

2021 PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE NOMINEES



Tom Brandt

Though I now live in Dearborn, Ann Arbor was my home for many years. I have been a member of First Pres for 22 years. One my favorite services is the Ash Wednesday Taizé Worship service. The service is so moving and binds together in worship not just the congregation of First Pres, but the broader Christian community in Ann Arbor. First Pres has so much potential: so much to offer in worship; in service to the marginalized, the lost, the spiritually bereft, the hungry, the homeless; in welcoming to all; and in spreading the love of Jesus Christ to everyone. I can't wait to see what God has planned for us!



Jim Clark

My favorite memory at First Pres was my wedding ceremony in 1993 in the main sanctuary when I married Nancy Janz and we blended our families. We were both single parents, having been widowed. The ceremony was especially meaningful since our five children (ages six to fifteen) served as honor attendants. I live in Ann Arbor and have been a member of First Pres for more than fifty years. I am excited to see what the future holds for First Pres. The recent Congregational Survey and Self Study confirmed that we, as a community of faith, are maintaining a remarkable commitment to the mission of this church in an unprecedented time of isolation and global health crisis. This is a direct result of the incredible effort by our church staff and continued engagement of our members. I am very optimistic about our ability to recover and pursue new initiatives to serve the needs of our community, address challenging issues of social injustice, and bring our message to a broader and more diverse audience. Session recently endorsed a report from the Strategic Planning Committee outlining a five-year plan for the future. We may not look quite the same a year, or more, from now, but with change comes opportunity. I view the search for a new Lead Pastor as a calling that will bring new life and a new perspective to our church that has learned much about itself in the last nine months. There is reason to be hopeful, if we can be patient for just a little longer. The veil of the health crisis will lift and, with God's help, we will begin to serve as He would have us do.

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Jennifer Edwards

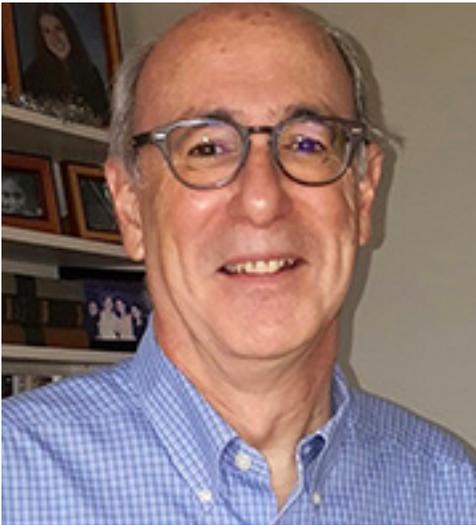
I live on the West Side of Ann Arbor and have been a member of First Pres for sixteen years. Among my favorite memories are the baptisms of both our sons and seeing them loved, supported and fully embraced by our First Pres family as they've grown. I am most excited about the tremendous opportunity, by God's grace, for our members and staff to work together to fully live out our new mission, vision and values with renewed commitment through justice, mercy, faith and love.



Kelsey Kaercher

I live in Saline though I grew up in southwest Ann Arbor and at First Pres. I have been a member of First Pres since I was confirmed in eighth grade. First Pres holds many of my most special memories, but my favorite is probably my involvement in Keys (high school youth group). My time in Keys was truly one of the most formative parts of my younger years. I was able to participate in at least eight mission trips as well as be a summer youth intern. Over the next five years I am excited to see how the Church grows and continues to recover. In addition, I am looking forward to watching my future children grow and develop their faith through First Pres.

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Mark Lindley

I live in Dexter Township and have been a member of First Pres for twenty-five years. Among my favorite memories is the warm welcome my daughters and I received at First Pres in 1994. Also, singing with Dave Brubeck. Another is my wedding to Sandy Talbott with Michael Lindvall officiating, in August, 1997. Sandy and I joined our two families and this has been our church home ever since. I am excited about unlocking the potential of this community of believers. Imagine seeing all our diverse passions move in one direction in common purpose.



Dianne Santinga

First Pres has been the setting of some of the most important and meaningful events of my life, including meeting my husband Peter in the campus fellowship group, our wedding, our son Jack's confirmation, and my ordination as Deacon. I live on the northeast side of Ann Arbor and have been a member of First Pres for nine years. Like many in our congregation, I am excited about the prospect of welcoming a new lead pastor under whose leadership we can experience an extended period of spiritual growth and fulfillment of our mission. I am also excited about resuming worship in-person while continuing to use our new digital tools to reach people in the Ann Arbor community and beyond.

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Charlotte Sawtell (with Jack)

I live in Ypsilanti and have been a member of First Pres for six years. My favorite memory at First Pres is marrying my husband Reid two years ago. My husband and I love our First Pres family. I am excited to see my son grow up in the First Pres community. I cannot wait to watch Jack grow and get to know the Church through all the incredible family programs offered at First Pres.



Jean Song

I live on the West Side of Ann Arbor and have been a member of First Pres for fifteen years. My favorite memory at First Pres is being baptized one week before my own daughter was baptized when we moved back to Ann Arbor in 2005. It's a precious memory for me and happened during the season of Advent. I am excited about the Church moving forward in its mission and vision to serve our congregation and our community, especially as we consider how we must do the work to address social justice and inclusivity. First Pres has the potential to be a leader in the transformational change needed to serve all the people of God and I'm thrilled by the energy of the congregation to do this work.

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Bill Upton

I live on the East Side of Ann Arbor and have been a member of First Pres since 1983. One of my favorite First Pres memories is the Christmas Eve service in 2017, sitting in the pew with my wife Dusty, my mother, my father, our three sons and our three daughters-in-law (one was still a fiancée at the time). Our grandson was also at that service, though only two members of our party were aware of that fact. (Elijah was born the following year.) It's the only time my father and grandson were there together. It's remarkable what First Pres has accomplished over the last two years despite the fact that we haven't had a lead pastor. Mel, Jay, and Rick have done amazing work, and the congregation has pulled together tremendously. One of our accomplishments in the challenging year 2020 has been adopting a strategic plan. It's exciting to think of what we can accomplish in the coming year, in terms of our service to the community and our own spiritual development, with a new lead pastor who can help us build on this foundation.