



2020 Self Study Report

A Journey of Faith & Hope | Making God's Love Visible



**First Presbyterian Church
Ann Arbor, MI**





Executive Summary

First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor is a large legacy church adjacent to the campus of the University of Michigan. The church is dedicated to sharing the Word and the life of Jesus Christ through worship, fellowship, mission, learning, and prayer. We commit ourselves, in all we say and do, to demonstrate God's grace and love. The foundation of our life as a church is based on four primary areas: Worship, Christian Formation, Fellowship, and Mission. Connecting with our neighbors beyond our congregation has been especially challenging for us in a period of transition complicated by a global pandemic.

The strength of our church can be found in the following programs:

- **Pastoral and Congregational care**, including the combined efforts of 50 deacons, 20 active Stephen Ministers, three Resident Ministers and a Parish Nurse, is the bedrock of our Christian purpose. Lay leaders and volunteers augment the extraordinary efforts of our dedicated pastoral staff.



- **Mission programs**, including multiple local, national and international mission projects, continue to be a church priority with a particular focus on social justice, homelessness, food insecurity, health and education.
- **Christian Formation** sustains all of our care and outreach programs. Our emphasis on education at all age levels, and a traditional worship service model - blessed with an outstanding Music Ministry – guide our acts of service, and inspire us to be open and progressive in our Christian thinking.

- **Fellowship**, essential to our congregation, gathers members together to pray, share meals, be in worship and small groups, to serve on church committees and more.

In spite of our best efforts, we continue to struggle with certain issues that challenge us as we strive to respond to the call of Christ as we understand it:

- **Inspiring and engaging new cohorts of volunteers** for church committees and lay leadership is a constant challenge. We aspire to engage a wider spectrum of our congregation, including youth, in and for service.
- **The aging of our congregation** is a concern. While supporting our senior members, we need to engage young families in meaningful ways.
- **We must focus on issues of equity, justice and inclusion.** Welcoming all, in the manner that Christ exemplified, is a constant challenge for a demographically homogenous congregation. We must do better. We have work to do.
- **The COVID-19 crisis** has increased burdens on staff that we must account for as we move forward in this transition to a new Lead Pastor.



The contentious and divisive dissolution of the call of our immediate past Lead Pastor, Rev. Dr. Fairfax Fair, began a long process of healing and reflection that still continues. This unfortunate circumstance, coupled with the unexpected and overwhelming impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has the potential to compromise the surprising energy and commitment we currently enjoy and will need to achieve what God calls us to do.

We have seized this opportunity to address all of these challenges. Session, through the Personnel Committee, recently approved a comprehensive overhaul of our administrative practices, including job descriptions, fair and transparent practices for job evaluations, and a “listening ear” to staff concerns. We have learned from past experience how vitally important it is for church leaders to act in a respectful, considerate and cooperative manner.

Session also approved a report from the Strategic Planning Work Group: **Making God's Love Visible.** This document is a compelling and aspirational account of our mission moving forward through the next five years. It calls for a comprehensive evaluation and re-thinking of everything we do as a church. As we do that work, we commit to:

- A “Radical Hospitality” welcoming people of all generations, races, economic classes, backgrounds, those who are differently-abled, gender expressions, and sexual orientation.
- Increasing member participation in all aspects of the church’s commitment to service.
- Making the church’s financial situation sustainable.
- Focusing on renovation and overdue maintenance of the church building to serve new and evolving needs in our programs.

To take clear measure of where our church is, we surveyed the congregation using the HolyCow! Consulting Congregation Assessment Tool. The results of the consultant’s interpretation are highlighted by the following key findings:

- Worship services are considered to be exceptional.
- Pastors offer a positive and compelling vision for the church.
- The spirit of our church fosters enthusiastic member involvement.
- Our congregation is considered progressive and demonstrates an institutional energy that is extraordinary for this difficult time.



- Church members want to focus more energy on issues of social justice and ministries serving the marginalized people in our community.

On that last point, we as a church have been called by God to embrace a larger role, a leadership role, extending Christ’s love and Spirit to create a fair and just society, dismantle racism, and serve and support the disadvantaged and under-resourced in our community. Mentoring young people, inspiring them to become disciples of Jesus Christ, and follow His example of service to others--is a particular challenge.

We look forward with great anticipation and excitement to calling our next Lead Pastor. We pray that this report will inform and inspire the **Pastor Nominating Committee** on this journey of faith and hope, following the path that God provides.

The Self Study Group, reflective of the entire congregation, recognizes the extraordinary effort and commitment that our pastors, ministry leaders and support staff have demonstrated during this challenging time in the history of our church.

Furthermore, we give thanks to the people who worked so hard to serve our congregation through an unprecedented global health crisis. We cannot measure this gift from God except to say that the unselfish effort and sacrifice of so many among our church family will create an opportunity for all of us to move forward into an uncertain future with renewed hope.

Thank you to all who believe in Him and in our mission as Christians; and thank you for making God's love visible.



Committee Members

Co-Chairs: Haley Brown, Kelsey Kaercher

Jim Clark, Jesse Feyen, Barry Johnson, Bill McPherson, Marita Servais,
Brian Schneidewind, Jean Song, Brad Taylor

Committee Advisor

Reverend Dr. Rick Spalding

Committee On Ministry Liaison

Reverend Dr. Judy Shipman

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I. Introduction

First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor has a nearly 200-year history (described in detail in Appendix A), and a broad range of church programs. First Pres offers the worship, educational and service opportunities of a large church with the warmth and closeness of small groups and ministries in pastoral and congregational care.

Youth and Children's Ministries provide a rich set of experiences and lessons that guide maturing Christian faiths. Campus Ministry serves the nearby student population of the University of Michigan. Resident Ministry is a unique program offering ministers mentorship and support as they begin their careers. First Pres also has extensive mission programs, focusing on social justice, hunger, and homelessness. The church supports thriving music and visual arts ministries that enrich worship and programs.



First Pres has had a challenging recent history that includes a lead pastoral dissolution, a lengthy transitional period, and COVID-19 complications. The complex situation of the dismissal of Rev. Dr. Fairfax Fair was multifaceted: there was a Disciplinary Trial in response to charges levied by the church's former Director of Youth Ministries, Rev. Dr. Jim Monnett; fraying staff relationships; and congregational division about her leadership.

Session, with assistance from the Presbytery of Detroit Committee on Ministry, eventually brought a recommendation to congregants to dissolve the church's relationship with Dr. Fair. Presbytery also initiated an Administrative Commission (AC) to investigate events leading to Dr. Fair's dismissal (full AC report is available in Appendix G). Personnel committee actions taken as a result of the report are detailed in the Church Organization section of this report.

Remarkably, the people of First Pres have continued healing and gathering strength while remaining cautiously optimistic, tenacious and resilient in the novel territory of the "remote" that COVID-19 demands. The pandemic has forced the church to continue its healing remotely while trying to maintain vitality and connection amongst the members. A survey conducted to gauge preferences for in-person events during a pandemic (see Appendix F) demonstrated the importance of live-streaming worship services in which significant work and energy has been and continues to be invested.

Through these trying times, First Pres has done careful reflecting, prioritizing and acting. A bold Mission and Vision 2019 report was put forth (see link in Appendix G) to guide the church into the future. A Strategic Planning Group (SPG) was formed to map out one-, three- and five-year goals to help us live out the report's Mission and Vision. The SPG report, linked in Appendix G, is meant to complement the contents of this report.

Progress and healing were affirmed by a congregational survey administered in September 2020 by the Self Study Group to measure congregational priorities and health (see Vital Signs report in Appendix G).



While there are continued opportunities for growth, the congregation is firmly anchored by its network of programs in worship, pastoral care, faith formation, and mission – all detailed in the pages that follow. The congregation is looking forward to a bright future while applying past strengths to new initiatives and needs, all with guidance from a new leader.

II. Church Programs

Under the title of Faith Formation, First Presbyterian Church offers fellowship and education opportunities through its ministries to children and youth, students on campus, and adult and senior members of our congregation and community.

Children, Youth & Family Ministries



Sunday school meets weekly for children and youth, preschool through 12th grade. Families are invited to find fellowship throughout the church year at The Milestone Ministry Program, monthly “Families at First” gatherings, craft-making festivals during the seasons of Advent and Lent, the annual Christmas Pageant, and Vacation Bible School.

Church youth in 6th through 12th grades meet weekly in a fellowship group. Sunday school for 8th graders is offered as a year-long Confirmation Class for those interested in more deeply exploring their faith and membership at First Pres. First Pres youth participate in regular social events throughout the church calendar, including lock-ins, regional conferences, and game nights. Older youth have the opportunity to participate in national and international mission trips to places such as Virginia, Florida, Costa Rica, and Guatemala to help with local construction projects.

Campus Ministry (UKirk @ UMich)

First Pres gives college students opportunities for faith and fellowship through small group meetings, weekly college lunches, coffee crew, the Michigan Meltdown Ice Cream Social, and pancake supper during the winter exam study period.

Campus Ministry organizes student participation in local service projects. An annual Spring Break mission trip has taken students internationally to assist with local construction projects as well as vacation bible schools.



While based on the campus of the University of Michigan, Campus Ministry works to include students from other nearby schools including Washtenaw Community College and Eastern Michigan University.

Adult Ministry

First Pres programs for adult education and fellowship include Stephen Ministry, Presbyterian Women, Sunday Morning Bible Study, regular education offerings, all-church book reads and study groups, weekday Bible studies, T2A2 (Twenties & Thirties of Ann Arbor), Immature Ministries (Forties & Fifties), and Knit Night.



Mature Ministries

For the 56% of the congregation who are 55 and older, First Pres offers regular events throughout the church year, including monthly guest speakers at the Mature Ministries Thursday Lunch & Learn, book groups, Bible studies, and field trips to local museums, lectures, performances and sporting events.

For the past several years, First Pres has focused on all-church intergenerational activities, including an annual all-church retreat, church picnic, outings to sporting events, local mission opportunities, and Faith Formation activities that bring adults, youth, families and young children together in the life and work of the church.



First Pres has two other program areas that are key to its mission: Health Ministry and the Music and Fine Arts program.

Since 1998, Health Ministry, also known as Parish Nursing, has worked through church leadership and in collaboration with local health organizations, to advocate for and provide health and wellness programs, spiritual care, security guidance, and, since March of 2020, clear communications and education on the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Music & Fine Arts



Worship at First Pres is immeasurably enhanced by the choral music, instrumental music, and a liturgical arts team. There are three choirs: the Children's Choir (Grades K-5), the Youth Choir (Grades 6-12), and the Chancel Choir (High School-Adult).



Instrumental ensembles include the Sanctus Ringer's Handbell Choir, a beginner Handbell Choir, the Recorder Ensemble, and a small orchestra composed of strings, wind instruments and percussion. There are also two organs on site including a state of the art 33-voice/42-rank Schoenstein organ. Liturgical art expresses in various mediums (fabric, quilting, weaving, paper-lace, paint, etc.) what words don't capture, and supports the scripture texts or theme of the day in worship.



Resident Ministry

First Pres is a national leader in mentoring exceptional first-call pastors in the Presbyterian Church (USA). The two-year residency program invites a small cohort of recent seminary graduates into the active, vibrant ministry of a large church in a dynamic university town. This peer-based program model combines action and reflection to deepen call, awaken strengths, and develop the next generation of church leaders. The program is designed to enhance the academic preparation of newly ordained graduates in powerful ways and ground them in the practice of ministry. From a core engagement in worship leadership, preaching, and pastoral care, residents explore other essential facets of ministry to develop their unique vocational interests and skills. Having participated in all facets of the day-to-day life of a large and diverse congregation, residents leave First Pres ready to navigate the challenges of 21st century ministry in a wide variety of pastoral settings. This program is fully funded by a special endowment.



III. Local & Global Mission

Mission is a vital and vibrant part of the personality of First Pres. Members feel called to work together both locally and globally to live out our stated Mission to Make God's Love Visible; to further peace and social justice; and stand in solidarity with, and minister to the needs of the poor, the sick, and the powerless.

Working through the Mission Committee of Session, the work of the church is captured in two subdivisions: Local Mission and International Mission. Each of these divisions is well led and well represented by a cross-section of the congregation.



Local Mission

Our local mission efforts, actions, programs, and commitments focus on three key areas: Social Justice, Homelessness, and Food Insecurity. First Pres members invest time, talent, and money to support a spectrum of local organizations working to make life better for those in our community. We work with and provide financial support to more than 20 local mission opportunities in south-eastern Michigan. Activities happen anywhere from once to several times a year to weekly.



Our current local mission activities include:

- **Alpha House** –First Pres members provide childcare, companionship, food, household supplies, and help with homework at Alpha House, a refuge for homeless families. Alpha House is a housing assistance and homeless services provider in Ann Arbor.

- **Cass Corridor/Detroit Mission** –Groups of 20-25 from First Pres volunteer twice a year with Cass Community Social Services who provides services to the homeless and disadvantaged populations of Detroit. It serves these diverse populations by providing for basic needs, including affordable housing, promoting self-reliance and encouraging community involvement and improvement.
- **Delonis Center** – First Pres for many years has worked with the Delonis Center, a local center for the homeless in our county, to provide nightly overflow shelter in the winter. In the past, this has meant providing food, companionship, and shelter to 25-30 homeless men. With the pandemic, First Pres members will be joined by volunteers from other faith communities to provide shelter and companionship for an entire month.

Many of our members are active in leading and supporting other local programs that address our priority areas of social justice, homelessness, and food insecurity such as:

- **Feeding Our Neighbors**
- **Friends In Deed**
- **Habitat - House of Faith**
- **Hope Clinic Food Programs**
- **Peace Neighborhood Center**



Walking the talk is essential to our belief, so each year we set aside approximately 5% of our annual giving for local mission programs. Local services organizations are invited to submit requests for funding with details about their daily work and program ideas. We evaluate their requests to find those most consistent with our priority areas through a dedicated grants review committee reviews process, ranking each application and determining the level of funding.

International Mission

Each First Pres international mission team works with partner organizations to achieve mutual respect, to carry out Jesus Christ's commission to heal the sick, to develop relationships, to promote self-sufficiency, and to meet the needs of the community being served. The church's location at the edge of the University of Michigan (U-M) campus, the affiliation of so many of our members with U-M and other nearby colleges, and the high number of congregation members

who hold college or post-graduate degrees makes our church especially dedicated to supporting international educational projects and programs. Similarly, is our support for public health projects with our mission partners building on the number of medical and public health professionals in the congregation.

First Pres currently has educational projects in the Philippines, Haiti, Russia, Israel/Palestine, and Nicaragua.



An example of our approach to mission is our work in Nicaragua. In 2019, we completed the electrical wiring of the school we had built over the previous two years; then received a request from a nearby community to build a classroom complete with electric wiring. Throughout the trip our team reflected on, discussed, and strove to build and serve through person-to-person relationships – with our team members and the Quebrada Honda community.

During morning devotions and evening discussions, we reflected on the joy of actively including community members in our electrical work as well as listening to and prioritizing their needs, dreams, and goals for their school and community. Local residents worked tirelessly – drilling holes, gluing conduit, and



cutting wires. Working side-by-side with members of Quebrada Honda brought much joy. At the same time, we supported each other as a team. We formed friendships, encouraged each other, and openly discussed challenging topics with honesty. All involved in the project worked as members of the same body of Christ, each with their own gifts and functions.

Five-Year Action Plan, 2021-2025

We believe that mission should be pervasive in our thoughts and hearts at First Pres. To do that we must integrate the “why” and “how” of Mission into the life and culture of the congregation. The church has set the following goals over the next five years:

2021 Action Items

- Identify local social justice issues where First Pres can have an impact:
 - Racial injustice (see Appendix D)
 - Gender inequality
 - Criminal justice
 - Gun violence
- Establish a Social Justice Work Group:
 - Identify and support local, regional, and national opportunities for advocacy and community engagement.
- Identify who our “neighbors” are, and how their needs might inform local mission projects.
- Identify opportunities sponsored by other churches in the Presbytery and by the denomination that are consistent with our priority areas.
- Work with Christian Formation to integrate Mission-related conversation and activities into the Sunday morning curriculum.
- Utilize recorded video conversations with our mission co-workers and local mission partners that explore with whom they work and how we work with them
- Make volunteering easier for the congregation through better visibility of the opportunities for service and the more family focused work.
- Improve Mission Volunteer Coordination and Communication
 - Expand and improve information about mission opportunities, registration, and sign-up on the Mission page, and highlighting of opportunities for service on the Home page of church website.



- Use social media and email to alert church members to opportunities, and showcase the participation and experiences of others in the congregation.
- Identify mission and service opportunities that utilize the professional skills of our congregation to provide specialized and unique service to our community.
- Hire a part-time Coordinator for Mission Activity and Volunteers.

2023 Action Items

- Build better relationships with PCUSA related mission programs and area field organizations.
 - Welcome PCUSA co-workers and other mission field teams.
 - Support PCUSA special offerings.
 - Support NEXT church movement.
 - Engage the congregation in Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.
- Concentrate and focus our International Mission effort:
 - Assess viability of all current international mission teams, based on criteria established in Mission Re-Imagined, a document that defines criteria and expectations for mission efforts.
 - Only support new mission team opportunities that fully meet the Mission Re-Imagined criteria.
 - Review congregational involvement in mission work and feasibility of multigenerational participation in future mission team trips and activities.
 - Evaluate in-country partnerships and their ability to support broader engagement with First Pres.
- Develop a spiritually based Social Justice curriculum for all age groups that emphasizes the role of mission in our local community and globally.
- Identify advocacy opportunities in our priority areas with a vision of social activism at local and national levels enabling our congregation to bring meaningful change in the community.



2025 Action Items

- Develop guidelines to expand use of the building for programs that support mission priority areas:
 - Improved shelter support facilities for homeless men and women, and expand the program support to provide daytime usage.
 - Identify use options for our vacant property that support community needs.
 - Identify additional use options for unused and underused space in the main church building -- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, a space for counseling center.
- Continue to evaluate international mission opportunities and support a new international mission field project that matches the priorities and resources of the congregation.

Each of these action items will require the careful allocation of resources, both people and money, and agreement on what metrics will be used to evaluate progress toward reaching set goals.

As good Presbyterians, we have organized our goals and action items by year. That does not imply that we will wait until 2021, 2023, or 2025 to accomplish these goals – but that we intend to accomplish them by these dates at the latest. These goals and action items represent both a re-thinking of the church's current mission actions and the next steps in building a higher level of congregational awareness and involvement in local, national and international mission.

Perhaps because of our proximity to one of the foremost institutions of higher learning in the world, we often start our thinking with education of our members. Teaching our congregation the importance of feeding the poor, loving thy neighbor, and walking humbly are the foundational concepts that we will use.



These lessons are particularly important for the children and youth of our church who are just forming their world view. Working through our Christian Formation program, the pulpit, and all our mission opportunities, we believe that we can instill greater awareness and deeper commitment in both the current and the next generation of Presbyterians in our church.

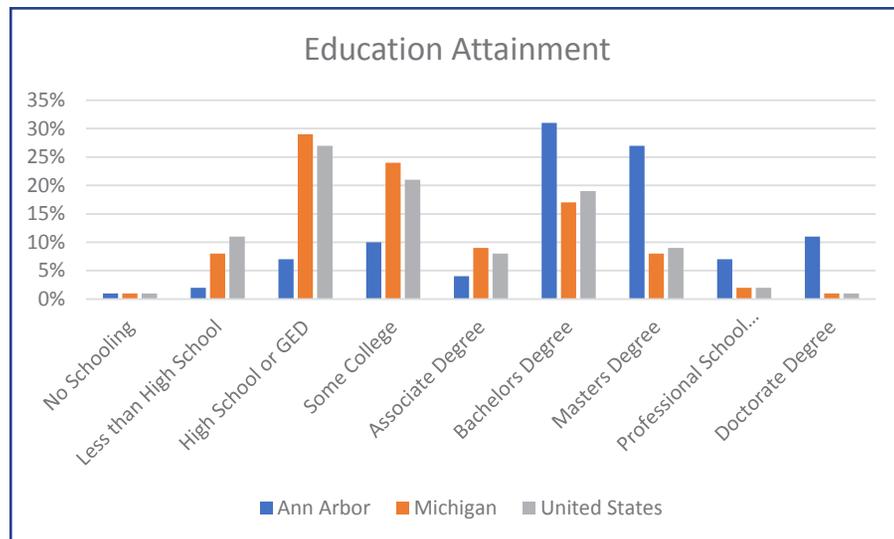
IV. Our Congregation – Who We Are

Our Community

Ann Arbor is located in Washtenaw County in southeast Michigan, approximately 40 miles west of Detroit. Founded in 1824, the City grew steadily after the University of Michigan (U-M) relocated here from Detroit in 1837. Over time it received the nickname of “Tree Town” due to its densely forested residential areas and parks.

Today, around 120,000 residents live within the city’s 28 square miles. One-quarter of Ann Arbor’s residents work for U-M, the city’s largest employer: 30,000 are employed by the university in health services, education, high-tech research, and biotechnology.

Ann Arbor’s affiliation with U-M and four other area colleges and universities make it a hub for excellence in education. That is reflected in the education levels of First Pres members: the percentages of congregants with Masters, Doctoral or professional degrees are double and triple national averages.



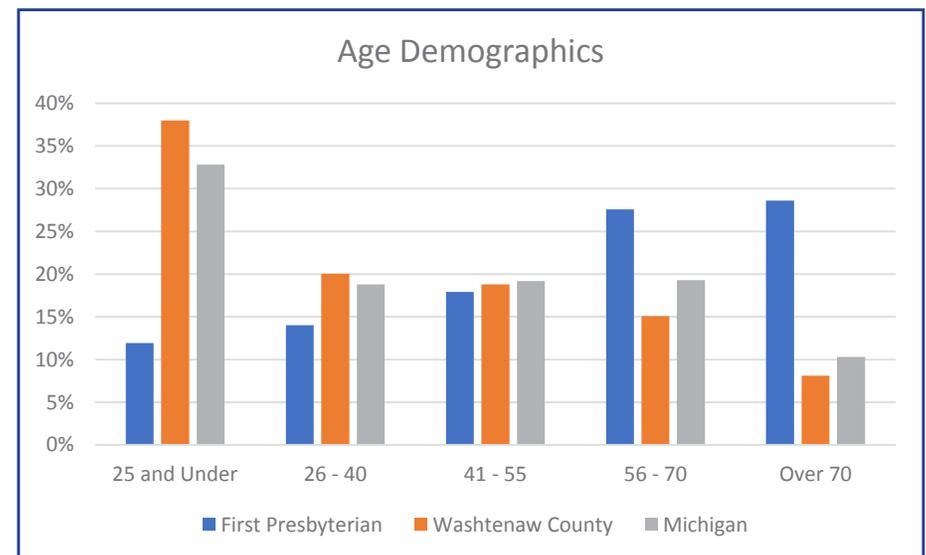
Our Congregation

First Presbyterian is a large church of 1,474 members. We have well-rooted worship and fellowship traditions which have kept long-term members loyal over time, and drawn new worshippers and members, including more than

30 retired clergy to our congregation. While First Pres has not experienced the sharp declines in membership and church attendance experienced by many mainline Protestant churches in the U.S., both numbers have been fairly flat for the past decade.

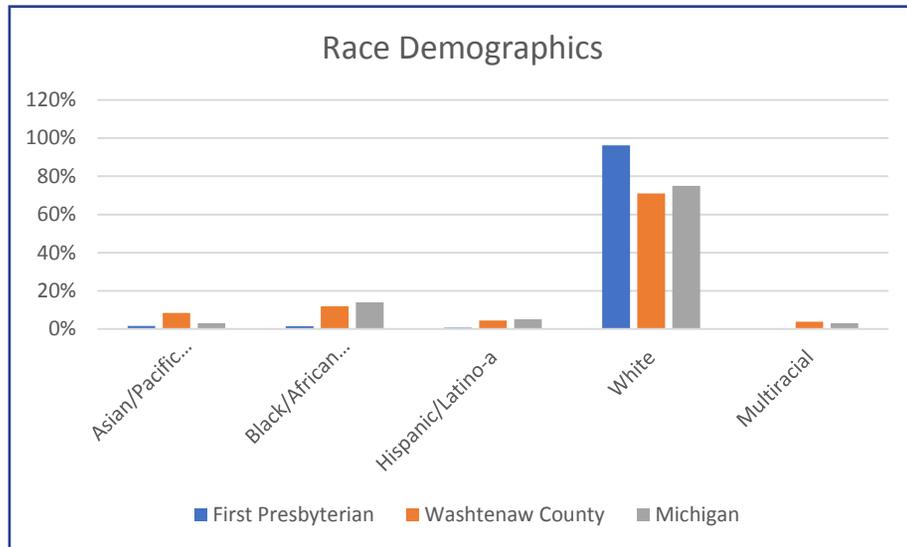


Like many established Protestant churches, we have an aging congregation: half of our members are over the age of 55; almost a third are over the age of 70. First Pres desires to do a better job of attracting youth and young families –

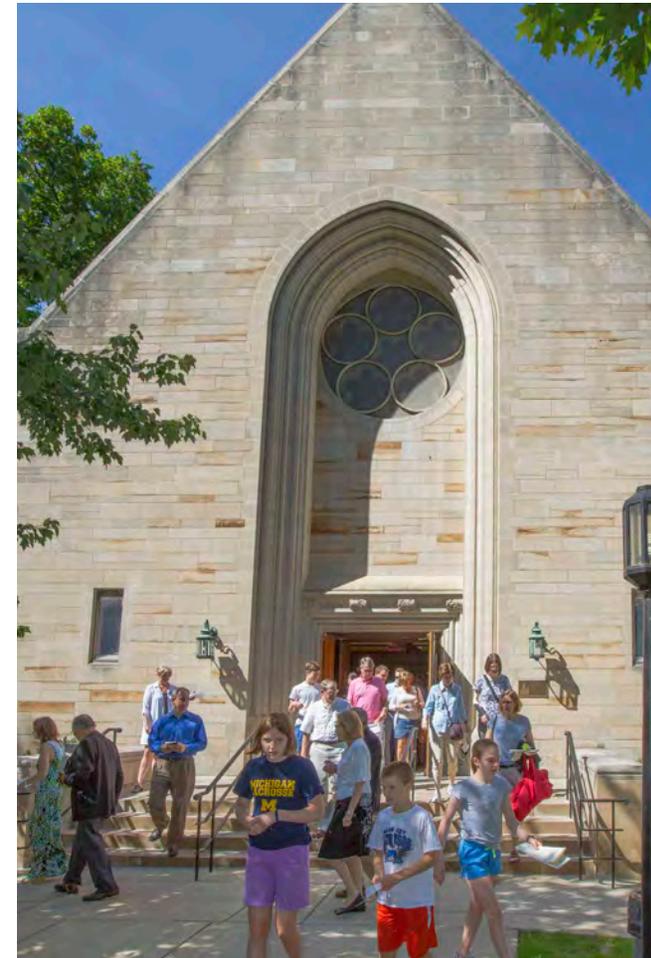


our next generation of active church members and church leaders. We have renewed efforts to nurture intergenerational relationships and activities, but we still have work ahead of us.

Additionally, our congregation is not as racially diverse as our surrounding community: 96% of First Pres members identify as white, a far higher percentage than in Washtenaw County or the State of Michigan as a whole. While we serve a diverse population, we do not represent a diverse population.



As a well-educated congregation in a university town, the members of First Pres value education, curiosity, and the diversity of ideas. While our church rituals are comforting to those familiar with Presbyterian tradition, we recognize they may not reach – and may even exclude others. Our unique Presbyterian customs of worship, music, and faith formation are fundamental to our current identity - but we are pressed to embrace brave changes to better serve the interests and needs of our diverse community.



V. Community Perceptions of First Pres



First Presbyterian Church is present in the Ann Arbor community through its local mission efforts and church programs that are highlighted in the Mission and Church Programming sections of this report. In order to better understand First Pres' place in the community without the bias of our own internal perspectives and to ascertain critical unmet needs, the Self Study Group sought the feedback of nine local leaders. Detailed methodology of how this section was developed is available in Appendix H which includes how local leaders were identified, selected and interviewed and how their feedback was analyzed.

The most important themes that emerged from these interviews are presented below.

First Pres is seen by many in the community as the “University of Michigan’s church,” not because of its engagement through campus ministry but rather because of its proximity and congregational ties to the school and the intellectual strength of its congregants. First Pres is considered to be an affluent and influential church; according to one leader it is “the place to be connect[ed] with people of money and political/social status...an important place to effectively network.”

Among local faith leaders we interviewed, First Pres is thought to have a well-groomed service with highly active and engaged associate and resident pastors. There is a perception that there is little to no responsiveness by our lead pastors to collaborate with these local faith communities. As one faith leader stated, “It appears the senior pastors do not prioritize having a collaborative relationship with other AA [Ann Arbor] clergy.” The church is also considered to have noticeable staff turnover, which contributes to challenges in collaboration.

Among the local pastoral leaders we interviewed, the commitment and engagement of our associate pastors, resident pastors, and deacons are considered strengths of the church. These local faith leaders feel the additional support and presence of First Pres is integral to their chaplain work, as one leader stated that

for the senior living community in which he served, “the number one spiritual identification is with First Presbyterian Church.”

Among local social services organizations in Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County and Detroit, First Pres’ biggest perceived strength was its strong base of volunteers who work together with the organizations rather than, as one leader stated, “... come in and setup what the church wants to do but find people to help you [the organization] with what you [the organization] want to see done.” We are considered a foundational partner to several of these organizations through deep and long-standing financial support as well as board membership. Though First Pres is not considered a diverse congregation, it is perceived of as willing to reach out to communities that do not look like itself and learn more about them.

For the future, local leaders we spoke with felt the most pressing challenges being faced by their communities include the great demands posed by the COVID-19 crisis that have exacerbated long-standing issues related to racial injustice, poverty, loneliness and mental health. They see racial injustice as the most likely area for increased collaboration with First Pres. As one local leader stated, “I see so much love and community in First Presbyterian Church, and see the power and potential [for it] to be a guiding voice for inclusion and desegregation in our community, and working toward anti-racist, anti-oppressive and [a] multi-cultural future for all of us.”



In general, First Pres is perceived positively and considered progressive, but there is room for growth. The HolyCow! Consulting Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT) results reinforce the church’s progressive leanings while also confirming the congregation’s intellectual strengths and socioeconomic diversity that leans toward affluence. While good financial standing and broad community networks are considered strengths by local community leaders, they also noted that these networks are not being leveraged as much as they would like to see for their organizations’ benefit. The CAT also raised the question whether First Pres has been able to develop an inclusive culture despite the socioeconomic diversity of its congregants. This question, coupled with the perception that First Pres is affluent and influential, challenges us to reflect on our mission and our profile in the community around us.

VI. Church Organization

In January of 2020, the Presbytery of Detroit released the Report of its Administrative Commission for First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor following the dismissal of Rev. Dr. Fairfax Fair. The report admonished the Presbytery of Detroit for mishandling the reference check process during Dr. Fair's initial call. The report also brought to light several failures in the church's organization, including the lack of annual performance reviews and personnel record keeping as well as extensive and inappropriate "information gatekeeping" by Dr. Fair in her role as Session moderator.

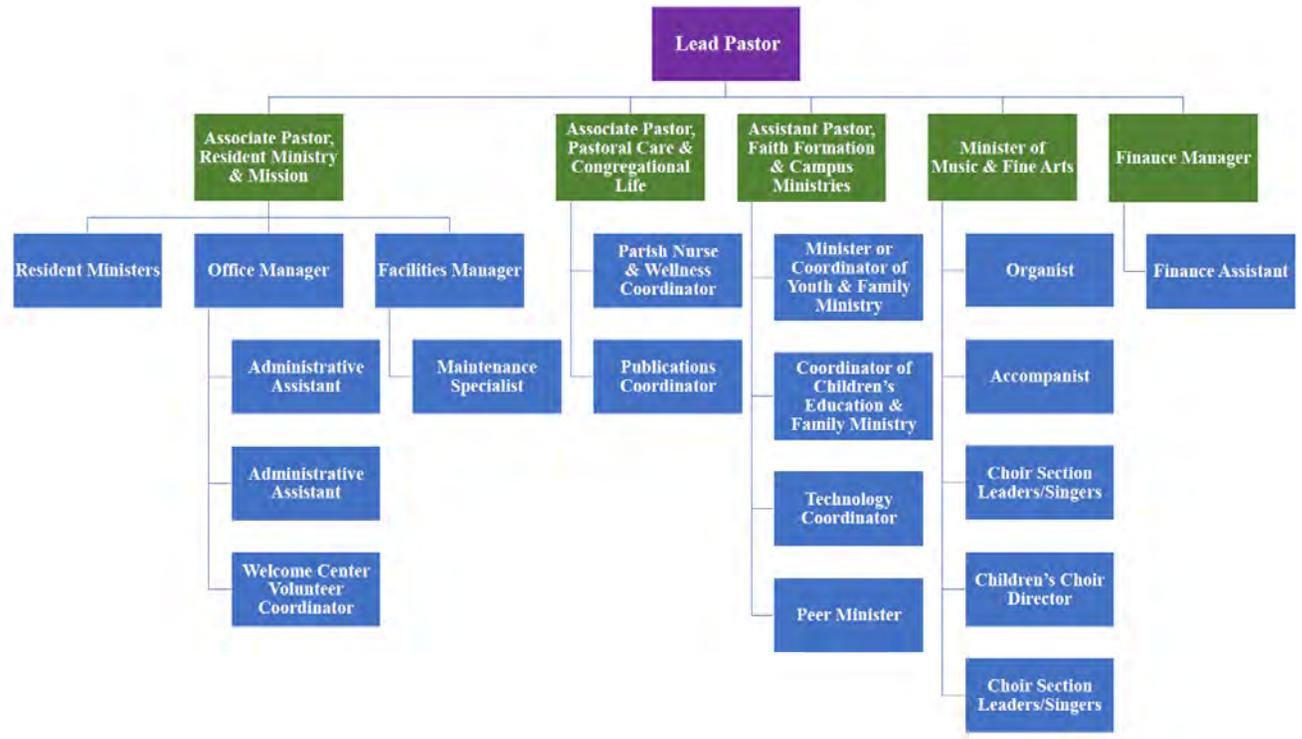
As a result of the Presbytery's report, significant church organization changes were made, including:

- a commitment to transparency, including publishing a summary of Session actions and committee reports in the monthly congregational newsletter.
- an emphasis on including lay leadership in many aspects of church life.

It is believed these changes will build a healthier, more collaborative environment for both congregants and staff.

In addition, the Personnel Committee worked with a consultant with expertise in church organization and human resources to update First Pres' organizational structure and responsibilities. The goals of this work were to clarify staff roles, responsibilities, and lines of communication, and define supervision responsibilities for the Lead Pastor and all other positions.

The consultant assessed personnel practices and policies, reviewed job descriptions, developed a new performance evaluation system, and completed a comprehensive review of the First Pres Personnel Manual. The results of this work were used to create an updated organizational structure, as shown in the figure above and listed in Appendix B, which describes each position in more detail.



A subcommittee of the Personnel Committee worked to update job descriptions for each staff position. Each job description defines position titles and duties and addresses who a position reports to and each position's supervisory responsibilities. This led to an updated Organizational Chart, the result of a joint effort of the Personnel Committee and pastoral staff and was approved by Session.

Moving forward, the Personnel Committee believes the Organizational Chart should have some flexibility for two reasons

- to allow Session to take advantage of each individual staff member's strengths and weaknesses, especially after a new staff member joins First Pres;
- to address new needs that emerge.

VII. Communications



The business of communicating news of the church with the congregation is a multifaceted endeavor involving numerous individuals and processes, both formal and informal. Its success derives from the close working relationships of key staff, a shared commitment to producing excellent and factual work and the long tenure of those who “know how things get done.”

A rough division of labor is predicated upon print vs. electronic information and, to a lesser degree, by targeted audience (i.e. mature ministries, mission, campus ministry, youth, and children’s outreach, which often involve both relevant ministers and staff).

A database of approximately 1500 members and several hundred non-members forms the backbone for dozens of mailing lists that need to be managed and kept current. The basic work of communicating the news of the church is highly successful, staff intensive--and mostly invisible to the congregation.

Beyond print and electronic transmission of the church bulletin and regular weekly and monthly publications, the church maintains a growing social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, and has rapidly developed “virtual church” to deliver weekly services on Facebook and YouTube.

With no lead time at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the church found ways to creatively replicate defining segments of First Pres worship services remotely – the sermon, choral music, communion, children’s lesson, coffee hour,



etc. These activities supplement the church’s longstanding presence on AM radio and offer possibilities for redefining and even extending the church’s reach in the future. This response places additional demands on a staff already stretching to cover all the bases.

In addition to print, electronic, and social media vehicles used to communicate with the congregation how they are most comfortable, the church’s communication efforts play a critical role in identifying and arranging responses to pastoral needs. The church takes particular pride in having established and maintained a



relational (or relations based) ministry of care, one in which members feel free to contact ministers, deacons, and church staff directly knowing that their needs will be addressed in a timely and personalized manner. This requires the maintenance of a finely tuned and supported “system” in which pastors, staff, and deacons all play a role. The church’s ability to succeed in this area benefits significantly from the tenure and broad network of its Associate Minister for Pastoral Care.

Church leaders agree that communications regarding church governance offers room for further consideration. There are, only recently, formal vehicles to convey news of the activities of Session to the congregation in the monthly *First Press* newsletter. This is, in part, a response to calls for greater transparency and has contributed, in part, to addressing some frustration in the congregation. A new Lead Pastor could help us greatly by providing additional direction in organizing, standardizing, and formalizing clear and effective communications between the congregation, Session and staff.

As with all church programming, the communications process at First Pres benefits from the commitment of dedicated staff who know they can depend on each other and on a shared desire to best serve the congregation. A new leader may find benefit in formally systematizing some of these activities and attending to long term planning and timely sharing of information needed for church publications. However, the foundation of this work—the staff—are masters at doing much with not quite enough in a highly collaborative manner.

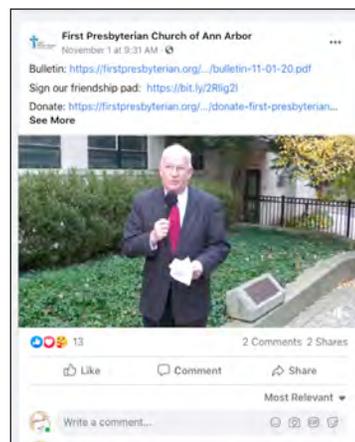
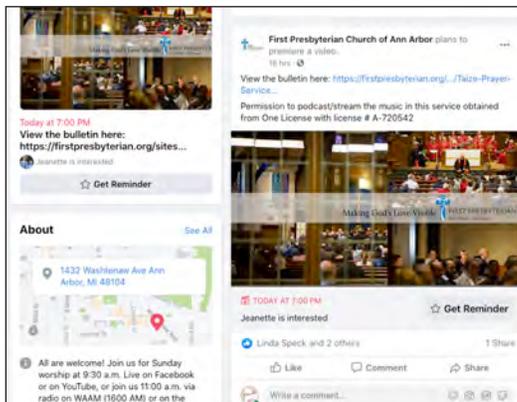
List of Church Communications

Several Times a Week

- [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) posts
- Phone calls (individual communication)
- Emails (individual communication)

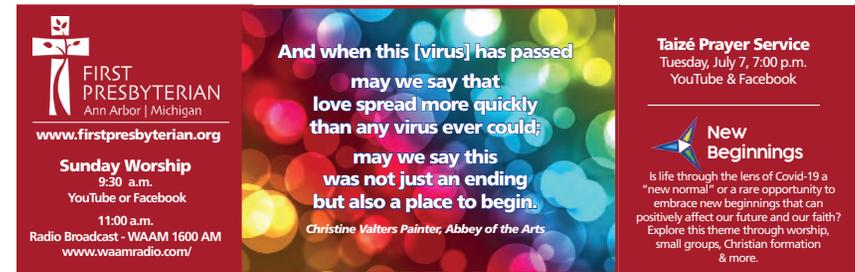
Weekly

- Sunday Worship Bulletin. Click [here](#) for examples.
- Worship service on [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#), and WAAM Radio AM 1600.
- *Our Life Together* congregational email with extensive announcements about worship for the upcoming Sunday, programming and scheduling, opportunities to get involved, and sign-ups.
- Numerous other weekly emails to target groups such as:
 - Visitors
 - Children & Family Ministries
 - Youth & Family Ministries
 - Adult Education
 - Campus Ministry
 - Deacons
 - Quarterly Financial statements (largely via USPS)



Monthly

- *First Press* [newsletter](#)
- Taizé worship service on [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#)
- Print ads in various publications such as The Ann Arbor Observer. See example below.



Annually

- Annual Report. The *2019 Annual Report* is linked in Appendix G. Click [here](#) to view reports dating back to 2013.
- Year-end financial statements (largely via USPS)



VIII. Church Facilities & Building

The current First Presbyterian church building on Washtenaw Avenue – the fifth for First Pres church in Ann Arbor – was built in 1937, consisting of the Sanctuary wing and a student activity wing (the Lemon wing). In 1955, after a 50% increase in church membership to over 2,200, a three-story classroom addition (the Kuizenga wing) was added and the student activity wing converted to use by the congregation.



Exterior of Nave

Forty-two years later, in 1997, the church built Monteith Hall, a one-story chapel, a multi-purpose area, and maintenance work area. As part of this expansion, a canopy was constructed on the west side of the Lemon wing, covering a new barrier-free ramp. At the same time, the Kuizenga wing was remodeled, and much-needed structural repairs were made to the façade of the Nave. A new Schoenstein organ was installed in the Nave in 1999, and extensive modifications to improve the acoustic quality of the Nave were completed in 2000 and 2001.

Over the past 20 years, the church has continually reviewed possible modifications to our facilities to provide better access to all levels of the building, covered drop-off areas for families and seniors, and enhancements to the worship areas to accommodate live streaming opportunities. A program of changes was developed in 2004 by design professionals in the congregation to address these needs and provide a better experience for new visitors to the church site. Unexpected changes in church leadership sidelined this effort.

In 2013, facing a choice between providing an endowment for the Resident Ministry Program or donations to a facilities and building capital campaign, the church resoundingly chose to invest in the Resident Ministry Program. A capital campaign was deferred until the endowment program was fully funded. The aforementioned changes in church leadership -- and lingering effects of the 2008 financial crisis -- stretched the timeline for fully funding the endowment and deferring much needed changes to the church facility. Over the years,

both member professionals and outside consultants have regularly revisited the specific changes that could be made to support our congregation and our programs. As a result of these ongoing reviews, First Pres has prioritized the following facilities improvements for the next capital campaign:

- A new vertical access that includes elevator service to all levels of the building and better egress from the Nave that improve movement among all levels and areas of the building;
- A covered drop-off area to better serve the needs of the church's large senior membership, as well as families with children;
- Air conditioning of the Nave and classrooms;
- Modifications to the parking areas, and improved traffic patterns creating a focused entry to the church; and
- Construction of a new "gathering" atrium to facilitate and expand opportunities for coffee and visiting with other congregants between and during worship services.

Additional choir practice, handbell choir practice, and robing areas to serve the choir are also needed but there is no specific plan for these needs.

The church currently has adequate office and classroom space to meet the staff and programmatic needs. The facilities maintenance budget is adequate for regular maintenance, and is slowly being increased to cover major maintenance priorities.



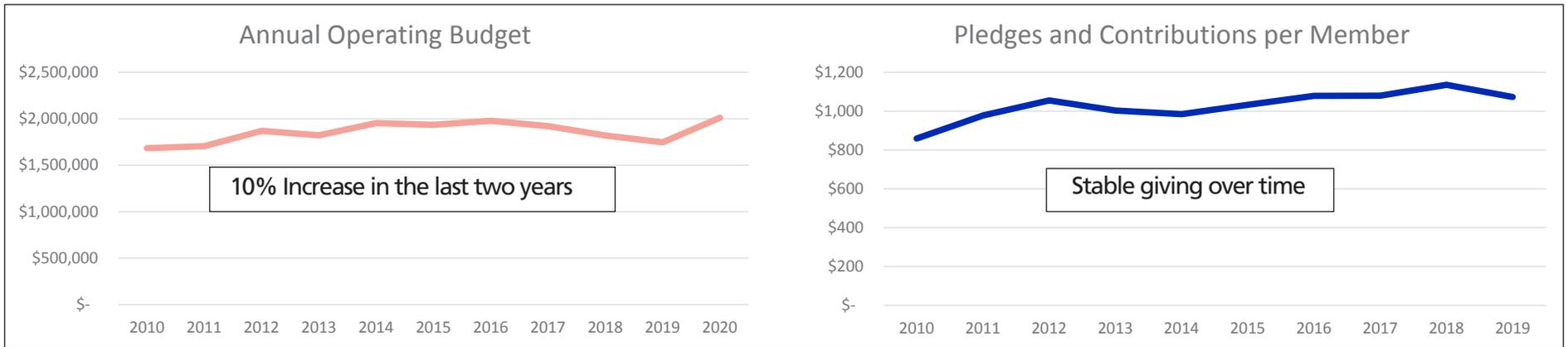
Nave from Balcony



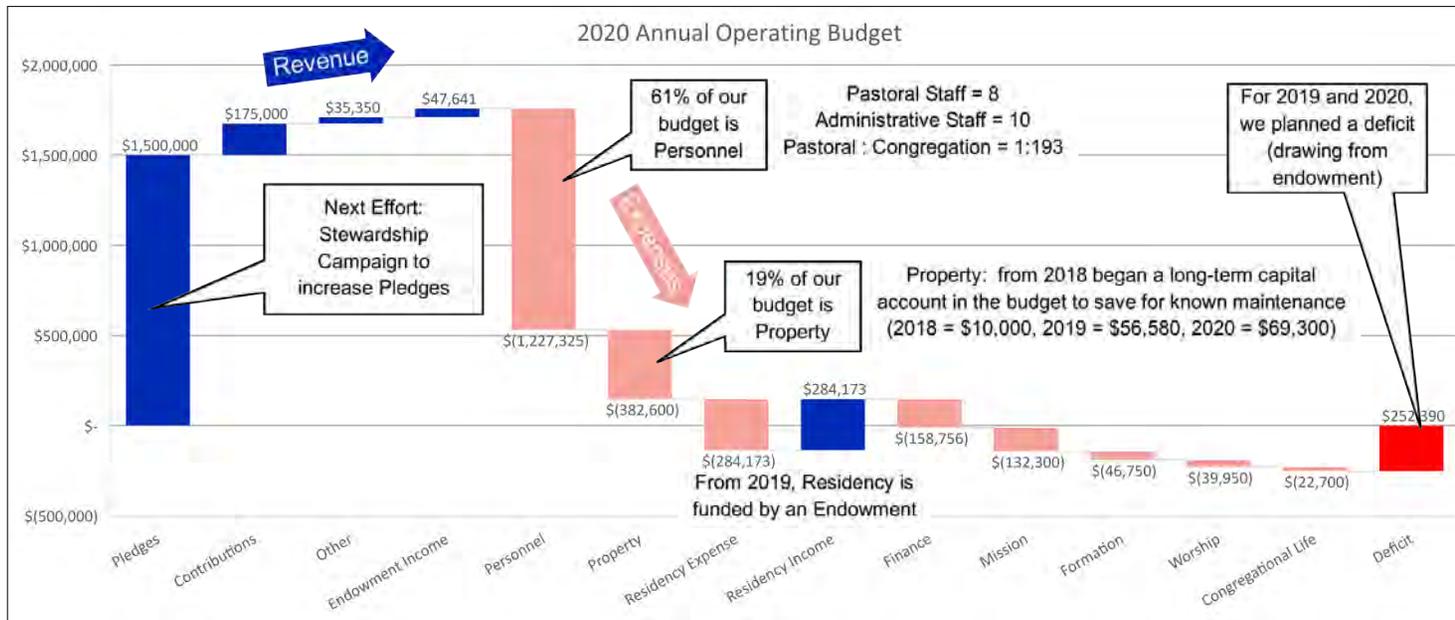
Nave from Chancel

IX. Church Finances

Since 2010, both our Annual Operating Budget and Pledges and Contributions per Member have been mostly stable. Beginning in 2018 our Total Expenses increased by 10%. At the same time, giving decreased slightly. We had to plan on drawing from our Endowment to balance the budget in 2019 and 2020, but as a result of unfilled Personnel positions in 2019, and decreased spending due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, we have not actually needed to draw from our Endowment.



Looking forward to 2021, we have to anticipate and address budget gaps if we return to our full slate of pre-pandemic programming. Personnel and Property costs (non-discretionary expenses) make up 80% of our Operating Budget. Rather than restrict or reduce programs, we plan an enhanced Stewardship Campaign to increase pledges and contributions.



A table describing First Pres revenue and expenses for the 10 years between 2010 and 2020 can be found in Appendix E.

X. Congregational Survey Summary



A critical part of preparing the Self Study report was seeking input from the congregation. To gain perspective of the church from its own unique body of people, and where they think it should head in the future, the Self Study Group arranged a survey of the congregation using HolyCow! Consulting's Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT). The CAT is a well validated, widely used instrument for assessing the condition of a church across a wide range of factors. The survey provides valuable feedback from members and insight into issues that are specific to First Pres.

The list of people invited to participate in the survey was generated from the *First Press* and *Our Life Together* email lists. Following HolyCow!'s recommendations, this list was revised to church members or regular attenders who had contributed to church life in the last year, would be able to complete a survey, were over age 16, and lived near enough the church to allow in-person participation prior to closing of the church building due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While most respondents completed the survey online, paper copies were mailed to approximately 40 people who preferred that option.

The survey response rate was 114% of average worship attendance. HolyCow! considers this response rate sufficient to provide valid results. The excellent response rate allowed the survey to be used to gauge congregational priorities, desirable qualities in a future Lead Pastor, and overall health of the congregation.

There was a notable difference in response rate by age. People 55 and over were 83% of the respondents to the survey and are only 56% of the membership roll. People less than 35 were only 4% of the respondents, yet they make up 21% of the membership roll. It is worth noting that at this time, the age breakdown of those in an average worship service is not known. Because of this, conclusions cannot be drawn about these discrepancies. In light of this, the SSG will recommend that the Pastor Nominating Committee consider the importance of reaching out to members under 35, as they were not well represented in the survey results.

Holy Cow! provided a 29-page report, "Vital Signs," with final results of the survey. Further data analysis reflection would be beneficial to Session, the Pastoral Nominating Committee, and the future Lead Pastor. A link to the documents from HolyCow!

including the Executive Summary and the Vital Signs data report can be found in Appendix G.

Also, a HolyCow! consultant met with church leaders in mid-October to provide an interpretation of the survey results. The Self Study Group, Session, and staff attended this two-hour virtual meeting which was very helpful for providing highlights of the survey in various sections of this report. Furthermore, Session will share survey results with the congregation at a future date.

Most notably, the consultant emphasized that the congregation is in a remarkably good position in terms of overall energy and satisfaction given difficulties in the recent history of the church. 53% of those surveyed are "clearly satisfied with things at the church," which suggests there is room for continued healing and growth.

The church is an aging congregation whose top priorities are to not only attract young people, families and new people in general, but to change in order to do so and engage these potential new members in the life of the church. The survey indicated that a new Lead Pastor as well as the congregation must be willing and able to attract and engage more of this age group in meaningful ways.

First Pres is considered an adaptable, progressive church with high energy compared to other mainline Protestant churches of a similar size. Caution should be taken because a higher energy congregation that is outward thinking tends to over commit to too many programs, overtaxing staff and members and diluting focus. Given the natural tendency for a church to try and be "everything to everyone," the congregation should be careful not to overdraw both its own and the church staff's time and resources. Therefore, a focused vision and identity could be important to the health of the church.

Additionally, those who self-identified that they attend less frequently or are considered by HolyCow! to be "on the fence" responded that the church demonstrates an average level of friendliness. This means that the church may not be as warm and welcoming as it hopes to be, but it could also be a trait of a thoughtful, introspective, intellectual congregation. It is an issue worth considering for outreach in the future.

According to the CAT survey data, the church has low theological diversity, is highly educated compared to other churches, and is socioeconomically diverse despite being perceived as affluent by community partners. It is important to note that the survey did not have very nuanced questions regarding theology and that some viewpoints may have been missed, suggesting the church may be more theologically diverse than was captured in the survey. Nonetheless, we were considered more progressive than other mainline Protestant churches of a similar size. Attracting diverse new members will take significant energy in light of these external perceptions.

XI. Mission & Vision: Moving Forward

The Self Study Group was guided by the Mission and Vision 2019 document (see Appendix G for full version) and the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) report, which outlines one, three- and five-year goals. We were also guided by insights from the HolyCow! congregational survey (CAT) and our own research in outlining our strengths as a church and where we see opportunities for renewed or different energy. All statements in quotes are from the Mission and Vision 2019 document.

We are guided by our Mission statement to **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.”

We feel our particular strengths as a church are:

- **Pastoral Care** – We are blessed with an Associate Pastor of Pastoral Care who knows the needs and brokenness of the congregation. We have long-standing connections with local nursing and memory care facilities. The **Deacons, Stephen Ministers**, and **Resident Ministers** are all disciples on this front.
- **Traditional Worship, Music and Art** – Worship services are a large driver of both energy and satisfaction at First Pres. We hold fast to our traditional roots, the history of high-quality preaching, and our Presbyterian liturgy, with organ, instrumental and choral music and hymn singing.



- **Mission Support** – Another driver of member satisfaction is involvement in volunteering. Our pastors help the church accomplish its mission by bringing out the best in people, and that instilled spirit encourages people to stay involved. First Pres has a number of longstanding local and global mission partners who speak highly of the collaboration.

- **Resident Ministry** – This is a unique aspect of First Pres amongst mainline Protestant churches: a two-year mentorship and teaching residency program provides three ministers just out of seminary with valuable pastoring experience. A successful capital campaign during Dr. Fair’s tenure fully funded the Resident Ministry program after original Lilly Endowment funding ended.



The last two years have been unprecedented in church history with the difficulty surrounding the dissolution of Dr. Fair’s call and the COVID-19 pandemic. While the church has gone through introspective learning and discernment processes, we have emerged with thriving programs, an energetic congregation, and a remarkable optimism as further evidenced by the results of the CAT. We strive to live into the lessons learned in order to continue First Pres ministry.

Bearing these good fruits in mind, we humbly acknowledge that to maintain a vital organization, one that embodies the Holy Spirit in its people and outside the walls of our sanctuary, and one that embraces all in the kingdom of God, there are opportunities for the taking in various areas of our ministry.

Vision Statement – Who we strive to be.

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.”

Seven 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.”

Challenges and Opportunities:

COVID-19 threw into sharp relief our unpreparedness for virtual and live-streaming worship. This stated goal of the SPG will require the coordination of a number of committees, including how to finance, operate and run live-streaming worship. During the buildup to live-streaming - and once the church returns to the three-service format plus live-streaming - we should be careful not to overburden staff, ensuring that there are policies and procedures in place to seamlessly integrate technology and new worship experiences. We prioritize high-quality preaching from our new Lead Pastor while valuing our role as a teaching church where we hear from preachers in training. 67% of Washtenaw County does not affiliate with a congregation¹. Since Worship is usually a visitor’s gateway to a church, it could be planned with more of an eye on those with no church experience if one of the congregation’s goals is to attract new members.



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.”

Challenges and Opportunities:

The CAT helped identify the priorities of different groups in the First Pres congregation. Most survey respondents were over 65 years

old, but those under 64 years old want opportunities that are more accessible to “life’s schedule” and culture meaningful relationships. One challenge is for newer or more “unconnected” members to join and/or form groups with more established members the church.

First Pres committees should be cautioned not to simply provide more opportunities for spiritual development but *different* ones. For each program, it will be critical to get input from its target members and have them represented in that program’s leadership. This could lead to novel, high-quality faith exploration and growth opportunities for all ages and understandings of Christianity, including adults with no religious affiliation. The most prominent factor for improving satisfaction that emerged from the congregation survey was having representative leaders.

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.”

Challenges and Opportunities:

The entire church would like to “work as an advocate for social and institutional change so that society might better reflect the values of the kingdom of God” and “expand outreach ministries that provide direct services to those living on the margins of society (i.e. homeless, immigrant, transient persons)” (from CAT survey). First Pres derives satisfaction from involvement, which is also a primary driver of energy. We urge leadership to devise strategies to incorporate more and new volunteers into these activities while not overdrawing the church and staff’s ability to help support these ministries. The SPG report outlined a plan to “re-think mission.” Difficult and visionary work is required to dig into systemic and institutional change, as partly described in the recent Session statement on racism (see Appendix D).



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.”

Challenges and Opportunities:

In an aging congregation whose priorities are to attract young people and young families, it is important to recognize that compassion looks different depending on what age and stage you are in life. A difficulty in a church that is laser-focused on mission and justice is a tendency to come off as unapproachable or impersonal. Being “radically hospitable” to all in this light is no small feat especially as so many in Ann Arbor are not affiliated with a congregation. However, outreach to those not connected with a congregation presents the opportunity to invite those without a church to join us in our challenge “to serve God with joy and to bear witness to God’s transforming love made visible in Jesus Christ.” The energy is there. How it gets applied is key to establishing a trusting culture of friendship and vulnerability.



Generosity:

“We give generously of ourselves, our time, and our resources in response to God’s generosity toward us.”

Challenges and Opportunities:

On average, our congregation members give 1.8% of their income to the church in pledged donations. Generosity to maintain the financial and physical vitality of the church is different from generosity of time and resources to support work outside our walls. As an older congregation seeking to attract young people and young families, different strategies may be required to encourage generosity of time and resources from all, not just a few. Age and stage in life may dictate if you are more able to give of your resources or your time. This should be taken into account for a congregation with diverse income levels and job responsibilities.

Diversity/Acceptance/Inclusivity/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.”

Challenges and Opportunities:

We are an overwhelmingly white church with a more progressive theological outlook than other mainline Protestant churches of a similar size. We are accepting of the theological differences in our congregation, but there may be a slightly stronger sense of generally progressive theological consensus at First Pres than in some other churches. Two challenges are to create an inclusive culture where theological differences are welcomed and where we can reach out to those in the community who are not affiliated with a congregation. Welcome, invitation and a sense of belonging demand introspection to determine if our actions accurately reflect who we say we are and who we strive to be. Welcome is more passive and invitation is more active so these should not be construed as equal. The notion of “all” needs expanding and expounding.

Transparency:

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

Challenges and Opportunities:

In light of a challenging few years following the previous Lead Pastor’s dismissal, the Personnel Committee and others have done extraordinary work to define job titles and roles and to establish methods for conflict management. These can’t simply be a band-aid but must be lived out. This requires transparency between leaders and staff, not just with the congregation, to address a history of staff turnover. Encouraging the congregation to demand transparency will be key towards continued repairs. And we will need to be transparent about policies and procedures governing what information is communicated to whom, by whom, how and when.



This is a bold vision, but then, Jesus was considered bold for his time. Boldness requires a leader with a creative and discerning eye towards prioritization to help the congregation effectively carry out its mission while avoiding burnout. For a congregation that has a tendency to try to “be everything to everyone,” this will be a challenge. Our new Lead Pastor should be aware of this and be able to guide us with sensitivity and grace. In the next section, we outline what other qualities in a new Lead Pastor will align with our congregation’s priorities.

¹ *mLive* [article](#) from September 9, 2019.

XII. Looking to the Future: Lead Pastor Qualities

The CAT survey provided members the opportunity to rank a range of pastoral abilities and attributes based on each person's thoughts of what is most valuable in a future Lead Pastor. When these results are combined with the priorities from the Mission and Vision 2019 report, as well as the Self Study Group's analysis, the following qualities were determined to be the most desired in the next Lead Pastor of First Pres.



Preaching

Overwhelmingly, excellent preaching was identified as the most important ability a candidate should possess. First Pres has a long history of dynamic, inspired preaching, and it is no surprise that this is a high priority for the next Lead Pastor.

Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is a vital skill of the Lead Pastor. First Pres desires a visionary who can inspire and motivate the congregation, champion change, and lead us towards our defined mission, vision, and values as well as God's plan for the church. This leader should be able to work with congregational volunteers who have an abundance of energy but are strapped for time; work within the church's culture of perfection and hyper-accomplishment; and have an understanding of and tolerance for human imperfection.



Change Management

Championing change will definitely not be an easy task. Thankfully, the CAT survey measures of the congregation's adaptability suggest that First Pres is willing to embrace change. Given the recent history of conflict, the church desires a Lead Pastor with excellent leadership, management, and conflict resolution abilities. Strong interpersonal skills are vital to seeing this through.

The ideal candidate would be an experienced collaborator who has the ability to create and manage partnerships within the church and surrounding communities. If First Pres is to work toward the increasingly important goal of being a champion for social justice in God's kingdom, finding a leader who embraces this goal is necessary.

The church also desires someone with a heart for pastoral care, for teaching, and for congregational mentorship. Especially in current times, a Lead Pastor must be ready for the importance that technology will play in our next chapters of ministry.

First Pres is seeking a gifted leader with a calming, spirited presence to lead a high-functioning church as we move from a period of recovery into a time of important and creative change in our church and community.



Acknowledgements

The Self Study Group would like to acknowledge and thank a number of individuals who provided valuable insight on the content and writing of this report. The group is thankful to:

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- The following community leaders for taking time to provide their honest perceptions of First Pres:

Rev. Matt Ackerman – Pastor, Campus Chapel

Rev. Paul Arnold – Chaplain, Glacier Hills Senior Living Community

Bonnie Billups – Executive Director, Peace Neighborhood Center

Rev. Marianne Danks – Chaplain, Trinity Health/St. Joseph Mercy Senior Communities

Rev. Faith Fowler – Executive Director, Cass Community Social Services

Rev. Bob Livingston – Senior Pastor, First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor

Naomi Norman - Interim School Superintendent of Washtenaw Intermediate School District

Ellen Schulmeister – Executive Director, Alpha House

Sarah Thornburg – Executive Director, Friends In Deed/Circles

- **Members and friends of First Pres** for completing the congregational survey and for hard work and discernment on a number of documents referenced in this report



- **Robyn Strain from HolyCow! Consulting** for guiding the Self Study Group, Session and staff through survey results and what they mean for the church
- **First Pres staff** for reviewing a large volume of report content, ensuring virtual meetings started smoothly and for assistance launching the congregational survey
- **The Session** for providing report material and for supporting the writing of this report
- **Member Beth Nissen** for her tremendously helpful editing of this document
- **Mary Jones** for providing creative visual content and for compiling report material into its current inviting format

Appendices

A. History of First Presbyterian Church, Ann Arbor

For 194 years, First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor has been a congregation serving Jesus Christ in Ann Arbor and throughout the world. First Pres history is recorded in the archives of the church and in three publications about the church. The most recent publication is a book *First Presbyterian Church and the Larger World*, written by Maria E. Montoya and Roderick M. Hills, Jr. The book describes milestones in the life of First Pres from 1826 to 2004. Excerpts from the book are provided for this report to introduce historical information that reflects the distinctive qualities of First Pres. More recent church activities are provided from annual reports and minutes of Session.



History of Social Justice at First Pres

“First Presbyterian Church has been an active participant in every movement of social reform from its founding in 1826 to the present day.”
- *First Presbyterian Church and the Larger World* (Ibid p.5)

Divisive Issues

“Sometimes the church’s congregation has been wracked with controversy over whether the church should take positions on deeply divisive issues, such as the struggle over the abolition of slavery, the political strife over economic reform during the Great Depression, the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, and the struggle for racial equality in housing. Sometimes the church has thrown itself into social reforms enthusiastically and unanimously, such as the 19th century movements for temperance, women’s education, and observance of the Sabbath. Sometimes the church has steered away from controversial positions, such as the abolition of slavery as the nation debated the Dred Scott case and U.S. participation in the Vietnam War.

But, whether it embraced a cause wholeheartedly or walked a cautious path, First Presbyterian Church’s congregation has never been able to

escape political controversies. Indeed, one characteristic that all of First Presbyterian’s pastors have shared is a desire for their congregation to embrace the world beyond the church’s physical boundaries. Dr. Ernie T. Campbell, First Presbyterian’s minister during the Vietnam War, perhaps summed up the church’s mission best when he preached during a 1967 sermon, “Loyalties under Fire: The Missionary Enterprise.” He noted, “No congregation has the right to debate whether it wishes to participate. It may ask “when?” and “how?” – but never “whether.” (Ibid, p. 5,6)

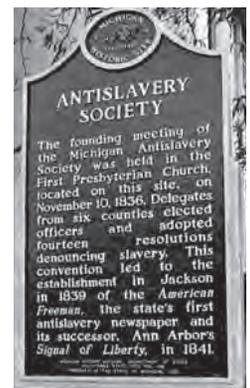
“The abolition of slavery was the most divisive issue the church faced in its long history, and it broke both the national and local church in two just as it divided the nation. But slavery was not the only political issue that would threaten to divide the church, as Presbyterians’ experience with racial segregation, the Vietnam War, and the ordination of homosexual clergy would reveal in the twentieth century.” (Ibid p.33)

Social Reform

“One of the overarching questions surfacing repeatedly in the life of the church in general, and First Presbyterian in particular, has been whether and to what extent faith in Jesus Christ should lead to social reform. On one hand, church members have been reluctant to elevate every political question into a matter of theological controversy. The church stands for faith in Christ, something more lasting and deeper than the season’s election, legislation, or political movement. On the other hand, Reformed Christianity has persistently maintained that faith manifests itself in works in the world. Church members have repeatedly found that their faith has led them to become involved in social reform, as part of the good works that God intends for their lives.” (Ibid, p.7)

First Pres involvement in the Larger World includes:

- Founding Michigan’s first Temperance Society in 1830
- Being a leader in the Sabbatarian movement to promote observance of the Sabbath
- Promoting abolition of slavery. In 1836 First Presbyterian hosted the first meeting of the Michigan State Antislavery Society, with 75 delegates in attendance
- Session adopting a “Covenant of Open Occupancy” in 1958, “. . . to promote inclusive residential patterns, mitigate “panic selling,” and stabilize our neighborhoods on a



non-segregated basis;" (Ibid p.89). In 1963 Ann Arbor City Council passed the Ann Arbor Fair Housing Bill.

- 600 members signed the "Covenant Book" in 1968, committing to the principal of racial integration. (Ibid p.92)
- Struggling whether to support or object to the war in Vietnam. Being no consensus on a position, the members agreed to disagree on a position. (Ibid p.97)

History of Relations with the University of Michigan

"Presbyterians help found the University of Michigan and the university's first two presidents, as well as other professors and presidents, also served as Presbyterian ministers. First Presbyterian would face many of its most difficult decisions and discussions about mission and reform as it dealt with its relationship to the university and its students." (Ibid p.7)

Highlights of the church's relationship with U-M include:

- Being a major focus of University of Michigan student life from 1881 and 1914, students were often half of the congregation of 1200 (Ibid p.34)
- Purchasing a building in 1909 for a women's dormitory to be used for the physical and spiritual welfare of University of Michigan women students, (Ibid p.49)
- A student minister taking 35 students to Detroit to participate in a May Day rally for worker's rights in 1934, resulting in the student minister resigning and the examining of the relationship of student ministry and First Pres. (Ibid p.57-78)



Campus ministry over the years has varied in scope and intensity. As the University of Michigan evolves so does the campus ministry program. Details of this unique relationship are expanded in the "Community Perceptions of the Church" section.

Notable Mission Actions by First Presbyterian Church

First Pres members have been active in missions from the founding of the church in 1826. Church members are weekly involved in carrying out local mission work, and throughout the year participate in missions as volunteers, advisors and board members. Some examples of First Pres mission activities are;



- Responding to the Black Manifesto and the Washtenaw County Black Economic Development League (WCBEDL) churches in Ann Arbor by forming the Interfaith Coalition of Congregations (IFCC) to deal with the issues that were raised. First Presbyterian committed \$60,000 to the IFCC to address the needs of the local indigent population. (Ibid p.105) The leader of the WCBEDL eventually became a member of First Pres.

- Underwriting loans for homeless families and being a landlord for a house for homeless families. (Ibid p.106)
- Providing Wednesday night meals for the hungry, assisting House by the Side of the Road and leadership in the Interfaith Hospitality Network. (Ibid p.107)
- Initiating the founding of a university level nursing education program in Leogane Haiti.

In 1997, the church embarked on the "Forward in Faith" campaign to refurbish the church and expand its mission outreach. A percentage of funds raised in the \$3 million campaign was used to support existing and new mission opportunities.

Mission continued to expand and in 2013 First Pres included 20 church sponsored local mission activities and five international missions.

More recent mission activities are included in the section on missions in this report.

Notable Events at First Pres

Resident Minister Program

Rev. Michael Lindvall is credited for having brought the Lilly Resident Minister Program to First Pres in 2001. All resident ministers are ordained or seek to become ordained after joining the staff. This program continues to benefit the congregation to this day.



A significant event during Dr. Fairfax Fair's time as head minister, was the ending of the Lilly Grant supporting the Resident Ministers. With the end in 2017 in sight, a \$5 million endowment campaign began in 2013 to provide support for this dearly loved program. Significant funds were raised by 2017 for First Pres to support this program with a modest contribution from the general budget. The decision to support the Resident Ministry Endowment precluded the pursuit of a capital campaign for building modernization.

Forced Retirement of Choir Director

One of the difficult actions that was taken in 1993 was the forced retirement of the choir director. It wasn't until 2002 that the church members learned of the reason for the choir director's leaving. In a letter sent in April 2002 to 2300 members of First Pres, Rev. Michael Lindvall revealed that the choir director had been accused of molestation at the church. The letter was reported in the Ann Arbor News and the New York Times. (New York Times, April 23, 2002, Section B, Page 7)

Vision and Strategy

Lead Minister Douglas J. Brouwer met with church members in a series of small group meetings called "Dialogues with Doug" in 2004. Through these meetings, members were able to meet him and begin a dialogue regarding church matters. The Vision and Strategy Committee expanded this process to a series of congregational group meetings. The results were the development of a new mission statement. Congregational priorities were also clarified as: faith development, connectedness and belonging, mission, worship, and targeted ministries (youth, campus students, and seniors).

Pastoral Care

The pastoral care program at First Pres was significantly strengthened with the hiring of a new Director of Pastoral Care, Melissa Anne Rogers in 2004. The

program has been increasingly meaningful to church members and others. Pastoral care has developed to be one of the significant strengths of First Pres.

Same Gender Marriage

2015 was a year of discussions and focus on the Bible's teachings on sexuality and human relationships. The Session unanimously adopted the following statement on September 16, 2015:

The Worship Committee moves that the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor affirm the responsibility of the pastors to provide appropriate pastoral care, rites and rituals for all members of the congregation and others who seek the care and ministry of the Church and affirm the use of church property and resources for any marriage, including same-gender marriage, that is in accord with the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and is legal in the State of Michigan. (From minutes of the Session meeting September 16, 2015)



Dr. Fairfax Fair Dismissal

In 2018, the Session began the process of dissolving the relationship of Dr. Fairfax Fair with First Pres. Additional information of Dr. Fair's dissolution is included in the Introduction and Church Organization sections of this report. The full report of the Administrative Commission investigation, which was started after Dr. Fair's departure and completed in January 2020, is linked in Appendix G.

Concluding Remark

Maria E. Montoya and Roderick M. Hills, Jr conclude *First Presbyterian Church and the Larger World* with this statement.

"First Presbyterian's history shows the difficulty and promise of engaging the world with faith. Like all history, it is filled with passion and error. But, as the church faces the continual struggle of faith and works, this legacy of good works and hard fights can also be a source of hope." (Ibid p.111)

Amen.

B. Church Organization – Details

First Presbyterian is blessed with a large and lively staff of pastors, resident ministers, leaders of youth and family ministries, musicians, and support staff. This large team of staff members each has a specific role to play to carry out the ministry of First Pres, as described below. And while some of the First Pres staff have served more than two decades, more than half joined within the past couple of years.



In addition to these staff employed by the church, First Presbyterian Church is served by a [Session](#) consisting of 24 elected and ordained elders, staggered in three year terms. Session is also served by the Lead and two Associate Pastors. In addition to meeting monthly to carry out the governance of the church, members of Session support numerous committees and work groups focused on many specific ministries by appointing liaisons, which are described below.

First Presbyterian also has a large, caring Board of 54 [Deacons](#). Deacons, who are ordained officers of the church, provide spiritual comfort and other assistance to a regionally-based group of member families in the church, called a chapel. The chapels are organized into four regional Quadrants to coordinate work across the region.

Deacons meet monthly to share information about church activities, plan events, grow in faith and fellowship, and gain valuable resources for their ministry. Deacons are one of the main points of contact between the church and its members to build community, lend support, share information, and ascertain needs. Deacons share relevant and appropriate information about church members with the pastoral staff so that all feel cared for in their time of need.



Finally, the church supports an active [Stephen Ministry](#), led by one of the Associate Pastors. A cadre of congregational members comprise this care-giving ministry of listening, where a trained lay person becomes a caregiver to a care receiver, a person of the same sex, who is dealing with needs, concerns, or struggles that would be made easier with support and prayer.

Pastoral & Program Staff

First Presbyterian has a team of 12 ministry leaders working together to serve the congregation and surrounding community. Each position plays a critical role in the work of the church.

Lead Pastor

The Lead Pastor is an ordained teaching elder with a strong sense of call and excellent communication, administrative, and interpersonal skills. A main responsibility is planning and leading worship, including frequent preaching and administering of sacraments. The lead pastor also provides direction and guidance to all pastoral and program staff, organizes and conducts staff meetings, and provides leadership and guidance for the church under the guidance of Session. Staff who report directly to the Lead Pastor are the Associate Pastors, the Assistant Pastor of Faith Formation and Campus Ministries, the Minister of Music & Fine Arts, and the Finance Manager, as well as the Clerk of Session.



Not only is deep knowledge of Reformed Christianity essential, the Lead Pastor must exhibit business and management principles involved in program administration, strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership technique and coordination of volunteers, staff and resources. Furthermore, the Lead Pastor should create a culture of affirmation and cooperation among church leaders, members, staff, visitors & friends.

Associate Pastor, Pastoral Care and Congregational Life

This Associate Pastor is an ordained teaching elder with a strong sense of call, administrative experience and excellent communication and people skills. The role coordinates and facilitates the congregation's pastoral and spiritual care and equips, supports and evaluates the care-giving ministry of the laity. The position's duties include planning, leading and preaching worship services, administering sacraments, working with Deacons and overseeing various programs, and this person oversees the Parish Nurse and Publications Coordinator.

Associate Pastor, Resident Ministry and Mission

This Associate Pastor is an ordained teaching elder with a strong sense of call, administrative experience and excellent communication and people skills. The role includes preaching and leading worship, administering sacraments, providing pastoral care, teaching, guiding mission and outreach ministries, and overseeing the Resident Ministry Program. This position oversees the Resident Ministers as well as the Office and Facilities Managers.

Assistant Pastor, Faith Formation and Campus Ministries

The Assistant Pastor of Faith Formation and Campus Ministries is an ordained teaching elder with a strong spiritual commitment, administrative experience, excellent communication, leadership, and people skills. The role includes preaching and leading worship, administering sacraments, providing pastoral care, teaching and overseeing Campus Ministry, Faith Formation, and Adult Education.



Located in a thriving university town, this role is a critical role at First Pres. This staff member leads [campus ministries](#), hosting regular activities for undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Michigan and surrounding campuses. These activities include relationship building, social activities, small group bible studies, and service opportunities.

Minister/Coordinator of Youth & Family Ministries



The Minister of Youth and Families leads [Middle School](#) and [High School](#) Youth Group activities. This position guides all aspects of ministry with middle and high school young people and their families. Emphasis is on creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, establishing healthy

relationships, offering opportunities for young people to grow in faith, crafting vital and effective programs and forging connections between young people and the congregation-at-large. Responsibilities include youth programming for faith formation in conjunction with the church, leadership development, mentoring, communications, pastoral care and administration.

Coordinator of Children's Education and Family Ministry

The Coordinator of Children's Education at First Pres leads [children's ministry](#) activities for those in elementary school and younger. The Coordinator guides all aspects of ministry with children from infancy through grade five and their families, partnering with parents, church staff, and adult volunteer leaders to organize and support events based on the church calendar.

The emphasis is on creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, establishing healthy relationships, offering opportunities for young families to grow in faith, sustaining vital and effective programs, and forging connections between young people and the First Presbyterian Church congregation-at-large. Activities include Sunday Schools, the milestone program, family fellowship opportunities, vacation bible school and support for parents.

Parish Nurse and Wellness Coordinator

This position is staffed by a Registered Nurse whose responsibilities include supporting the ministry of the Deacons, directing a health ministry, answering health questions, checking blood pressures, and helping with referrals and health-related questions. The Parish Nurse leads in identifying and meeting the congregation's health and health



counseling needs, and promotes the church's health and wellness ministry and maintains effective relationships with those served by the role.

The Parish Nurse interprets the health and wellness program to the congregation through a presence in worship and other gatherings, bulletin, newsletter, worship announcements and other promotional media, including brochures and an Annual Report to the Congregation. This staff member collaborates with Deacons, Stephen Ministers, health and wellness ministry advisory and older adult ministry committees.

Resident Ministers

More than a decade ago, First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor was awarded funding from the Lilly Endowment to establish a two-year resident ministry program to offer on-the-job training for early career Presbyterian ministers. This program was embraced by the congregation of First Pres who generously funded an endowment to continue on a three-person cohort of resident ministers who serve a two-year term.



The resident ministers serve a variety of functions to support the ministry of the church, including preaching, visitation, offering communion, leading education programs, working with Deacons and other program staff on specific ministry activities, and many other roles as needed. They have served as a dynamic team of energetic resourcefulness that evolves over time, bringing in new energy and ideas to the congregation in exchange for mentorship and training before continuing their pastoral work in new roles. Resident ministers demonstrate service to the congregation and devotion to learning the craft of professional pastoral leadership.



Residents are resilient and agile preachers, pastors, leaders, facilitators, counselors and administrators serving a large community of faith who bring fresh gifts of insight and imagination, and share a passion for the challenges of collective ministry. The Residency Program enables recent seminary graduates to build skills and

practices, professional and personal, to provide a firm foundation for a lifetime of effective ministry service. They receive broad leadership opportunities and responsibilities, and gain experience and develop proficiency in preaching, teaching, pastoral care, mission, evangelism, formation, administration and congregational leadership.

Minister of Music and Fine Arts

First Presbyterian Church has a long history of an expansive and energetic music program. The responsibilities of the Minister of Music and Fine Arts includes leading the choir, selecting the music for Sunday services (including hymns, songs, and musical performances), leading the handbell choir (the Sanctus Ringers), and organizing contributions from special musicians and the orchestra. Musical contributions become an even more central part of worship around holidays and significant events in the church calendar.



Additionally, the Minister of Music and Fine Arts organizes visual and fine art works to complement the worship seasons, and oversees the church's Music and Fine Arts Program, including all vocal and instrumental ensembles, organists, accompanists and Program volunteers. This position serves in a leadership role for all collaborative worship service planning and administers all concerts, special programs and fine arts projects and events. This position is supported by the Organist, Accompanist, the Children's Choir Director and Choir Section Leaders.

Organist

First Presbyterian's sanctuary is a wonderful venue for music and contains a large pipe [organ](#). The organist at First Presbyterian plays an active part in leading the church's numerous worship services and accompanies both congregational and choir hymns and songs. This is a part-time, salaried position for a musician who plays organ and piano for regularly scheduled worship services. Responsibilities also include playing for weekly Chancel Choir rehearsals and at approximately 50 special events annually.

Administrative Staff

A dynamic team of administrative staff ensures that the First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor is a highly functional and effective ministry. These roles include:

Finance Manager

The Finance Manager is the church's fiduciary agent in carrying out all monetary policies and procedures endorsed by the Finance Committee and approved by Session. This includes maintaining complete records of all financial transactions for the annual audit and ensuring all regulatory requirements are met.



This staff member is responsible for processing all receipts, disbursements and payroll, and for analyzing, reporting and interpreting all church financial information in an accurate and timely manner. The Finance Manager works with Facility and Office managers and Communication and Technology Coordinators to support the mission of First Pres. This position is supported by the Financial Assistant.



Office Manager

The Office Manager role at First Pres oversees and implements all Church Office administrative operations, working side-by-side with the Facility and Finance managers and Communication and Technology Coordinators to support the First Pres mission. The Office Manager supports the ministry of pastoral and program staff, provides coordina-

tion between programs/projects, creates weekly and special worship bulletins in both digital and print formats, and manages the membership module of the church database.

The Office and Welcome Center staffing are directed by the Office Manager, who responds appropriately to calls, in-person visits and information requests from guests, members and staff. Finally, the Office Manager assists the Clerk of Session and ensures accurate and timely congregational record-keeping.

Facility Manager

With a large and aging facility, the Facility Manager is a key role responsible for overseeing the maintenance, repair and upkeep of the church's building and grounds, and supporting the work of the Property Committee. The Facility Manager works with the Finance and Office managers and the Communication and Technology Coordinators to support the mission of First Pres. A Maintenance Specialist supports the Facility Manager in the completion of these duties.



Technology Coordinator

The Technology Coordinator guides the development, implementation, maintenance and use of technology to support and further the First Presbyterian mission. This staff person manages the church website and other internet technologies (email, social media, etc.) and designs and produces electronic materials as needed. The Technology Coordinator acts as a resource for staff and laity in planning, auditing and utilization of electronic mediums, supports operation of information, data and telecommunications systems, and assists staff and committee representatives with IT tasks, issues and repairs.

Publications Coordinator

The Publications Coordinator creates, organizes, plans and implements effective publication materials, messages and strategies to engage church and community audiences. This role supports church staff and ministry leaders in conveying their vision and communications priorities to appropriate audiences.

Administrative Assistants

First Pres has two Administrative Assistants who support the organizational, hospitality and communication functions of the First Pres congregation, staff and leader teams. These staff assist the Office Manager with general administrative duties, including: providing church staff support, greeting visitors, answering the phone, managing the church calendar and event schedule, organizing various special projects and application processes, keeping the workroom neat and well-stocked, preparing mailings, running photocopies and other tasks as assigned.

Committees & Work Groups

Committees are led by Session and carry out its work, being led by elders and including staff liaisons, and are populated by members of the congregation. In addition, First Pres' numerous ministries and programs are organized by working groups consisting of a few passionate members of the church who report to these committees.

CHRISTIAN FORMATION COMMITTEE

This committee focuses on shepherding the youth of the church as they grow through different phases of life. This committee is comprised of the following work groups.

- **Children & Families Work Group** - This group supports First Pres' [ministry for children](#) up through elementary school, including their families.

First Pres is committed to providing a strong church school program in which children can learn the fundamentals of the Reformed faith and begin a lifelong spiritual journey based on biblical literacy. It coordinates the incorporation of children into the life of the church in a variety of ways, and provides for the [education](#) of children. The staff liaison is the Coordinator of Children's Education and Family Ministry.



- **Youth & Families Work Group** - The Youth & Families Work Group supports the church's ministry to [middle](#) and [high school](#) youth with the Minister of Youth & Families. It plans youth gatherings, activities, book groups, and service projects - both locally and internationally. Our Youth

Ministry provides a safe, healthy place for young people to explore and grow a strong Christian faith, to connect with other young people and to support busy families. Youth gather weekly on Sunday mornings during worship, and have weekly evening meetings to build their own independent connection to the church.

- **Campus Ministry Work Group** - In light of its location in the midst of the University of Michigan and its students, First Pres carries out an active campus ministry led by the Assistant Pastor of Faith Formation and Campus Ministries, who acts as the liaison to the work group along with one Associate Pastor. [UKirk@UMich](#) is a UKirk Ministry, connecting it with the strong national Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) network of campus ministries. Students from campuses around Ann Arbor are invited to weekly meetings, on-campus social events, service activities, and other annual traditions.



- **Young Adults / T2A2 Work Group** - [T2A2](#) (Twenties and Thirties of Ann Arbor) is First Presbyterian's group for post-undergraduate adults in their twenties and thirties. T2A2 is a community where people from different life paths come together to grow spiritually through Bible study, conversations about life, and service opportunities. Typical activities include a Wednesday evening hangout, discussion of faith-related questions in a Sunday evening small group, and service and justice-making opportunities. Staff liaisons are the Assistant Pastor of Faith Formation and Campus Ministries and a Resident Minister.

- **Adult Education Work Group** - With the assistance of an Associate Pastor and Resident Minister, this work group leads a rich array of [adult education](#) programs during Sunday morning worship services and also coordinates self-directed study groups. Examples include study of the Bible, faith exploration, social justice work, book groups, a men's group, a [Presbyterian Women's](#) group, and others.



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE COMMITTEE

The mission of the [Congregational Life Committee](#) is to invite women and men to greater faith in Jesus Christ and encourage authentic expressions of that faith through membership and active participation in First Presbyterian Church by fostering spiritual fellowship in small groups and congregational gatherings. The committee is organized into four work groups, and is supported by one Elder and one Associate Pastor.



- **Work Group on Welcoming** - Welcoming focuses on hosting new visitors at First Pres by staffing the welcome center, organizing greeters, and collecting contact information to follow up with guests.
- **Work Group on Fellowship and Church Events** - This work group maintains a database of active small groups in the church, helps organize all-church events such as the picnic, produces an activity guide and assists with the photo directory.

- **Work Group on Inquiry and New Members Inquirer Identification** - The Inquiry Work Group welcomes new members by organizing new member classes, follows up with new members, and organizes a breakfast when classes of new members join First Pres.
- **Work Group on Communications** - The Communications Work Group oversees media activities for First Pres, including graphics and logos, branding, congregational communications, and outreach.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The role of the Finance Committee is to govern all aspects of the financial duties of the church, including the annual budget (including all associated funds and the endowment), special gifts, and the annual stewardship drive. Church funding typically comes through three sources: annual gifts (pledges and contributions), capital campaigns (for specific needs like refurbishing the building or endowing a program) and planned giving (such as gifts people leave through their estates). It does this in large part by overseeing the contributions of the following four work groups. Staff liaisons include the Head of Staff, one Associate Pastor, one Resident Minister, and the Finance Manager.



- **Annual Giving Work Group** - The Annual Giving Work Group oversees the annual stewardship drive to gather pledges for giving. Staff liaisons consist of one Associate Pastor, one Resident Minister, the Finance Manager, the Publications Coordinator, and the Technology Coordinator.

- **Endowments & Special Gifts Work Group** - This work group manages the church's endowments and special giving program. Their goal is to educate and guide First Pres members to make long lasting gifts to First Pres. The liaisons from church staff include both Associate Pastors and the Finance Manager.
- **Investments Work Group** - This group focuses on management the investment portfolio of the church's funds. The Finance Manager serves as the liaison from staff.
- **Technology Work Group** - The technology work group spends most of its time and energy ensuring ongoing technical operation including audio concerns for services (mics, speakers, sound board, podcasts, radio and web broadcast), website maintenance, telephones and internet access, and computer equipment, operation, and supplies. The Technology Coordinator, a Resident Minister, and the Minister of Youth and Families all act as staff liaisons.



MISSION COMMITTEE

First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor supports a large group of [mission-focused ministries](#), spanning communities both [locally](#) and [around the world](#). The committee itself is an active group supported by one of the Associate Pastors and a Resident Minister, and has one subcommittee focused on National/International Missions and another on Local Missions. Some are large and active groups while others may only contain a few members of the church, but all are focused on the vision of the mission committee: to use our witness to transform the world through God's compassion for all.

The committee's mission is to "go and bear witness to Jesus Christ in love, justice and reconciliation" in many different ways. This work is done via core values focused on partnerships, reconciliation, justice and advocacy, service, and sustainability. A long list of work groups focused on specific missions is provided below.



- **Alpha House Work Group - [Alpha House](#)** is a local charity whose mission is to support homeless families and their children as they build a better future by providing shelter, rapid re-housing, and other forms of support.

- **Circles Program of Friends In Deed Work Group - [Friends In Deed](#)** is a local charity focused on fighting poverty in our community by providing a safety net for low-income families in our community through donated furniture, a direct assistance program, and helping people find their way out of poverty. First Pres has had a long and close relationship with Friends In Deed, providing both funding and key volunteers across several different programs.

- **Cass Community Social Services Work Group - [Cass Community Social Services](#)** provides services to the homeless and disadvantaged populations of Detroit. It serves these diverse populations by providing for basic needs, including affordable housing, promoting self-reliance and encouraging community involvement and improvement. First Pres has been [serving Cass](#) since 2010. Groups of 20-25 members provide volunteer services twice a year. The spring trip is given to planting the vegetable gardens located near the Cass kitchen. Other First Pres groups have painted Cass buildings, weeded gardens, planted spring flowers, "rehabilitated" rooms, organized supply rooms, and sponsored parties for the children of Cass.



- **Community Action Network Work Group** - Members of First Pres provide support to the local [Community Action Network](#) (CAN). CAN works to close socio-economic gaps by providing educational and enrichment programs for children as well as support services for families.

- **Delonis Center Work Groups** - The Delonis Center is a shelter that serves homeless men and women—providing food and shelter, and also medical care and job skills training and placement, and counseling services. [First Pres volunteers](#) assist with dinner preparation and serving every Wednesday evening for more than 100 persons in the Ann Arbor community who may not get enough to eat on a regular basis. In addition, on Wednesday evenings when we cook and serve the meal, First Pres members also bring a collection of greeting cards, envelopes, and stamps for shelter residents, to assist residents in keeping in touch with family and friends. First Pres has work groups for each of these ministries. Also, at Christmas time, First Pres members contribute gifts of warm socks, hats and gloves to those at the Center.
- **English as a Second Language Work Group** - The English as a Second Language (ESL) Ministry is a collaboration with [Washtenaw Literacy](#) and offers English language and American culture tutoring for international visitors.
- **Family to Family Christmas Outreach Work Group** - Every year our congregation generously provides Christmas gifts of food, clothing, and toys for families in the Washtenaw County area.
- **Feeding Our Neighbors Food Rescue Work Group** - First Presbyterian's [Feeding Our Neighbors](#) Program has been operating since 2011. During the last eight years the program has expanded from just picking up the cooked unsold food at football games to include all Big Ten Basketball games and food from the athlete's kitchen. The football games contribute about 1,000 lbs of hot dogs, brats, pizzas and pretzels per game. Basketball



has about eighteen home games each year, each contributing about 250 lbs per game. In 2019 we rescued 20,000 lbs of food which went to Cass Community Services, Second Mt. Carmel Missionary Baptist Church, Circles, and First Presbyterian Church of Ypsilanti's Riverside Meal Program.

- **Habitat for Humanity Work Group** - First Pres supports the local [Habitat for Humanity](#) organization by providing volunteers to work on a local building project. It is a time of fellowship, and an opportunity to work with and get to know members of other community churches. And most importantly, it makes a significant difference in the life of our partner family: a tangible way for us to live the gospel and to help us become a stronger and more effective tool for Christ.



- **Hope Clinic Work Group** - One of the organizations to which First Pres donates both funding and volunteer assistance is [Hope Clinic](#) in Ypsilanti. Hope Clinic is a non-profit, interdenominational Christian medical and social services organization. It has several food programs which have been crucial in combatting hunger in the community.

- **Local Mission Grant Program Work Group** - The First Pres Local Community Mission [Grant Program](#) is a process that awards grants to non-profit organizations and ministries that care for and protect the vulnerable in Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County and Metro Detroit. It seeks to provide pathways and opportunities for disadvantaged persons to become contributing members to society and is particularly interested in partnering with organizations that meet basic human needs with effective programs to build communities. The program focuses on groups that tackle structural social inequities and are attentive to groups who engage in long-cycle solutions.



- **Peace Neighborhood Center Work Group** - First Pres supports the [Peace Neighborhood Center](#), whose mission is to provide programs for children, families, and individuals who are affected by social and economic problems. They help people discover options, enhance skills, and make choices that lead to self-sufficiency and positive community involvement.

- **Rotating Shelter Work Group** - Each January, First Pres opens its doors to provide sleeping space for up to 25 homeless men, organized by the Shelter Association. Members of the congregation provide evening and overnight hosts between 7:00 PM and 7:00 AM, and also provide a hot meal. Members also help by donating snacks, gloves, hats, socks, hand warmers, and new long underwear.

- **Nicaragua Mission Work Group** - The [Nicaragua Mission Team](#) works in collaboration with the CEPAD (Council of Evangelical Churches of Nicaragua) to organize mission trips to Nicaragua every one to two years, working with a local impoverished community to build classrooms for children.

- **Philippines Mission Work Group** - The [Philippines Mission Team](#) began in 1999 working with Habitat for Humanity in Dumaguette City with local and international partners. In five days, 30 homes were built with 22 First Pres volunteers working side-by-side with local Filipino families. Over the years the team has supported 70+ student scholarships, shared nearly a half million dollars of school supplies, built eight homes and two community centers, among many other acts of mission.

- **Russia Mission Work Group** - The [Russia Mission Team](#) has created a unique partnership with a Russian Orthodox Church in the village of Davydovo, Russia, working closely with priest who leads the community's ministry to children with disabilities and their caregivers. Some of the activities while in Russia have included building restoration, sharing crafts with the campers, working in the dining hall preparing food, and sharing in worship.



PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Personnel Committee oversees personnel policies, maintains a healthy and positive staff culture, manages a personnel evaluation system, and analyzes staff compensation. The committee addresses a host of issues including personnel practice and policy, maintaining a healthy staff environment, and managing the ongoing efforts of various search committees to fill open positions. The Committee also recommends all personnel policies and staffing decisions, serves in a liaison role to staff, and prepares guidelines for recruiting, seeking and hiring full-time permanent positions.



- **Resident Ministry Work Group** - The Resident Ministry Work Group consists of an active team of members along with an Associate Pastor who work to guide the [Resident Ministry Program](#) at First Presbyterian. First Presbyterian Church is a national leader in mentoring exceptional first-call pastors in the Presbyterian Church (USA). The two-year residency program includes a small cohort of three recent seminary graduates. First Pres residents jump into the work of full-time parish ministry on arrival in Ann Arbor.

From a core engagement in worship leadership, preaching, and pastoral care, residents explore other essential facets of ministry, with mentorship from senior staff, to develop their vocational interests and skills. Residents leave First Pres ready to navigate the challenges of 21st century ministry and to flourish in diverse pastoral settings.

PROPERTY COMMITTEE

The Property Committee oversees major property projects at church, including major repairs, capital improvements, safety issues, energy efficiency upgrades, grounds maintenance, and care of the Memorial Garden. With staff liaisons of the Facility Manager and an Associate Pastor, the Property Committee focuses on the needs to provide and maintain facility services for First Presbyterian.



- **Safety Work Group** - The Safety Work Group examines building security; maintains procedures for evacuations, sheltering-in-place, and other emergencies; organizes drills and trainings; and ensures safety equipment and procedures are kept up to date. Staff liaisons are an Associate Pastor, Resident Minister, and Parish Nurse.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC COMMITTEE - The Worship and Music Committee organizes many aspects of worship services. Activities include overseeing liturgical and visual arts in the church, preparing communion, recruiting and training youth acolytes, overseeing a Memorial Guild, and organizing weekly sanctuary setup, ushers, sound technicians, and lectors. The Lead Pastor, Minister of Music and Fine Arts, and Organist serve as staff liaisons.

- **Liturgical/Visual Arts Team Work Group** - The Minister of Music and Fine Arts helps to lead this new work group which works to create stimulating visual expressions of First Pres' ministry for – and with – the congregation.



CONGREGATIONAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE

With a large ministry to support, the church has an active [Congregational Nominating Committee](#) consisting of six members, is chaired by an elder, and also includes a deacon and elder representative. The Congregational Nominating Committee is an elected body that performs the search and selection of church officers for election by the congregation. This committee also selects special search committees such as a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) or Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC).

The committee typically begins meeting in February or March and may meet bi-weekly or even weekly in April or May when most of the committee's work is done. Usually the slate is complete before summer but sometimes the committee may have to convene to select candidates to fill vacancies that occur later in the year (if an officer has to resign for some reason).

- **Governance Task Force** - This group, served by the Lead Pastor and both Associate Pastors, is working to compile a complete manual of administrative operations and policies for the Session and its committees.
- **Strategic Planning Group** - Currently a Strategic Planning Group is working to build a plan that expresses the long range vision of First Presbyterian for its mission, staff, facilities, programs, and other factors. Liaisons from staff are the Lead Pastor and both Associate Pastors.

C. Church Calendar

<p>11 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 9:00 AM Prayer Room--Zoom 9:30 AM Worship Service--YouTube/Facebook 10:30 AM Children's Choir--Virtual 10:30 AM Virtual Coffee Hour--zoom 11:00 AM Children & Youth Christian Formation Classes Online 11:00 AM Confirmation Class--Zoom 11:00 AM First Friends--zoom 11:00 AM Worship Service--Radio WAAM 1600AM/waamradio.com 12:00 PM Prayer Room--Zoom 12:00 PM Tell Me More About this Church--Zoom 12:15 PM Exploring the Faith--Zoom 12:15 PM UKirk College Lunch 12:30 PM New Officer Training--zoom 1:00 PM Nominating Committee (CNC)--Zoom 2:00 PM Taiwanese Presbyterian Church Worship (currently off-site) 3:00 PM T2A2 Small Group--in-person and virtual 4:00 PM Blessing of the Animals Drive Through Event 4:00 PM Blessing of the Animals Outdoor Worship--sign up/pre-registration required 5:00 PM The Bible with Rev Ed Koster--Zoom 7:00 PM Self-Study Group Meeting--Zoom 7:00 PM Virtual Youth Group--Zoom</p>	<p>12 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 10:00 AM Recording of Body, Mind, and Spirit II 10:00 AM Tea with the Residents--Facebook 12:00 PM Technology Work Group--zoom 1:30 PM Staff Bulletin Review--Zoom 2:00 PM Staff Worship Planning--zoom 3:00 PM Faith Formation Team Meeting--Zoom 4:00 PM Parish Nurse Search Committee--zoom 4:00 PM Personnel Meeting--Zoom 5:30 PM Worship Committee Meeting--Zoom 6:00 PM Congregational Life Meeting--Zoom 7:00 PM Sanctus Ringers Handbell Rehearsal 7:00 PM Stephen Ministry Continuing Education--Zoom</p>	<p>13 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 5:00 PM Ann Arbor Youth Chorale Rehearsals 7:00 PM HolyCow Survey Interpretation for Session--zoom</p>	<p>14 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 9:30 AM Pastoral & Program Staff Meeting--Zoom 10:00 AM Staff Worship and Meeting--Zoom 10:30 AM PW William Barclay Bible Study--zoom 4:00 PM Recommendations for Re-opening Work Group--Zoom 7:00 PM Board of Deacons Meeting--Zoom 7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal--Zoom 8:00 PM UKirk Wed@8 College Group--Zoom</p>	<p>15 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 9:00 AM Flower Delivery for Sunday Recording 9:00 AM RM Cohort Meeting--Zoom 12:00 PM Admin Staff Huddle--Ring Central 5:30 PM Sunday service recording 7:00 PM Deacons Pick up flowers for delivery</p>	<p>16 Building Closed/In-person events suspended Habitat House of Faith Work Day 8:00 AM Men's Study Group--Zoom 10:30 AM CROSSROADS Conversations on Race and Racism--Zoom</p>	<p>17 Building Closed/In-person events suspended</p>
<p>18 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 9:00 AM Prayer Room--Zoom 9:30 AM Worship Service--YouTube/Facebook 10:30 AM Children's Choir--Virtual 10:30 AM Virtual Coffee Hour--zoom 11:00 AM Children & Youth Christian Formation Classes Online 11:00 AM Confirmation Class--Zoom 11:00 AM First Friends--zoom 11:00 AM Worship Service--Radio WAAM 1600AM/waamradio.com 12:00 PM FastTrack to Membership--Zoom 12:00 PM Prayer Room--Zoom 12:15 PM Exploring the Faith--Zoom 12:15 PM UKirk College Lunch 12:30 PM New Officer Training--zoom 2:00 PM In-Person Youth Group 2:00 PM Taiwanese Presbyterian Church Worship (currently off-site) 3:00 PM T2A2 Small Group--in-person and virtual 4:00 PM Outdoor Worship--sign up/pre-registration required 4:00 PM Parish Nurse Search Committee--zoom 5:00 PM The Bible with Rev Ed Koster--Zoom</p>	<p>19 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 10:00 AM Tea with the Residents--Facebook 12:00 PM Technology Work Group--zoom 1:30 PM Staff Bulletin Review--Zoom 2:00 PM Staff Worship Planning--zoom 3:00 PM Faith Formation Team Meeting--Zoom 7:00 PM Finance Committee--GoToMeeting 7:00 PM Sanctus Ringers Handbell Rehearsal</p>	<p>20 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 11:00 AM Small Group Meeting 5:00 PM Ann Arbor Youth Chorale Rehearsals 7:00 PM Body, Mind, Spirit--View via Facebook or YouTube 7:00 PM Self-Study Group Meeting--Zoom</p>	<p>21 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 9:30 AM Pastoral & Program Staff Meeting--Zoom 10:00 AM Staff Worship and Meeting--Zoom 10:30 AM PW William Barclay Bible Study--zoom 12:00 PM Strengthening Ourselves & Strengthening Others Series--Zoom 12:15 PM Photos in Sanctuary--Paul Keller 3:00 PM Local Mission Committee Meeting--Zoom 4:00 PM Recommendations for Re-opening Work Group--Zoom 7:00 PM Session--zoom</p>	<p>22 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 9:00 AM Flower Delivery for Sunday Recording 9:00 AM RM Cohort Meeting--Zoom 11:30 AM Journeys Bible Study--Zoom 12:00 PM Admin Staff Huddle--Ring Central 5:30 PM Sunday service recording 7:00 PM Deacons Pick up flowers for delivery</p>	<p>23 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 10:30 AM CROSSROADS Conversations on Race and Racism--Zoom</p>	<p>24 Building Closed/In-person events suspended 9:00 AM Youth Alpha House Work Day</p>

This is a screenshot of the church calendar for the weeks of October 11- October 24, 2020 to give an idea of the weekly goings on in the church.



D. Session Resolution on Racism

Published in *First Press* September 2020 issue.

The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor, in consideration of 'A Statement from the Special Committee on Racism, Truth and Reconciliation' by our denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), establishes the following goals for the work that is ours to do as a congregation:

Note: *The words in italics are direct quotations from the PC(USA) statement.*

As followers of Jesus Christ, who loves all and calls us to challenge the unjust structures of church and society, we are called to work for justice and peace for all God's people.

We the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor affirm that:

- God's abiding truth is this: every human being is created in the image of God and therefore has intrinsic, and equal, value and worth.
- As Christians we must be guided by the unconditional love that Christ has for each of us, no matter our race.
- Racism is an utter rejection of what God intends for humanity; insinuating that some of God's children are less worthy than others.
- Now is the time for First Presbyterian Church to renew our commitment to abolish systemic racism and white privilege, and to work for lasting justice and equality.
- Relying on the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, we vow to continue to reflect and repent, to study and to advocate, to change and to grow and to work to achieve complete racial equality in our world. Black Lives Matter*

** Black Lives Matter is an expression and should not be construed to imply our acceptance of or allegiance to the #Black Lives Matter Movement.*

The Session is committed to addressing the inequities of Racism and Injustice through the work of each committee and all the ministries of our church.

We call for our congregation to commit to engaging in the work and practice of eliminating racism.

- To ensure that racial justice remains a part of our confessions and worship
- To include racial justice in the Christian formation program for all ages
- To continue to share the work of social transformation with our neighbors in our mission field

We call each member of our congregation to a season of repentance for its complicity in the horrific history and unjust treatment of people of color, which continues to this day.

- To further their individual journey by reading, learning, dialogue and action
- To take the 21-Day Equity Challenge to further our self-awareness, education, and action

We call for white people to recognize their privilege in society and engage in the work of eliminating racism and racist acts against people of color.

- To engage in study and reflection on the injustice of white privilege individually, communally and as a congregation, through discernment and prayer
- To engage thoughtfully and with sensitivity in dialogue with people of color
- To examine the ways in which white privilege has permeated First Pres and begin the work of dismantling these inequities

E. Church Finances: Revenue/ Expenses 2010 - 2020

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Est.)
Pledge Receipts	1,360,164	1,404,817	1,504,183	1,479,996	1,500,618	1,563,600	1,601,476	1,526,110	1,567,267	1,477,273	1,500,000
Contributions	191,187	164,218	165,177	165,406	132,489	161,759	185,943	233,857	201,068	177,857	175,000
Resident Ministry Program (note 1)	9,100	10,100	10,100	12,225	11,225	10,471	12,225	12,225	12,225	243,914	284,173
Other Income	105,522	96,138	123,115	91,121	131,084	81,251	90,513	149,132	130,536	130,330	82,992
Defecit/(Surplus) Endowment Xfer	16,753	30,000	66,627	74,000	178,678	117,472	88,352	-	(90,917)	-	252,389
Total Revenue	1,682,726	1,705,273	1,869,202	1,822,748	1,954,094	1,934,553	1,978,509	1,921,324	1,820,179	2,029,374	2,294,554
Personnel	970,353	1,006,806	1,030,422	1,011,996	1,197,539	1,172,194	1,151,694	1,159,335	1,097,583	1,039,078	1,227,325
Resident Ministry Program (note 1)	20,500	27,000	120,000	120,382	120,832	108,218	117,713	62,380	-	283,058	284,173
Property	240,337	236,905	236,927	224,904	242,404	263,249	290,440	284,454	295,399	316,239	373,800
Other Expenses	451,536	434,562	481,853	465,466	393,319	390,892	418,662	415,155	427,197	390,998	409,256
Total Expenses	1,682,726	1,705,273	1,869,202	1,822,748	1,954,094	1,934,553	1,978,509	1,921,324	1,820,179	2,029,373	2,294,554
Membership	1,805	1,604	1,583	1,641	1,658	1,671	1,657	1,629	1,556	1,542	1,474
Avg Worship Attendance (total for all services)	643	650	679	648	620	593	586	559	525	514	
As a percent of Membership	36%	41%	43%	39%	37%	35%	35%	34%	34%	33%	
Pedge Receipts & Contributions/Member	\$ 859	\$ 978	\$ 1,055	\$ 1,003	\$ 985	\$ 1,033	\$ 1,079	\$ 1,080	\$ 1,136	\$ 1,073	
Year-End Balances											
RM Endowment Balance	96,916	463,571	800,393	1,368,932	2,625,273	2,951,357	3,610,066	4,335,512	4,184,352	4,697,748	
Endowment Non-RM Restricted	1,268,920	1,384,204	1,214,121	1,830,357	947,977	911,638	995,028	1,581,678	1,447,049	1,953,307	
Endowment Unrestricted	809,352	714,611	787,913	763,536	1,182,043	916,620	882,975	1,039,665	1,011,389	1,006,237	
Total Endowment	2,175,188	2,562,386	2,802,427	3,962,825	4,755,293	4,779,615	5,488,069	6,956,855	6,642,790	7,657,292	
Cash on Hand - FPC Operating (note 2)	636,144	646,171	508,984	553,560	526,324	133,302	138,399	309,020	175,263	232,106	
Short Term Investments (note 2)	558	837	30,589	31,838	50,735	717,651	847,902	477,896	561,484	541,027	
Total Liquid Funds on Hand	636,702	647,008	539,573	585,398	577,059	850,953	986,301	786,916	736,747	773,133	

Note 1: The Resident Ministry Program was funded nearly 100% with grants from the Lilly Endowment Inc. from 2000-2011. It was funded 50% by the Lilly Endowment from 2012 to 2017. Residual Lilly grants funded the program into 2018. 2019 was the first year the program was funded entirely by First Pres.

Note 2: In 2015, the Finance Committee decided to transfer the majority of the church's cash balances to short term investments, such as CDs, where they could earn some investment income. The overall year-end cash balances fluctuate based on changes in Accounts Payable. Year-end ST investment levels fluctuate based on the amount by which members pay their pledges through gifts of securities, and also by what proportion of the following year's pledges are paid in advance.



F. Church during COVID-19 Pandemic

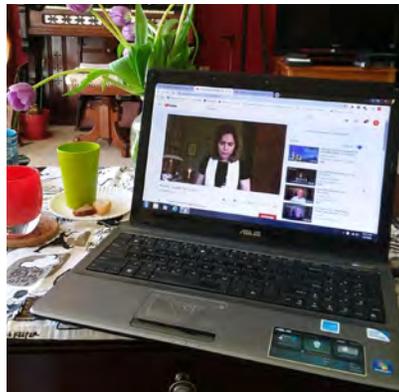
Church Building Closed

In late March 2020 First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor closed the church building according to a directive issued by the governor of Michigan. At that time only personnel responsible for essential maintenance were allowed to enter the church. Based on CDC and public health recommendations, as well as state and local guidelines, all other personnel including pastors, staff and parishioners were required to work remotely.

In addition, all church committees and various organized church groups including Session, Deacons, Stephen Ministry and all standing committees began to hold virtual meetings, often through Zoom Video Communications. Numerous other First Pres church groups including the Strategic Planning Group and the Self Study Group also held regularly scheduled meetings via Zoom.

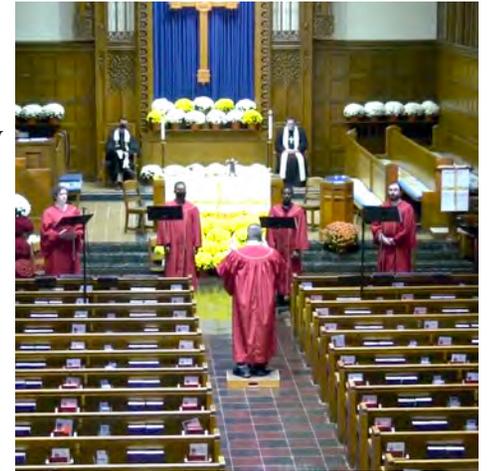
Going Virtual

Almost immediately the pastoral staff and all relevant support personnel mounted an effort to bring First Pres worship services to the congregation in an on-line format. Initially, these worship services were taped in advance from participating individuals' home sites, edited together and broadcast via Facebook and YouTube on Sunday mornings at 9:30 AM. We also continued our traditional broadcast on WAAM radio at 11:00 AM.



In addition to the online worship service, a worship service bulletin, friendship pad, and opportunities to provide an offering to the church were available. Also available was a live “virtual coffee hour” immediately following the 9:30 AM service in which any number of viewers could join in a “real time” conversation with other worshippers. Other electronic media options were added to keep people connected including Taizé worship services, Zoom for Adult Education, Bedtime Stories for Children, Staff Videos, Blog Posts, etc.

When the state mandate allowed for small group gatherings indoors (initially up to 10 people), worship services were videotaped on Thursday evenings using the church sanctuary. Among other things, this new freedom allowed for more creative choir music, church organ accompaniment and a traditional presentation of the Sacrament of Communion. Viewing the service from our sanctuary was a welcome change and well received by our congregation.



Reopening

In April 2020 Session established the Reopening Recommendations Work Group (RRWG). This group, Co-Chaired by the Assistant Pastor of Faith Formation and Campus Ministries and a Professor Emeritus from the U-M School of Public Health, included four staff members, elders, deacons, health care professionals and a member active in children’s ministry. Session’s charge to the RRWG was to offer recommendations regarding safely reopening the church building, including public health guided precautions and protocols that should be in place at each phase of re-entry.

In May 2020 the RRWG surveyed the congregation to assess their comfort level in returning to the church building for small and larger group activities as well as their satisfaction with current on-line worship and other church-related opportunities available through electronic media.

The survey results, representing over 400 responders, were presented to Session in June 2020. In addition, the RRWG presented a Recommended Framework for Keeping Safe as We Re-Enter our Building report to Session. A motion was approved in support of Phase I Recommendations: Being Safe in our Building and Preparing to Re-Enter, and Phase II Recommendations: Re-Entry of Small Groups and Preparation for Larger Groups (linked in Appendix G).



Included in Phase I was the creation of a Reopening Communication Team (RCT) responsible for making decisions on movement between phases as well as responding to any COVID-19 related events involving the church. Movement between Phase I and Phase II was based on local, state and federal guidelines for maximizing individual health and safety. RRWG's recommendations were for remain on-line during Phase I.

In early August 2020 RRWG conducted a survey of the pastors and support staff to assess their own comfort level regarding participation in outdoor and indoor worship for various sized groups of congregants. Based on survey results and current public health and government guidelines, Session approved a RRWG recommendation to expand Phase II to include opportunities for outdoor worship at First Pres.

The church moved to Phase II in September 2020 and has been “pilot testing” a number of small group indoor activities before moving to full implementation. The communication team keeps close watch on all benchmarks of COVID-19 and is ready to move forward, or to return to a former Phase of reopening, as may be necessary to maintain safety.

Return to In-Person Outdoor Worship

In late August and early September 2020, First Pres held two small outdoor worship services to pilot all sign-up and in-person procedures and protocols prior to opening up to the congregation for larger outdoor services. These pilot services were planned with strict safety protocols and adherence to the local Washtenaw County Health Department mandate limiting gatherings to a maximum of 25 people.

Consequently, this small group of worshippers constituted a cohort of RRWG members and other church leaders with a vested interest in coordinating larger gatherings for safe worship anticipated in the future. Small changes were instituted and the first outdoor worship service for up to 50 congregants was held on September 13, 2020. Outdoor worship will continue as weather permits.

Return to In-Person Indoor Worship

In October 2020 RRWG recommended that the church stay in “Phase II: Small Groups” through the end of 2020. Session approved the following amendment to Phase II:

“To allow up to 25 congregants to attend in-person worship in the sanctuary beginning with the Thursday night recording and moving to a live-streamed service on Sunday when it becomes available. Date to begin in-person worship in Sanctuary is planned for the first week in December (Dec 3rd), contingent upon these three factors:

1. Viral Conditions in the Community
2. Progress with Live-Streaming
3. Staff Comfort and Concurrence with the Plan”

RRWG will update Session at their November meeting with regard to determining a start date for live-streaming and in-person indoor worship. The RCT will make necessary changes to these plans as circumstances dictate.

Connection

Staff has been hard at work devising creative ways to engage the congregation at a time when we still cannot meet in large groups. For six weeks in September and October the church sponsored “Six Sundays of Fun”. The goal of these six weekly “drive through” events was to engage the congregation in a safe manner while promoting several important initiatives including an emphasis on issues of social justice. Several of the events focused on activities that would appeal to children and young families. These welcoming events required extensive planning and a host of willing church volunteers. In addition, the church staff has been considering ways to



broaden our virtual offerings and find creative ways to gather in-person as the weather turns colder while mitigating risk of spreading the virus.

They also recognize and embrace the need to increase and improve our technology capabilities, including moving to a live streaming platform for worship service. It should be noted that one unexpected benefit of our expanded opportunities for “virtual engagement” has been widening our audience and increasing access to our services and programs.

Safety First

It should be noted that First Pres has steadfastly followed guidelines as described by the CDC, the state’s COVID-19 task force and all government and health department recommendations and directives. The governor of Michigan has stated that places of worship are exempt from penalties for not following



all COVID-19 related guidelines. First Pres has sought to carefully balance our priorities to keep all members at minimal risk while considering the needs of those who yearn for in-person connection. The church feels that the best way to safeguard the health and well-being of our congregation and staff is to follow best practices including mask wearing and social distancing.

We continue to assess how many total individuals (staff and congregants) can gather together, at a minimally acceptable level of risk, outdoors and indoors. We will continue to evaluate our current practices and make adjustments as necessary to minimize the risk of coronavirus infection for the sake of our entire church family.

The RRWG continues to meet weekly and provide Session with updates monthly. The updated RRWG report approved by Session at the time of this report is available at the designated link in Appendix G.





G. Links to Additional Reports:

The **Administrative Commission of the Presbytery of Detroit report** concerning the dissolution of the pastoral relationship with Rev. Dr. Fairfax Fair can be found here:

http://pbydetroit.org/Meetings/Action/S-1_200128.pdf

The **Reopening Recommendations Work Group (RRWG) report** can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wuW4Tzh1BtkX76JiCcRp5i4z0_PxXMvQ8rgryjf0uIo/edit

The **“Mission and Vision 2019” report** can be found here:

<https://firstpresbyterian.org/sites/default/files/other/Mission-Vision-2019.pdf>

The **2019 Annual Report** can be found here:

<https://firstpresbyterian.org/about/more-about-church/annual-report>

The **2019 Church Statistical Report** can be found here:

<https://www.firstpresbyterian.org/sites/default/files/other/FPC-Strategic-Plan-2020.pdf>

The **HolyCow! Congregation Assessment Tool Results** can be found here:

<https://www.firstpresbyterian.org/sites/default/files/other/FirstPres-SelfStudy-Survey-Results-2020.pdf>

H. Methodology for Local Community Perceptions of FPC

In order to develop the Community Perceptions section of the Self Study Report, previous self study report methodology was examined where it was described that local community leaders were interviewed. In order to generate a local community leaders list, the Self Study Group approached associate pastors and congregants familiar with the church's work with mission, youth, campus ministries, and pastoral care. A spreadsheet with contact information for potential local leaders to interview was created. Local leaders with the most knowledge of FPC were given a higher priority to contact first. A list of questions was developed as was an initial contact message (see below).

Twelve local leaders who were prioritized in the list were contacted with email follow up conducted ten days after the initial contact. Nine leaders responded either directly with email responses to the questions or asked to have an interview conducted. Six email responses were received. One Zoom interview and two additional phone interviews were conducted. The nine leaders represented all of the areas of the church's work to determine the initial list, and therefore, was considered sufficient representation for this section of the report.

The email responses and transcribed interview text were coded into themes and analyzed to determine frequency and importance of themes to be included in the section.

Local Communities Interview Questions

Purpose of the questions:

What information is most useful for a prospective minister of the church

Guidance:

- Tailor the questions to the type of individual
- Ask questions that people can actually answer based on their experience
- Give individuals the opportunity to respond in-person/virtual or in writing

Interview Questions

FPCA2 Specific

1. [Approach this question in a tailored format]

As a leader in

[pick a tailored option: campus faith based programs, the local faith based community, social services in Detroit, the Ypsilanti community, the Washtenaw community, the Ann Arbor community, local Pastoral Care, local children/youth enrichment]

how do you believe FPC is perceived by the community?

Follow up probing questions:

- a. What do you believe are FPC's strengths/positives
- b. What do you believe are FPC's weaknesses/areas for improvement

2. Have there been opportunities for you to collaborate with FPC?

Follow up probing questions:

- a. How has your relationship with FPCA2 evolved?
- b. If no, would you like to see more collaboration?

More General

(to get an idea of areas of need/gaps that FPC could fill)

1. What are the most pressing needs of the community you serve?

Follow up probing questions:

- a. How can FPC best support your organization in meeting the needs of the community?
- b. What are the biggest challenges facing your community in the future? (immediate, 5 years down, Covid-19, etc...)

Initial Email Contact Message

Subject:

Your Feedback on Community Perceptions of First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor

Body:

Dear [insert name here],

The First Presbyterian Church (FPC) of Ann Arbor is gathering information to guide decisions for the recruitment of a new Lead Pastor. I am Jean Song, a member of FPC and a member of the Self Study Group (SSG) who is tasked with conducting a self-study of our church. The SSG will create a report that (1) identifies the congregation's vision for ministry and leadership competencies (specific skills) desired for its next pastor and (2) presents to potential pastors the congregation's understanding of its call, resources and needs.

As part of this work, the SSG is seeking your feedback on your own and your community's perceptions of FPC.

Your feedback is incredibly valuable in describing how our church is perceived in the communities we are trying to serve and will be presented in this report which will be shared with our congregation, the Presbytery of Detroit, and prospective Lead Pastor candidates.

I have included the questions at the bottom of this email for you to answer if you are willing to provide your feedback to the SSG or if you would prefer, I am happy to arrange a 30 minute (or less) meeting (phone or video conference) at your convenience with either myself or Jim Clark, another member of FPC on the SSG. If you would prefer that we reach out to a different individual who can best speak to the perceptions of FPC, please let us know, and we will be happy to work with that individual instead.

If you are able to provide written feedback, we would appreciate your responses as soon as you are able but no later than Friday, September 25.

If you would like to arrange a meeting, please send along some preferred dates and times and your preferred method of communication (phone or video conference) as soon as possible, and we will make arrangements to speak with you to gather your feedback.

If you would like NOT to participate, if you could please let us know, we would also greatly appreciate it.

Thank you so much for your thoughts and time!

Sincerely,
Jean Song and Jim Clark

On behalf of The Self Study Committee
Haley Brown, Jim Clark, Jesse Feyen, Barry Johnson, Kelsey (King) Kaercher,
Bill McPherson, Brian Schneidewind, Marita Servais, Jean Song and Brad Taylor.

Rev. Rick Spalding is the staff liaison to the committee.

The SSG can be contacted at selfstudygroup@firstpresbyterian.org.



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
Ann Arbor | Michigan

1432 Washtenaw Avenue
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104
(734) 662-4466
www.firstpresbyterian.org