

# Making God's Love Visible:

## *A Strategic Plan for First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor*

October 18, 2020



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## Introduction

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Founded in 1826 First Presbyterian Church (FPC) of Ann Arbor has a long a vibrant history within the Ann Arbor community and within the PC(USA). Along with its commitment to transformative worship, FPC has been unwavering in its dedication to mission and outreach to the larger community. As it nears its bicentennial, First Presbyterian has embarked on a strategic process to identify where we find ourselves at this point and to identify where the Holy Spirit is leading us.

As the first step, in 2018 the church embarked on a broad process *to establish a clear identity for First Presbyterian Church by outlining our guiding Mission, Vision, and Values, as they related to our current state of existence and our future aims*. Following significant input from the congregation, the task force produced **Mission Vision 2019**. Within the document are a revised Mission Statement, a list of Core Values, and a Vision of whom we strive to be. The Mission Statement, Make God's Love Visible, affirms that...

First Presbyterian Church 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.

In seeking to bring the Mission Statement to life, the task force identified aspirations that are integral to the church we seek to become:

- 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 one another and our leaders and staff
- Communicate honestly
- Manage facilities wisely

In early 2020, the Session of FPC created a Strategic Planning Committee to develop the strategies that outline the work before us in bringing the Mission and Vision to fruition.

As the Committee's work proceeded, and in response to the work of the **Mission Vision 2019** task force, the following workgroups were formed: 1) Compassion; 2) Diversity, Inclusion, Acceptance, and Accessibility (DIAA); 3) Christian Formation; 4) Mission; 5) Worship; 6) Transparency/Governance; 7) Generosity; 8) Facilities; and 9) Technology. While these workgroups are not necessarily parallel and do not directly mirror FPC's committee structure, they represent areas around which our priorities could evolve. In the ensuing months of collaborative discernment the workgroups identified the following overarching guideposts for our work:

- Becoming a robust actual and virtual sanctuary, welcoming and accepting all people: radically inclusive, hospitable, fully accessible and cultivating diversity. A new DIAA Task Force will oversee policies, programs and initiatives to help realize more social justice engagement and to ensure allocation of the resources necessary to realize these vital qualities.

- Prioritizing programs and policies that result in deeper faith, stronger connections, demonstrated integrity, focused Christian formation for all ages, and worship experiences that are intergenerational, broader and more accessible.
- Engage in intentional practices of Christian social justice, advocacy, action and education.
- Initiating policies and practices that yield a more transparent, more just, equitable, and accountable environment — from personnel to investments — developed and led by new groups that fulfil our calling.
- Broadening and enhancing experiences in mission, worship and Christian formation so as to foster a culture of learning, caring and active expressions of compassion, and growth in participation and giving.
- Leveraging greater volunteer participation, engagement and collaboration in programmatic initiatives to ensure our highest and best use of the congregation's human capital and staff resources.
- Creating a transformative facility renovation plan that prioritizes reprogramming of space so as to accommodate contemporary methods of worship, mission, faith formation and compassionate care. Initiate a capital campaign to fund deferred maintenance, life safety building requirements and mission-driven priorities. Annual property maintenance requirements will be funded by healthy and disciplined financial practices to ensure appropriate stewardship of the legacy from the past and the resource for the future that our facilities represent. Imagine facilities to be an active asset in our outreach, compassion and missional ministries.
- Deploying enhanced technology that strengthens and reinforces innovation and creativity in expanding outreach, formation, and compassionate connections and improving live-streaming capabilities for virtual gatherings, meetings and services.
- Increasing generosity to enable delivery of the opportunities articulated in this Strategic Plan - with annual monitoring and assessment of Plan outcomes by means of a disciplined review of metrics, with proactive adjustments as required.
- Verifying that the combination of programs, policies, participation and resources will be integrated into a sustainable and strategic framework for conducting inclusive worship, active mission, Christian formation, and continued cultivation of a culture of compassion and care.

In order to enable FPC to realize these aspirations, this Strategic Planning Committee has identified the following foundational commitments:

- Welcoming and involving more children, youth, families and young adults in the life, programs and ministry of the church, as well as those who have not previously found or wanted access to our mostly-white, mostly upper-middle-class ways of living our Presbyterian congregational identity
- Increasing active participation – by guests and visitors, adherents and members, volunteers, and the community at large – in key aspects of the church's ministry: lively and inspiring worship, programs that deepen faith formation at all life stages, mission activities that are transformative for participants and the community
- Making the church's financial life sustainable

- Stabilizing the building as a reliable, adaptable, sustainable instrument of ministry that is well-adapted to the core commitments of our ministry: social responsibility, justice and humanitarian concern, sustainability, closely-woven and inclusive community

While the very nature of this work calls us into shared responsibility to bring the Strategic Plan to life, the strategies identified by the spirit-led workgroups are separated into FPC's existing ministry areas so that committees and workgroups may easily identify lines of responsibility: **Worship/Music, Christian Formation, Pastoral Care/Congregational Life, and Mission**. One additional category, **Stewardship of Resources**, includes those strategies that provided a sustainable foundation and enable and support the work of FPC's community of faith.

Within each ministry area, the strategies are grouped in three chronological stages: near-term (by 2021), mid-term (by 2023) and long-term (by 2025). Partner committees are identified to the right of each strategy. There is also a Reference Key that is used to cross-reference the strategy to its location on the Resource Table. The Resource Table, an addendum to the Strategic Plan, is a concise listing of strategies, timeframes, and the responsible committees. The individual workgroup reports are available upon request.

To be successful, this Plan must be a living document: while adhering to the essence of the Plan, revisions will possibly, in fact should, be necessary. As such, it is recommended that, at a minimum, the Strategic Plan be reviewed at the beginning and end of each programmatic year. A Session-appointed Strategic Planning Monitoring Group should receive reports from responsible ministry areas. Committees should indicate progress toward accomplishing the strategies as well as suggested modifications and adjustments.

Ministry Areas' work should be guided by the strategies set forth in the Plan. While these strategies should be a priority for our work together, they are designed to guide, not to limit, our efforts and creativity. Although not a specific strategy, a church-wide spirit of commitment is a vital aspect of becoming the church envisioned in these aspirations.

The strategies that follow are the product of many months of prayerful discernment and collaborative engagement. The Strategic Planning Committee and Session have gone before us and discerned a path forward. It is now incumbent upon all of us, as members of this household of faith, to make the vision a reality. May the work of this Plan make God's love visible to FPC and to all with whom we are in community and seek to serve.

## Worship/Music

Our worship of God is primary: it is, by necessity, the central act of any healthy, vibrant community of faith. Whether or not we acknowledge it to others, or even to ourselves, the act of worshiping simultaneously expresses and shapes the way we feel, the way we think, and the way we live. Our daily lives are, in fact, a form of worship. In this section we are primarily addressing the explicit and direct behavior of the gathering of God’s people to express their love, gratitude, hope, pain, and longing. The commandment to worship could hardly be more direct:

*Mark 12:30 The Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”*

The words are straightforward; Jesus, in fact, quotes them directly from Deuteronomy 6:5. But we sometimes find it hard to know how to live into them. Psalm 100 gives us some help:

*Psalm 100:1-3 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into God’s presence with singing.*

The strategies below help us to live into our response to our God. They specifically address creating an inspirational and transformative worship space, eliminating physical and social barriers so that all worshipers can be included, involving all generations in worship leadership, and extending our worship opportunities far beyond our physical space.

Strategies - 2021	Partner Committees
Implement interim, low-cost modifications to Chancel to provide adequate space for worship leadership/choir, improve functionality, and provide greater connection between the locus of worship and the worshiper [WM1]	Property Finance
Modify Monteith Hall to provide a space to create an environment that is more flexible in its use and more conducive to an expanded worship repertoire. Modifications include the addition of a floor-inlaid labyrinth, enhanced acoustics and lighting, improved sound amplification and technology, paint, and new liturgical furnishings [WM2]	Property Finance Technology
Incorporate children, youth, and families in FPC’s worship leadership [WM3]	Formation
Continue to deepen the worship experience by including dramatic readings, tableaux, liturgical dance, congregational movement that shortens the distance between the worshiper and the chancel [WM4]	
Expand our ability to live-stream all services, including those in the evening, regardless of location [WM5]	Technology
Create an annual Interfaith Service [WM6]	
American Sign Language interpretation for services as needed [WM7]	

Strategies - 2023	Partner Committees
Revisit times, location, and character of our worship services. Consider expansion of worshipers they serve. [WM8]	
Assess the value of continuing a radio broadcast of our services. Migrate radio streaming to a station that is aligned with FPC’s ethos if the broadcast is continued. [WM9]	
Hold off-site, fully accessible worship services to shift perception away from church being a specific location [WM10]	Formation

Strategies - 2025	Partner Committees
Reconfigure Sanctuary chancel, nave, and narthex to shorten the distance (literally and figuratively) between the locus of worship leadership and the experience of worship in the congregation [WM11]	Property Finance Technology

## Christian Formation

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In this complex, often incomprehensible, sometimes frightening world, the task of answering our call to love and serve God, and to love and serve neighbor, can be daunting. The third section of the Strategic Plan document speaks to spiritual growth and development. It speaks to equipping the saints (perhaps surprisingly, that means each of us – all of us!), and to giving our children, youth, college students, young adults, and not-so-young adults, the spiritual, physical, and virtual tools we all need to do the work of our God, the work of our hands and our hearts, the work of our calling.

*Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.*

*Colossians 1:9-10 For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to God, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.*

Our call to learn and grow is clear and applies to all of us. It is the focus of this section to offer that opportunity. This may not necessarily be learning of an intellectual or academic sort. It can also be about learning how broadly the call to love our neighbor needs to reach, and of finding new ways to do the reaching. It includes a more emotional, more spiritual learning - about opening not only our minds and our hands, but also our hearts.

Strategy - 2021	Partner Committees
Encourage personal practices such as prayer, journaling, spiritual practices, and retreats [CF1]	Worship
Provide childcare at all church events [CF2]	Finance
Expand and deepen ministry with young adults and U-M Students by providing opportunities to serve at FPC, e.g. sound board, nursery, volunteering with youth and children [CF3]	Campus Ministry
Invite, encourage, lead, and cultivate opportunities in which youth may practice leadership skills and experience inter-generational activities and mentoring relationships [CF4]	

Strategy – 2023	Partner Committees
Offer a robust adult formation program that meets all persons at all stages of adulthood [CF5]	
Develop Social Justice Curriculum for all ages [CF6]	
Provide all age groups opportunities to deepen interfaith understanding through ecumenical activities, including visits to other faith communities [CF7]	
Provide educational events focusing on Native American heritage [CF8]	
Create and use technology to attract, engage, and enrich faith formation [CF9]	Technology
Equip classrooms, learning and meeting spaces with state-of-the-art technology for in-person and at-home activities [CF10]	Technology Finance

## Pastoral Care/Congregational Life

If we are to have the strength and the will to be God’s hands and feet in the world, we have to be strong and healthy ourselves. Worship and Christian Formation prepare us with the will and the way to serve others, but we must also care for ourselves and our church family. From the earliest days of Christianity, followers of this radical new faith took care of each other. Jesus modeled it in his behavior and in his teaching.

*John 13:14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.*

*1 Corinthians 12:24b-26 but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.*

And even earlier, in one of the most beautiful texts in Hebrew scripture we hear Ruth, speaking to her grieving mother-in-law:

*But Ruth said, “Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; Where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die— there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!”*

For many, this is a hard lesson. An overcharged work-ethic, a societal push for productivity, our individual confusion about the difference between self-care and selfishness all get in the way of providing a nurturing environment for ourselves, our families, and our community of faith. It isn’t that we don’t have a model right at the beginning of Genesis – God rested on the seventh day, and even before that, there was evening and there was morning beginning in the first paragraph of the Bible. Pastoral Care and Congregational Life are vital elements of being a strong and healthy church. The strategies in this section address steps we can take to enhance our communal life and to provide an inclusive and authentic welcome to our sisters and brothers.

Strategy - 2021	Partner Committees
Create a Radical Hospitality Task Force to eliminate barriers to our worship life, to oversee all aspects of accessibility, and to encourage diversity – including all generations, races, economic classes, sexual orientations, gender expressions, political ideologies, backgrounds, and those who are differently abled [CL1]	Session Worship Formation
Include items to determine spiritual and tangible needs and target programming for the upcoming year in annual congregational survey [CL2]	
Create a new welcome statement that is broadly inclusive and specifically mentions the LGBT community. Make our welcome clearer with targeted advertising, and a rainbow flag on the property. [CL3]	
Enhance and expand our downloadable resources [CL4]	Technology
Review and revise the process for joining as needed so that it is increasingly meaningful, effective, and easy for people to become full active members of First Pres [CL5]	Session
Foster connection by increasing opportunities for digital engagement [CL6]	Technology
Expand database of community resources of social, mental, and spiritual health specialists [CL7]	Technology
Expand Support Groups such as grief, caregivers, job loss, COVID-19, Anxiety, Job Loss, etc. [CL8]	
Conduct annual review of existing support groups and consider those the church might provide to the community [CL9]	

Cultivate a sense of virtual hospitality through online meetings and gatherings that are primarily focused on welcoming all, strengthening social connections, and building relationships [CL10]	Technology
Enhance congregational participation by communicating activities and opportunities to the congregation; by developing tools to recruit, manage, support, and engage volunteers, including creation of virtual want-ads; and by helping newcomers connect with volunteer opportunities [CL11]	Technology
Expand Greeters in the Pew program [CL12]	
Provide Scholarship Fund for events with meals [CL13]	Finance
Create a digital photo directory [CL14]	
Incorporate children, youth, and families in all church activities [CL15]	

Strategy - 2023	Partner Committees
Foster connection and participation in the life and ministries of First Pres by offering clear updated digital information about ministries and opportunities for engagement, service and action [CL16]	Technology
Expand Stephen Ministry Program and market availability to the larger community [CL17]	
Develop Circles of Light Program [CL18]	
Develop forum and process for members of the FPC community to share their faith stories in worship and in devotional materials [CL19]	Worship
Create all-inclusive church-wide events that includes those with special needs and abilities [CL20]	
Expanded accessibility-conscious Pilgrimage opportunities with lower cost and scholarships [CL21]	Finance

Strategy – 2025	Partner Committees
Expand Circles of Light Program [CL22]	
Provide a welcoming and sustainable community for T2A2 (Twenties and Thirties) [CL23]	Formation

## Mission

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As we close our Sunday morning worship each week we say, “Our service now begins!” This is a deeply meaningful charge to express our love of God through our love of neighbor and through our lives’ work – to care for and serve our sisters and brothers who look like us and those who look very different; those who think as we do and those with whom we disagree completely; those who live nearby and those who live in places we can hardly imagine; those who are wealthy beyond our understanding and those who go to sleep on city sidewalks or straw mats. The ways we live with each other, and try to welcome and serve each other, are the subjects of this section.

*Leviticus 19:18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.*

*Galatians 5:14 For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

It is hard to imagine how anything in the Bible could be more direct – these verses and many others like them are unequivocal. Yet they are difficult for us, as individuals, as a society, and as the church. It takes courage and it takes grace to love our neighbor in a world of consumerism, systemic racism, self-centeredness, and fear. This section has strategies designed to move us closer toward caring relationships with each other, increased service to the world, and radical hospitality to all.

Strategy - 2021	Partner Committees
Establish and Expand Collaborative relationships with community organizations [MI1]	Cong Life
Integrate mission into the life and work of our community of faith [MI2]	Formation
Establish Social Justice Workgroup [MI3]	Session
Incorporate children, youth, young adults, and families in service opportunities [MI4]	Formation
Participate in mission in partnership with other Presbyterian Mission CoWorkers, Projects, Initiatives and Programs [MI5]	
Create focused and effective International Mission Projects [MI6]	
Create an Interfaith Initiative [MI7]	

Strategy - 2025	Partner Committees
Review Mission Policies for effectiveness and relevance [MI8]	
Examine possibilities for new local and international mission projects [MI9]	
Expand Use of Facilities for Mission-centric programs [MI10]	Property
Ensure adequate staff resources are focused on Missional Programs and related volunteers [MI11]	Personnel

## Stewardship of Resources

Perhaps the very first story many of us heard that had to do with Stewardship of Resources is the parable of the talents, found in Matthew 25. A man entrusts a part of his wealth to each of three servants. One buries it because he is afraid and wants to keep it safe, but the others invest the talents, and double the amount they began with. This section of the Strategic Plan calls for us to use our resources wisely – certainly to care for them and protect them, but also to invest our resources of time, talent, and money in ways that foster our commitment to God and to the church. This section addresses our financial resources, the care of our physical campus, and our use of technology.

*1 Chronicles 16:29 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due God's name; bring an offering, and come before God. Worship the Lord in holy splendor;*

As worshipers, most of us have cared deeply about the spaces in which we worship and do the work of God. The ancient Hebrews built and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem – the very act of rebuilding helped them survive and reclaim their lives as a people. As Notre-Dame de Paris burned in April of 2019, people all over the world wept, and in an astounding short time funds were donated for its restoration. The church indeed is not a building, not a location, but its building and location are none the less important to its worshipers, the community of saints from the past, present, and future - a place for both our young children and the most senior of our membership to call home. We must use our resources wisely, we must care for and enhance our beautiful facility, and we must provide and use the most up-to-date technological tools to serve our God. The strategies in this section guide us thoughtfully in that direction.

Strategy - 2021	Committees
Develop phased approach for new HVAC system and implement Phase I – Sanctuary and Social Hall [SR1]	Finance Property
Make transparency the subject of the Fall Officer Retreat [SR2]	Session
Make the work of committees, boards, and workgroups more accessible by publishing minutes in a timely way and extending an open invitation to people not on the committee [SR3]	Technology
Create a policy and procedure database that is accessible to the congregation and that is reviewed and revised on an established schedule [SR4]	Admin
Provide opportunities for congregation to identify areas that feel less than transparent [SR5]	Session
Budget \$250,000 annually for capital repair/replacement [SR6]	Property Finance

Strategy - 2023	Committees
Improve parking availability and offer safe transport from Forest Street parking to the church [SR7]	Finance Property
Ensure staff policies and procedures are fully DIAA [SR8]	Personnel
Replace sound system in sanctuary with incorporated hearing loop [SR9]	Finance Property Technology
Complete remaining phases of HVAC system throughout remainder of building as means of providing for welcome, inclusion and full participation of members, participants, staff and guests in all seasons [SR10]	Finance Property
Enable remote participation for committee meetings [SR11]	All

Ensure Youth and Young Adult assignment to every Session Committee [SR12]	Session
Ensure FPC's investments are fully socially responsible [SR13]	Finance
Insure completion of capital campaign to address all deferred maintenance, life safety, and replacement needs [SR14]	Property Finance
Install updated exterior and interior signage and wayfinding that includes Braille [SR15]	Property
Conduct a Capital Campaign culminating in 2023 [SR16]	Finance

Strategy – 2021 - 2025	Committees
Make Sanctuary, Social Hall, and Welcome Center fully accessible from any entrance [SR17]	Property Finance
By 2025, increase annual revenues and expenses by 6.25% and 4% respectively to achieve budget balance [SR18]	Finance
Increase expenditures in stewardship, Christian Formation, Worship, and Congregational Life by 6.5% per year through 2025. Increase Mission by 5.25% per year, Personnel by \$%, and Property by \$.5%. Hold annual increases in residency program to 1% [SR19]	Finance
Sustain growth in pledge receipts and other donations by 7.5% per year [SR20]	Finance
Reduce the annual operating deficit to \$0 by 2025. Fund residency entirely out of endowment through 2022 [SR21]	Finance
By 2025 have a capital planning and budgeting framework with fully secured financing for non-operating expenses [SR22]	Finance
Establish a culture and practice of financial stewardship [SR23]	Finance Formation

## Session Resolution

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At its regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, October 21, 2020, the Session of First Presbyterian Church passed the following resolution in support of this Strategic Plan and the exciting work ahead:

Session endorses the October 18, 2020 Strategic Plan and affirms that 1) the Plan will guide work of the Session and the associated priorities of the church, 2) Session will embrace the Plan as a living document and remain accountable to work with committees to carry out the work of the Plan and align reports in accordance to the Plan, and 3) Session will utilize the support of a Strategic Planning Monitoring Group to ensure annual monitoring of both the implementation of the Plan and updating of the Strategic Plan as necessary.





Number	Strategy Category	Year	Strategy	Worship/Music	Spiritual Formati	Pastoral Care/Cong Life	Formation	Mission	Property	Finance	Technology	Administration	Personnel	Session	Human Resources	Operating Budget Financial Resources	Capital Financial Resources
SR20	Stwrdsbp Resrcs	2021-2025	Sustain growth in pledge receipts and other donations by 7.5% per year							X							

## Resource List

[Placeholder]