quarterly gatherings of Church and Non-profit leaders where they share best practices and ways to connect their organizations together
  - Churches agree to collaborate with 3 other Churches and 3 Non-Profits

**Goal #2** - Because the church acted in a city-wide unified prayer movement, the people of DFW are experiencing intergenerational, inter-racial, transformational, missional church bodies

- Recommendations
  - Church Pastors begin to pray with other Pastors in their community and host regular joint prayer services/calls with their congregations
  - Annually DFW has one combined Prayer Event

**Goal #3** - Every young adult in DFW is or has been educated spiritually and academically. Trained for a job and has been activated and inspired to live missionally

- Recommendations
  - Five of the larger churches in DFW agree to share their programs and training materials with the local DFW churches so that all DFW Churches can benefit from work that is already successful
  - Every Church encourages the next generation in their congregation to do one local and one international mission project each year
  - DFW Churches provide connections to job opportunities from members in their church that have business openings
  - DFW Churches work with local Second Chance Employers and help pay for job certifications for existing job opportunities

**Goal #4** - DFW is flourishing because the next generation is being intentionally disciplined, thereby families are strengthened

- Recommendations
  - Equip and mobilize churches to foster youth formation and discipleship
  - Use social networks and multimedia to engage young people

**Goal #5** - Because the church has acted in relevant and vital ways, the cultural renaissance is being formed where the gospel is being preached, disciples are being made, families are being trained together, and the people of DFW are flourishing

- Recommendations
  - Every DFW Church agrees to plant one new church every other year or work with five other local DFW Churches to jointly plant a new church every other year
  - Every DFW Church agrees to work with five other local churches to jointly fund the fast track training of new church pastor

**Goal #6** - Every church in Dallas is partnering with community organizations for the good of their neighborhoods

- Recommendations
  - Every Church should adopt 3 core flourishing initiatives with Local Non-Profits

**Goal #7** - Every school has a church partner and every student has the opportunity for a mentor

- Recommendations
  - Every DFW Church commits to adopt and support one neighborhood school in their area
  - Churches that adopt a school in their neighborhood agree to work with other churches that have also adopted that school to ensure that every student has a personal mentor





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## Unite Sponsors





Movement|DFW was proud to have Unite as a Co-Host of Move DFW 2020. This year is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Unite and its service to the community. We were delighted to celebrate this special occasion with Rebecca Walls, the Executive Director for Unite.

