

Mission Vision 2019



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
Ann Arbor | Michigan

Purpose of Document:

To establish a clear identity for First Presbyterian Church by outlining our guiding Mission, Vision, and Values as they relate to our current state of existence and our future aims.

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1. Mission

Who we are.

Mission Statement:

Make God's Love Visible

First Presbyterian Church (First Pres) is an inclusive and diverse faith community, led by the Holy Spirit, who welcomes people of all ages and backgrounds to come together to explore, nurture, and deepen their faith. Through worship, shared discussion, participation, and service, we aim to make God's love felt throughout our congregation, and community, and echo throughout the world. Our challenge is to serve God with joy and to bear witness to God's transforming love made visible in Jesus Christ.

2. What Guides Us

7 defined values or activities that are integral to how we experience our faith.

Worship: We seek God and God's peace through meaningful worship services and other communal activities. In all our gatherings, we seek to celebrate, nurture, and deepen our faith. With reverence and joy, we praise and pray to our Lord Jesus.

Faith Exploration and Growth: We see the goodness in each other, celebrate our differences, and strive to grow together as followers of Jesus Christ. Through learning together, we experience and explore the boundaries between the promises of the Christian faith, the demands of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the pressing issues of contemporary life. As we navigate the challenges and obstacles of life, we lift each other up.

Mission/Service: We take our faith into the world to serve our neighbors in Ann Arbor and beyond by engaging in local mission and global outreach.

Compassion: Cultivating a culture of compassion and service, we are devoted to love, encourage, and support one another, and through mutual vulnerability and trust, build deep connections of friendship.

Generosity: We give generously of ourselves, our time, and our resources in response to God's generosity toward us.

Diversity/Acceptance/Inclusion/Accessibility: We respect different opinions, perspectives, and backgrounds. We welcome persons from every race, age, gender, ethnicity and background into this community. We strive to be attentive to our own subtle biases. We are fiercely committed to the principles of equity, respect, diversity, inclusion and openness in our community. We invite all to participate in and shape our community. We value one another.

Transparency: Our leaders, and our staff communicate and make decisions thoughtfully, aspiring for transparency, clarity, honesty, authenticity, and mutual respect.

3. Our Vision

Who we strive to be.

Vision Statement:
*Inspire Extraordinary
Faith That Transforms
Lives.*

We will offer innovative and joyous worship opportunities while continuing to value the familiarity and timelessness of tradition. By remaining a spiritual center in the City of Ann Arbor that loves and serves Jesus Christ, we will inspire and grow the communal Christian faith from birth through all of life's stages. We open our arms to all as God's beloved people. We embrace one another with compassion and put our faith into action to make Christ's love tangible through our service. We embody courage, grace, and love in all that we do.

We seek to:

- Welcome unconditionally
- Gather joyously
- Love abundantly
- Lead collaboratively
- Learn wholeheartedly
- Worship passionately
- Serve generously
- Give unsparingly
- Cultivate the gifts of people creatively
- Care lovingly for our leaders and staff and one another
- Communicate honestly
- Manage facilities wisely

4. Values In Action

Where our Mission and Vision come together. In this section, we will explore what we value, how those aspects of our community relate to our mission, and how we can continue to grow them through future initiatives. Rather than being an exhaustive list, these goals and strategies are a starting place for our aims over the next decade and will be adapted to meet the needs of a changing congregation and culture.

A. Worship

We believe that courageous, stirring worship, music and preaching is at the center of our life together. Our worship should be simultaneously traditional, creative, energetic, multi-sensory and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Our worship is centered on Jesus Christ and grounded in the Bible.

Goal:

To maintain a variety of worship opportunities that seek to engage the community of all ages, backgrounds, and interests. We will continuously seek new opportunities to engage with one another to share our faith and God's love.

Potential Strategies:

- Ensure a stirring proclamation of the Word as a prime element of our worship — a focus explored through thematic and multi-sensory elements of all services.
- Integrate a continuum of music types, including traditional sacred music, music from other traditions, and contemporary expressions, within the worship service and respective activities to honor the history of our faith.
- Nurture and grow a dynamic music and fine arts outreach program. With our Minister of Music and Fine Arts, create and nurture a fellowship program in fine arts with the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University.
- Use storytelling — in worship, education, mission, devotional materials and retreat settings — to share with our congregation the many ways in which First Pres shapes lives and families.
- Use technology appropriately to enhance our worship and to make it available to a wider, more mobile audience. Utilize technologies — light, sound, and image — to engage all worshipers in the experience of worship.

B. Faith Exploration and Growth

We believe in a faith that grows in people of all ages and connects people to one another. Faith encompasses the head, heart, and mind — it enriches our everyday life as part of a shared journey with others in the Christian community fellowship.

Through small groups, people gather for enriching discussion and rich spiritual practices, including pilgrimage experiences. Sunday school classes for children, youth and adults are engaging, nurturing, and playful opportunities for all people to grow in their faith, from a young age to maturity. Pilgrimages allow people a chance to combine travel, spiritual reflection, and the power of small-group learning with the discipline of walking.

Goal:

Engage in shared activities across ages, races, individual, and family identities in order to grow in our faith and build relationships in our Christian community. Personal growth opportunities will be integrated around identified church themes and include mission and worship components.

Potential Strategies:

- Celebrate Milestones — guide and celebrate key steps along one's faith journey including Baptism, receiving Bibles, confirmation, membership, weddings, funerals, communion, and worship.
- Cultivate multi-sensory learning opportunities that engage the heart, head, and hands. Such practices will be offered in multi-generational (activities across age groups) and intergenerational (activities where multi-ages participate in same activity) settings.
- Integrate child, youth, and family-friendly elements in the services identified as Family Worship.
- Strive to increase the participation of children and youth in all programs and ministries within three years.
- Develop a collaboration between Christian Formation, Mission, and Worship to offer a selection of multi-faceted service learning experiences and programs for all ages.
- Inform the congregation about the many service opportunities, especially short-term projects requiring specific skills, using existing notices and publications, such as Our Life Together's weekly sign-up links.
- Recruit more volunteers by adding co-opted members to Session's standing committees for time-limited and specific projects.
- Develop a robust leadership development program for church officers — Elders and Deacons — as well as for committee, team and group leaders.
- Utilize technology — audio, video, streaming or simulcasting—to engage a wider audience in Christian formation.

C. Mission and Service

We follow Jesus into the places of need and heartbreak in the neighborhoods and communities in Ann Arbor and southeast Michigan. However, our compassion extends across the globe. Mission teams travel to distant places, build relationships and continue community care projects. Our growing campus ministry project touches the lives of students with God's love and mercy.

Goal:

We see God's compassion transforming the world through us. Mission and service will be integrated into the identity, lives and faith formation of all members at First Pres, from cradle to grave, understanding that service for the world is integral to our worship.

Potential Strategies:

- Increase mission and service participation, focusing on intergenerational projects. Work within existing teams and partners to promote children, youth, and family involvement.
- Create a mentorship system to help ease newcomers into volunteering.
- Incorporate mission activities into Sunday school and youth curriculum.
- Make monthly presentations to introduce members to our current mission partners and volunteer opportunities.
- Regularly evaluate the success of programs and seek to add value or restructure as needed.
- Continue the successful efforts to use the professional and technical skills of our congregation in mission areas worldwide.
- Create a system whereby potential volunteers are made aware of service needs and the time commitments involved.
- Create ways to engage with the many communities of people in the neighborhoods surrounding our church, in Washtenaw County and in Southeast Michigan.

D. Compassion

*From birth to resurrection,
we care compassionately for
all and nourish a culture of
caring. Knowing there is a
broken heart in every pew,
we bear one another's
burdens together. Devoted to
extending spiritual care and
dedicated to helping with the
tangible needs of our
members and friends, we
offer a loving heart, a
listening ear, an open hand,
and a generous spirit.*

Goal:

Identify both service and compassionate care needs using existing structures and resources within the church. Develop pathways for service delivery within the church, both through individual's contributions of time and talent to specific time-limited projects and through participation in ongoing and/or newly-developed programs.

Potential Strategies:

- Consulting with staff and engaging already-involved members, regularly identify the spiritual and tangible needs of our members.
- Create programs that provide intensive support, companionship, and coordination services for elderly members who have no family or close friends to assist with late life living conditions, health care, and decision-making.
- Expand the existing Stephen Ministry program to train and assign ministers for additional responsibilities in spiritual care. Expand the Helping Hands program to train and assign volunteers for additional and appropriate responsibilities related to the tangible needs of our members, particularly the elderly, and young families.
- Create a thorough program of small to medium-sized intergenerational groups in which cross-generational understanding, fellowship, and support are fostered.
- From the point of joining, ground a member's experience in purpose and constantly seek to deepen their engagement. Encourage active participation within the congregation in at least one way.
- Identify and utilize the internal resources of our members and friends more effectively.
- Identify and establish collaborative relationships between First Presbyterian and other community service organizations such as: The Area Agency on Aging, Turner Senior Services, Jewish Family Services, and the Ann Arbor Intermediate School District.
- Pursue best practices in our pastoral and congregational care model.

E. Generosity

Generosity is the antidote to fear and scarcity. As faithful people seeking to love God and our neighbors, we give generously of ourselves, our time, and our resources in response to God's generosity toward us. We are generous in offering community leadership in turbulent times. Members are deeply talented and hold many important positions in the community, offering opportunities to further nurture community relations. In addition, we are called to be responsible stewards of all God's gifts, including our financial and natural resources, our facilities, and the gifts of our staff and members.

Goal:

To increase the awareness that each of us represents the Church of Christ broadly and First Pres more specifically. We aim to extend the "Everyone is Welcome Here" perception of our church throughout the community, in visitors and in parishioners. Through doing so, we hope to develop specific ways to identify and accommodate the needs of folks who come to First Pres for church or community events.

Potential Strategies:

- Regularly share with our members stories of the significant leadership role that First Pres has played historically in times of "messiness" and increase our generous response in turbulent times. Be a beacon for our community of safety, service, and justice, no matter what the circumstance.
- Discover the potential needs of our neighbors, and develop ways to help meet those needs.
- Identify and understand our immediate geographical neighbors and coordinate mission, service, and educational projects like Vacation Bible School with other churches.
- Develop and carry out a planned process to educate our First Pres community on various modes of generous giving, including Annual Giving, Legacy Partner Support, Resident Ministry Endowment Support and Capital Project Funding.
- Accommodate the need for secure parking for those attending worship services, memorials, meetings and conferences, add clear and visible signage, and make clear the available options when there is overflow. Make our welcoming entrance/foyer to be a place that invites investigation from visitors and fosters communication and fellowship among the attendees.

F. Diversity/ Acceptance/Inclusion/ Accessibility

We believe that everybody has a place at First Pres. Regardless of who you are, where you're from, what kind of job you have or don't have, what kind of family you're from, or if you have no family at all, there's a place for you in this community of faith at First Pres. We strive to be wildly inclusive; that is God's way.

Goal:

To create a vibrant year-round program of regular events to promote inclusiveness, community, and intergenerational participation.

Potential Strategies:

- Develop a comprehensive program of family-friendly activities and events in order to re-envision “family worship” for all ages to worship together.
- Hold inclusive workshops off-site that are open to the community.
- Provide and cultivate regular intergenerational programs throughout the year.
- Increase partnerships with local service organizations, and support key community service events with intergenerational participation.
- Nurture youth leadership and increase youth visibility in worship and in small groups.
- Develop intentional conversations, relationships and partnerships with a broad range of faith traditions, including Jewish, Muslim, B’hai, Buddhist and other religious groups.
- Grow the presence, participation, and visibility of campus ministry students, faculty, and staff in the life of the church.
- Pursue cross-team meetings and opportunities, including designating liaisons between church programs and groups.
- Provide mental health support through the collaboration of our Wellness Coordinator, Youth Ministry Director and Stephen Ministers, offering a series of continuing professional development in areas of mental health. Feature regularly, on the website and in print publications, resources available to members affected by mental health issues.

G. Transparency and Governance

Our leaders, and our staff communicate and make decisions thoughtfully, aspiring for transparency, clarity, honesty, authenticity, and mutual respect.

Goal:

To develop a congregational culture of trust, openness, equity, communication and collaboration among governing boards, pastors, staff members, elders, deacons and members and friends of the congregation.

Potential Strategies:

- Make Session minutes available on a members-only section of the website as soon as they are approved.
- Host an annual open gathering with interested members at the beginning and end of the program year to discuss key events of the year, celebrate successes, evaluate losses, and brainstorm ideas for future programs.
- At the annual congregational meeting in January, give staff members opportunities to share about their ministries and communicate key experiences.
- Offer regular opportunities for our members and guests to learn about our polity and policies, and to both understand their role and engage in the governance process.
- Revise our First Pres bylaws and create congregational governance policies to insist on openness, disclosure and transparency in regards to church management, finance, personnel, facilities and program ministries.
- Reconstitute our First Pres personnel policies to reflect healthy, faithful and productive employment practices for clergy, program staff and administrative staff.
- Create or revise effective operating practices and guidance for all areas of ministry, leadership and administration including personnel, finance, stewardship, administration, communication and facilities.
- Working from the foundations of our Presbyterian polity and connectional form of government, be a catalyst for renewal in our community, our state and in the larger church.
- Prepare our leaders with essential knowledge and practical experiences, and instill in them the effective skills and knowledge necessary to lead First Pres confidently into the future in the midst of rapid social and religious change.

H. Tools — *integral to the realization of our Mission and Vision.*

Facility

Technology

Web Imaging
Social Media

*First Pres is a sacred space.
Sharing what we have, we
strengthen the fabric of our
relationships and our
community.*

Our facility provides both inspiration and function. It is a potent force in our mission of “Making God’s Love Visible.” Our building is our greatest physical asset for our core mission of worship and the arts, Christian formation, congregational life, mission and service and compassionate care. Our space is a bridge linking us to our neighbors and the greater Ann Arbor community. Our space is the center for the life of the First Pres congregation, yet offers others in our neighborhood, campus community, and city, a place to gather and flourish.

Potential Strategies:

- Ensure facilities are safe, secure, accessible to all.
- Oversee facility investments to be sure that they will adequately support future programmatic needs.
- Prioritize re-investment in facilities with an emphasis on preservation of iconic historic features, ensuring the legacy of the church while leaning into future adaptations that address state of the art technology, creation of gathering space, and increased building system efficiencies.
- Emphasize our commitment and support of environmental stewardship within the greater Ann Arbor community.
- Modernize business practices and enhance technology to improve and appropriately monitor associate practices.
- Anticipate and strategically plan for capital needs of the facility as well as addressing deferred maintenance.

As our world continues to grow its digital footprint, we, too, must establish our community as accessible through online platforms and develop an online presence that people can connect with. By expanding digitally, we are able to remain top-of-mind to younger audiences, position ourselves as thought-leaders in the Christian faith, and bring God's love to the community without requiring in-person attendance at First Pres events.

Potential Strategies:

- Set objectives, and define goals and measures for various technology enhancements. Then measure that progress on a regular basis to help insure a wise use of funds and time.
- Install monitors in/near the Social Hall to stream information, volunteer opportunities, and inspirational quotes, short video clips, or messages during peak hours of on-site activity.
- Use technology appropriately to enhance our worship and broadcast it to a wider audience. Utilize technology — light, sound and image — to include all worshipers in the experience of worship.
- Consider other technological solutions to expand our capabilities, such as a potential overflow area for special services and events (i.e. Easter, Christmas Eve, Annual Meeting), a hearing loop for the Sanctuary and/or Monteith, kiosks, more integrated audio/visual solutions for meeting rooms, video recording for resident ministry, etc.

Web and Digital Imaging:

- Update the website to include “Thoughts/Prayers of the Day/Week” to make the website serve as more than an informational tool. *Note: This could also be done via social media and might be a good way to increase engagement there.*
- Expand our photo repertoire so we may utilize more photos of our church and congregation on the website rather than having to use outside (stock) photos. Using more imagery of our building throughout the website may resonate with audiences since the building itself is recognizable.
- Develop a blog page on the website where members are able to contribute thoughts and share after vetted through First Pres leadership.

Social Media:

- Create specific goals that reflect the vision of the church and correlate with where we would like to be in the future. Make strategies that help us achieve those goals and then measure and re-access goals and strategies as necessary over time.
- Create posts which initiate conversations and increase our engagement, connection, and reach through various platforms (go beyond using social media for merely informing people of upcoming events). Examples: posts using more videos, weekly blog (could take the place of the main text of the weekly email), a sermon “preview” or “wrap up” post each week prior to or following the Sunday sermon, short devotional video post, personal posts, etc.
- Plan for and integrate social media into what we do. Dedicate specific pastoral and program staff time to pursue more online activities such as blogging and planning for thought provoking posts, video clips, etc.
- Through staff collaboration and planning, develop a content calendar that applies to various platforms to coordinate posts. This would include content that would disseminate information about upcoming activities, provide opportunities for member or event spotlights to highlight the successful work done in the community, share stories about our members, post about youth, campus, and various mission trips, and other posts that would increase engagement and conversation.

Regarding current social media platforms:

- **Facebook** generally targets folks over the age of 30. Explore using Facebook Live is one method to stream an occasional event and look for other long-term streaming solutions.
- **Instagram** is great to engage younger audiences, ages 13–30. Account information for our youth and campus ministries can be shared so that students on mission trips and other outings can post directly to the Instagram account, either as a permanent post or a 24-hour story.
- **Twitter and Snapchat**, along with emerging social media platforms, can be tools to reach younger audiences and perhaps engage Youth Groups to have a voice. By creating a First Pres Youth Group account and rotating ownership of the account each week or month, the younger groups are able to feel that they are playing a role in sharing First Pres' mission.
- **LinkedIn** will be utilized for recruiting new staff and connecting to other business organizations and professionals, boosting our presence as a church that attracts young professionals and those employed to various industries in the Ann Arbor area and Michigan region.
- **YouTube and Vimeo** are platforms to post videos online, particularly of mission trips and worship services. Having a vblog (video blog) rather than just a blog might be preferred for some events and educational elements.