First Presbyterian Church – Strategic Plan

Glorifying God, Proclaiming Christ, Serving Others

Introduction

First Presbyterian Church is a church with a vision. There is a work we are called to do. We are called to glorify God, to proclaim Christ, and to serve others. The task is clear. The best way to organize ourselves to embrace this task is often not so clear.

This path can be challenging because the neighborhood around us, in fact, the world around us, keeps changing. That means that once daring and loving actions may no longer serve adequately. Besides that, we keep changing as well. As membership and staffing and finances change, our notion of what we can do and what we must do changes as well. To deal thoughtfully with these changes, we have adopted a practice of making a strategic plan to guide our actions over the next several years.

Our Strategic Plan is a commitment to think carefully about what God is calling us to do and to be as a church. That is what we are offering here. We begin with a survey of five central commitments of our church. We are committed to be a worshipping community; to encourage the faith development of our members; to sustain each other in true fellowship; to serve our neighbors as Christ commanded; and to reach out to welcome those who want to share in the church’s life.

We follow these central commitments with a consideration of the resources we will need to continue these commitments and to grow as the need grows. We will consider financial resources; our need for pastoral and professional staff as well as lay leadership; what new tasks will be called for to be stewards of our historic sanctuary; how best to communicate to those inside the church and those outside; and how to put in place a systematic review of progress made toward the commitments we offer in this document.
Part A. The Central Commitments of Our Church

I. WORSHIP

Lifting our hearts to the Lord

What do we mean by “worship?”

Worship is the response of the Christian to God, to glorify the giver and sustainer of life and of all there is. In that larger sense, everything we do and hope to do here is “worship.” But there is also a more focused notion of worship. Worship is the most fundamental service we owe and we gather together on Sunday mornings to offer it with a whole heart. Our worship follows a traditional liturgical service and we affirm our desire to celebrate our style of worship and music while offering other opportunities to experience Christ.

Why is worship important to us?

Worship is the common experience that draws all the other elements of the church together. It casts its own warmth and its own light on our other commitments as a congregation and on our individual lives as disciples of Christ.

Strategic Goals

1. We will explore ways to engage our congregation more deeply in the service of worship.

2. We continue to hear and explore needs and directions for additional worship services.

3. We commit to preserving and enhancing, as finances permit, our beautiful sanctuary and church buildings to accomplish our mission of glorifying God, proclaiming Christ and serving others, and to deepen our worship experience with members and visitors alike.
II. Faith Development

Creating lifelong followers of Christ

What do we mean by “faith development?”

By “faith development,” we mean those educational activities by which we provide our congregation with what they need to be disciples. We model acceptance at the earliest ages and build on that foundation in a continuum for youth and adults by helping them add the critical skills that mature faith requires in our time. We hope to serve the youngest among us, the eldest among us and all ages in between. We emphasize the knowledge every Christian should have and the skills that a committed Christian life might demand of any one of us.

Why is learning important to us?

Our commitment to worship leads us to learn more about our faith. God invites us to belong to the family, to contribute the unique skills each brings to the family. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring out in each of us our special gifts and to make those available to the community as a whole. Those gifts, and especially the understandings and the skills that are necessary to bring them to full realization, are the work of education at First Presbyterian Church.

Strategic Goals

1. We will develop a cohesive program of education for discipleship along a continuum of all ages. We will continue to offer classes that deepen our understanding of Scripture in keeping with our Reformed tradition.

2. We will offer a diversity of educational opportunities to engage and connect our members in our individual and collective faith development.

3. We will cultivate and expand the culture of involvement and learning to include those of diverse backgrounds and needs. We will promote education with a Christ-centered approach and intentionally develop lay leadership for such programs.

4. We commit to broadening the scope of our educational opportunities to include classes that focus on how we live out our faith in our daily lives.
III. FELLOWSHIP

Encouraging each other along life’s journey

What do we mean by “fellowship?”

“Fellowship” is the character of relationships that enable us to support and encourage each other in the life we share in Christ. It is our connection to one another within the church as the body of Christ. We specifically include those activities calculated to engage members in each other’s lives; to engage them in the work of the church; to provide the support, encouragement, and discernment that will aid a life of discipleship.

Why is fellowship important to us?

Fellowship is important to us because worship flows into fellowship just as it flows into mission. We worship together, sharing the life the church makes available and sharing the common work the church calls us to do. We are “a community of faith, and it is the fellowship that makes us a community.”

Strategic Goals

1. We will cultivate a culture of fellowship in every aspect of the church’s life so that members (new and not so new) have an opportunity for fellowship needs to be met.

2. We will encourage the Fellowship committee and Membership sub-committee to work together to form new groups to engage and connect new members and/or unassimilated members.

3. We will improve communication to make current members and future members aware of opportunities to serve together as well as occasions for social connections.
IV. MISSION

Serving our neighbors near and far

What do we mean by “mission?”

Mission addresses the needs of our neighbors near and far, whom we are called to serve, especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged. We serve these neighbors as individuals, as a congregation, and in cooperation with others.

Why is mission important to us?

Mission is the natural consequence of worship. Worshipping God is our reason for being the church. A worshipping church is a servant church, being the good neighbor as Jesus taught. Mission is important because of the compassion it embodies, because of the services it provides, and because of what it teaches us about our faith. Mission involves linking hearts and hands, living out what we believe and striving for God’s kingdom of love, justice, and peace.

Strategic Goals

1. Encourage Session to adopt guiding principles by which the church engages in mission resulting in a clearer focus. Such guidelines would include local, national, and international involvement.

2. The Mission Committee will implement the Session guidelines for selecting church-sponsored mission activities.

3. We commit to expanding the number of those in our congregation involved in these missions and the proportion of the budget that goes to mission activities.

4. We will develop a more accessible organization of our mission activities that better communicates the opportunities for service available to a broader range of our congregation.
V. OUTREACH

An invitation to the life of Christ’s church

What do we mean by “outreach?”

We think of “outreach” as those activities we undertake to bring people to our church, to come into contact with our congregation and ultimately to share our faith with them wherever they are.

Why is outreach important?

The life that we experience in worshiping together is meant to be shared with everyone we know. Living the life that faith requires and enables cannot be merely a private matter. It is, by its nature, a public matter and “outreach” is the living of that life by our individual members and by the congregation as a whole. In that sense, outreach means only that we tell people what we are doing here and why and we invite them to join us.

Strategic Goals

1. We will develop a more intentional invitation to experience First Presbyterian Church through social media, traditional advertising, and word of mouth.

2. We will commit to easing the entry to our building and our services for our visitors. We will plan for greater use of the Plaza for outreach activities and to update frequently used rooms in the church to reflect the liveliness of the congregation. A new Great Hall to welcome the community and to enhance the congregation’s fellowship should be seriously considered.

3. We will expand the ways we introduce First Presbyterian Church—our programs, our goals, our need for volunteers, our polity—to people who have expressed an interest in joining us.
Part B. The Resources We Will Need to Fulfill Our Commitments

Introduction

“Which of you here,” asked Jesus, “intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it?” (Luke 14:28). As we look at our tower – those program commitments we have made – we want to address the question: How will we provide the resources to complete it?

In Part B of this plan, we will look at what resources it will take to accomplish the strategic goals we have described and how we propose to provide them. We will consider a wide range of resources, including: financial resources, facilities, staffing, lay leadership, communications and the ongoing need for systematic review of our plans.

1. Financial Resources

Every plan begins, as it should, with a commitment to provide adequate resources. As stewards of the grace we have experienced in Christ and as trustees of those who provided us with our sanctuary and our culture of service, we must ask: “Adequate for what?” The best answer is that the resources must be adequate to support the work that God has called us to do from our base here at 12th and Alder. But a more developed answer is that the resources must be adequate to the program commitments we made in Section A and to the opportunities that will surprise us in the next five years and beyond. (Isaiah 43:19)

The recent incremental growth in our church’s budget has enabled us to stabilize programs that would otherwise have slipped away. We need to continue that growth as we are able.

Planning requires pledged giving. It is true that the dollars we receive from members who commit themselves to an annual amount are crucial to the church’s life. It is also true that making a thoughtful commitment to support the church financially as each is able is a crucial aspect of stewardship. We aspire to be a congregation where all of our active members make a financial pledge to the support of the work we are doing here.

We also need to continue to encourage church members to remember the church in their estate planning through the work of the Legacy Builders group. This will strengthen the church’s resource base to provide funding for the church’s needs in years to come.
In the next year or two, a capital campaign should be undertaken to fund longer-term needs in facilities maintenance, and to seek to underwrite a new Great Hall and renovation of the Whitman Room and other facilities.

2. Facilities

When one first looks at our church building, the word “historic” comes readily to mind. It is beautiful in the classic sense. However, “historic” also means “old” and an old building needs a quality of care that new buildings do not.

Some of the care our beautiful building requires is structural. A few examples will suggest the range of projects. The stained glass windows require attention; the heating and cooling system needs to be upgraded; the roof needs repairs; and some consideration needs to be given to seismic upgrades. These are concerns that are best dealt with beyond the annual budget.

Other changes have to do with making new services available. We have talked of a Great Hall, encompassing the chapel and the chapel narthex. This is the time to begin serious work toward what has long been a dream.

And yet other changes require that we keep the facilities we use most looking current, to reflect the liveliness and diversity of our congregation. We know ourselves to be an active and forward-looking church and we want our most used rooms to reflect that.

3. Staffing

We are serious about discipleship at First Presbyterian Church. Everyone in the congregation has a gift to give and it is crucially important that we identify those gifts and cherish their value. It is for that reason that our pastoral and program staff are so important to living out our mission. We have been fortunate in being able to find competent, thoughtful, and dedicated pastors as well as program and administrative staff, but our staffing needs will change as the church’s needs and opportunities develop.

We will need, under any circumstances, a collegial staff; a staff working smoothly together to enable the worship and service of the congregation. In order to be good stewards of the gifts of our staff, we will need a regular review of the strengths of each and a willingness to reconfigure assignments so that they best support the programs we need most.

The programs we have described here are the plans we have made to carry out our strategic goals. Allocating staff correctly and efficiently to those programs is a necessary part of our work. A careful and continuing adjustment of our staff resources to pastoral, program, and administrative needs will always be necessary to help us respond appropriately to new needs.
4. Lay Leadership

Although a competent and gifted staff is crucial to our life as a church, nothing we plan will succeed without the active involvement of lay leadership. Recognizing and developing lay leadership are among the most valuable contributions of the pastoral and program staff.

First Presbyterian Church is rich in the skills and dedication of its members. Our commitment to active lay leadership recognizes that the gifts and perspectives of our lay leaders are crucial to our life together.

In order to capitalize on this vital resource, we need to emphasize regular training for the several offices lay people hold and active recruitment of the whole range of our congregation to the service of the church. It is easy, as everyone knows, to rely on members whose past service is a treasure to the operation of the church, but it is also important to find new people with new perspectives to join us in the work, and for all to be equipped for the service to which they are called.

5. Communications

The time in which we live is a time dominated by new ways to communicate our message as a church. We need to be creative in finding the promise of these new ways of communicating without abandoning the old ways, which still serve many of our members best.

In order to take advantage of the new communications opportunities, we will need to allocate staff to that function particularly. We will also need to find a way to streamline the way we communicate with each other. We encourage Session to form a Program Committee composed of Fellowship, Nurture, Mission and other committees to take the lead in improving the coordination of communication in the church and beyond. If we are to make full use of the Program Committee, all of the people of the congregation will need to learn what information is now available and how they can best use it.

These new forms of communication are especially important in engaging lay leadership. We should, for instance, continue and expand the present levels of training for ushers, readers, and greeters, who are increasingly important to visitors as well as members.

6. Systematic Review

The programs we have described in Part A and the resources necessary to achieve them described in Part B are vital to the future of First Presbyterian Church. As we acknowledge with gratitude the legacy of our past, we now commit ourselves to an active responsibility for the present and the future. Achieving our strategic goals will require the systematic review of how well things are working so that adjustments can be made as necessary.
We encourage the Session to undertake an annual review of the program and resource commitments they have made in this document. These will be their commitments as they accept and approve this plan, so they will naturally want to know what effects their work is producing. To that end, we ask each of the committees responsible for these programs to develop measures that will assist the Session to assess progress toward these goals. Not everything can be measured, of course; in fact, the most important things in a church resist definition, let alone measurement. But many important elements of the work can be measured and compared over time. This kind of information would be of great value to Session as they continue to discern directions for the church’s life.

Finally, the clear and public achievement of goals to which all are committed will be crucial to our continued development. There is nothing in a church as invigorating as communicating a goal to the community, committing to an understandable measurement of progress toward achieving it, and finally, celebrating the achievement together. That experience builds teams of every kind; we believe it will do so at First Presbyterian Church.

**Conclusion**

As we look ahead to the next chapter of the church’s life, we are grateful for the faithful witness of those who have gone before us at First Presbyterian Church. They have left as their legacy a beautiful sanctuary and suite of buildings, a tradition of glorious music and thoughtful worship, a commitment to Christian education, and a willingness to engage in faithful service of those in need.

We commit to building on this legacy with heart and spirit and to responding to Christ’s call to love and serve God and our neighbors near and far. We commit to nurturing the children and youth of the church in their faith, to enhancing fellowship and support for our members, and to strengthening our outreach to our neighbors and those in the wider metro area. We will develop more effective communication to help people connect with the many good programs already in place, and commit to developing new and creative ways of living out the faith together. We will celebrate and develop the gifts of each one, as we together seek to build up the body of Christ and to extend Christ’s love to the world.

Looking to 2020 and beyond, may we commit ourselves to glorifying God, proclaiming Christ, and serving others.

*Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for God who has promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23)*