

Continuing in God's Work: a 5-year Ministry Plan for First Presbyterian Church

Draft

First Presbyterian Church of La Crosse
La Crosse, WI



First Presbyterian Church
more than just Sunday morning

Table of Contents

Background Summary.....	3
Purpose Statement.....	3
Mission.....	4
Values.....	4
Core Pillars of Living Into Our Mission and Values.....	4
Pillar One.....	6
Pillar Two	8
Pillar Three.....	10
Pillar Four	12
Implementing the Plan.....	TBD
Communication Plan.....	TBD
Evaluation & Monitoring	TBD
Plan Refresh & Renewal Calendar.....	TBD
Plan Review & Approval Process	TBD
Appendices.....	14

Background

As the members and friends of First Presbyterian Church (FPC) reconnected in person in late spring of 2022, following a nearly two-year hiatus due to the COVID pandemic, the need was identified to re-engage our congregation in the mission and ministry of FPC.

Tasked by the Session, Rev. Haley researched possible candidates to guide the church leadership through a strategic planning process. As a result of that search, Peter Hughes and his team from HughesStrategy and Viterbo University Center for Professional Learning and Development led a two-day retreat in early December 2022. Participants included both members of Session and the congregation.

The retreat team reviewed trends within our congregation over the past five years, the current conditions within the church and national trends. The team identified top concerns facing FPC and what impact those concerns could have on the congregation if they were addressed or ignored. The retreat team envisioned what headlines might read in 5 years when FPC is a vibrant and growing center for faith in the La Crosse area.

Insightful discussions, facilitated by the Hughes team, led the planning retreat participants to identify four factors that would be critical to the success of the FPC congregation. These four “core pillars” will be a foundation on which the church builds over the next five years and include: Spiritual Growth, Congregational Growth, Ministry, Collaboration. Retreat members then brainstormed a five-year vision for each pillar, possible three-year goals, and one-year actions that would move the entire congregation forward. A copy of the FPC 2022 Strategic Planning Retreat document may be obtained at the church office.

A Writing Team was identified to pull together all the content from the retreat and distill it into a plan for the congregation. Initial drafts of the four core pillars were presented to the Session in February 2023. A brief presentation was made to the congregation at the annual meeting of the congregation at the end of February 2023 to provide them with an update on the work of the retreat team and writing team.

Feedback on the draft Strategic Plan was gathered from the Session in late April. In May, the Writing Team introduced a draft of the Strategic Plan to the entire congregation and welcomed comments and discussion at listening sessions on two following Sundays.

Purpose Statement

This ministry plan is a road map to guide us in the next five years. It represents a commitment between members and leadership that we are intentional about weaving together our congregation in mission and purpose. Following the direction of the Holy Spirit, the plan may be adjusted over time as new needs and opportunities emerge.

Mission

“We exist to glorify God,
inviting all into a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.”

Values

We are...

*Centered in Christ
Nourished by Scripture
Rooted in Prayer
Dedicated Stewards
Enlivened through Ministry
Flourishing through Teams*

Core Pillars of Living Into Our Mission and Values

**Spiritual Growth
Congregational Growth
Ministry
Collaboration**

Having been created in God’s image, following Christ’s example, and enabled by the Spirit...

- We will become more Christ-like by engaging in spiritual practices that foster transformation (Spiritual Growth)
- We will be a vibrant and growing community of faith, cultivating participation of members and friends in worship and ministry (Congregational Growth)
- We will serve others with dignity and respect as equals by offering and creating ministries (Ministry)
- We will collaborate with organizations with common goals and missions to serve the broader community (Collaboration)

Living Into Our Mission and Values

As noted in the Background Summary (p. 3), the December Strategic Planning Retreat Team identified four factors that will be critical to the future success of FPC as an agent of transformation for Christ in the world. These four “core pillars” (Spiritual Growth, Congregational Growth, Ministry, Collaboration) are a foundation on which the church builds over the next five years.

This ministry plan represents a general road map for the next five years that builds on the four core pillars. For each pillar, it offers a vision of where we want to be in five years, goals that reveal how well we are progressing towards our vision, and actions we can take together. In the sections that follow, these ideas are organized as follows:

Five-year vision statement

- Succinctly states the desired future state of First Presbyterian Church as envisioned by the retreat team and the writing team
- Guides the direction of the church’s efforts to live into our mission of glorifying God as we invite others into transformational relationships with Jesus Christ

Three-year goals

- Gauge our progress toward achieving our five-year vision with specific, attainable, and often measurable outcomes
- Are supported with statements that offer inspiration and rationale for the goals

Actions

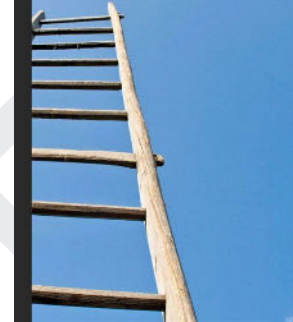
- Are the steps that we can take together in the first year to begin our journey
- The plan offers a “what” but has intentionally not defined “the how, the who or the when” for most of the actions
- Implementation details are entrusted to the individuals called to move these initiatives forward, with reliance on their gifting and the leading of the Spirit

There is overlap between some of the goals and actions. That overlap is seen as both strengthening the fabric of our ministry and allowing flexibility for those who will implement the actions.

Core Pillar One: Spiritual Growth

We will become more Christ-like by engaging in spiritual practices that foster transformation.

The faithful life is a journey. You might think of it as climbing up a ladder. When you make a profession of faith, that's like stepping up onto the first rung of a ladder. Each successive step up brings change or transformation. We are called to be transformed into the likeness of Christ – a lifelong pursuit. As we deepen our relationship with Christ, we are increasingly equipped by the Holy Spirit to align our will, our visions, and our efforts with the Lord's.



As we live into the Ministry Plan, we envision that in five years FPC is a congregation where the words and actions of its participants express their ever-deepening Christian identity

To help us move forward towards this 5-year vision, 3-year goals have been identified:

Goal 1: At least 50% of active participants (members, friends, youth, children) will have written their personal faith statement

Empowering members and congregants of all ages to reflect on how they have grown spiritually, to articulate their beliefs, to cement their personal understanding of their “Why” for engaging in their faith journey with FPC, and to equip themselves with tools for sharing the Good News with others.

Goal 2: At least 50% of active participants will participate in a discipleship network **Empowering** small group mentoring opportunities for the support of members and friends at different stages of their faith journey. The small groups provide an environment for both learning and encouraging one another as we journey together.

Goal 3: FPC will host small group retreats

Empowering congregants of all ages to explore spiritual practices together beyond just Sunday mornings. Small group retreats provide a canvas on which members and friends connect, inspire and educate one another. Retreats offer organic opportunities for getting to know one another better while continuing on our journey of faith together.

We can build toward these 3-year goals in the next year by:

Goal 1, Action 1.1: Developing plan and timeline for “CC 2.0”

Action 1.2: Developing “CC 2.0” core leadership team description and preparation materials

Action 1.3: Identifying “CC 2.0” core leadership team and engage in training

Action 1.4: Promoting participation for adult members and friends

Action 1.5: Launching “CC 2.0” in September

Goal 2, Action 2.1: Researching successful models of mentoring/discipleship networks to help lay foundation for building and sustaining our own network of trusting partnerships that are open to personal growth

Goal 3, Action 3.1: Developing a retreat team to identify retreat focus, timing and location

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Core Pillar Two: Congregational Growth

We will be a vibrant and growing community of faith, cultivating participation of members and friends in worship and ministry.

To cultivate is to nurture and encourage. We will work to ensure that the people of FPC understand themselves to be important to the church. By welcoming visitors, we can cultivate new relationships for people to connect with the person of Jesus Christ, through ministry and mission. Our reach beyond our campus can be cultivated through tools like the website and social media.



As we live into the Ministry Plan, we envision that in 5 years First Presbyterian Church is experiencing an increased presence in its worship and participation in its ministry.

To help us move forward towards this 5-year vision, 3-year goals have been identified:

Goal 1 Participants understand themselves as being vital to FPC.

Empowering FPC to build our future on the belief that our church is the people. Each congregant, whether member or friend, young or old, believes themselves to be essential to the FPC family.

Goal 2 Participants translate their sense of belonging into a desire to commit to the FPC family of faith.

Empowering our hopes and dreams for a future vibrant and growing ministry of FPC. These hopes and dreams are rooted in the belief that people will move these initiatives forward. Growth in impact of FPC's missions and ministry is predicated on growth in membership. Each visitor in worship and activities will be welcomed and encouraged to return and explore what it means to belong with other believers at FPC.

Goal 3 Provide current and engaging access to information for members and visitors - both in person and through online presence (website, streaming platform and social media)

Empowering FPC to showcase and celebrate what the church is doing currently, as well as what it plans for the future. Opportunities to participate in the mission and ministry of FPC will be clearly promoted in a timely manner.

We can build toward these 3-year goals in the next year by:

Goal 1, Action 1.1a Developing a congregant connection plan

Action 1.1b Making personal connections with each congregant

Action 1.2 Assessing need among congregants for a care network

Action 1.3 Investigating options for a congregational care network

Goal 2, Action 2.1 Verifying current membership roll as baseline

Action 2.2a Exploring options for gathering visitor information

Action 2.2b Identifying best practice for FPC to gather visitor information

Action 2.3a Exploring options for systematically connecting visitors with a congregational “friend”

Action 2.3b Identifying best practice for connecting visitors with congregants.

Action 2.4a Investigating methods to connect visitors with opportunities to engage with the ministries of FPC

Action 2.4b Developing pathway to “plug-in” guests by helping them identify gifts and then connecting gifts with opportunities for service and volunteering

Goal 3, Action 3.1 Investigating what/where/how to introduce a welcome/ information station to showcase ministries and activities

Action 3.2a Investigating needs for enhanced online presence (e.g., studies of current trends, PCUSA resources)

Action 3.2b Assessing FPC’s current ability to meet needs for enhanced online presence (technology, personnel, expense)

Action 3.2c Developing plan to expand/enhance FPC’s online presence

Core Pillar Three: Ministry

We will serve others with dignity and respect as equals by offering and creating ministries



Ministry to others is one expression of our thankfulness to our Triune God. As we individually and corporately serve others our faith finds substance. The faith we share will outflow to our community. We believe that every member has a ministry that is a celebration of their unique gifts and talents. As the church we will be intentional in creating opportunities for members and friends to express their faith through action. FPC serves as a hub from which Christ's love radiates out through our congregation.

As we live into the Ministry Plan, we envision that in 5 years the ministries of First Presbyterian Church are founded in creative, compassionate action as a response to identified needs in our community and beyond.

To help us move forward towards this 5-year vision, 3-year goals have been identified:

Goal 1 - Coach House apartments are being used for transitional housing and we are seeking an additional housing unit as an expansion of this outreach
Empowering our congregation to use our physical resources to bless others in need. The collaboration of members and friends with diverse skills will result in the restoration of two existing apartment spaces.

Goal 2 - Every individual has a ministry role and is able to participate with FPC where they serve, feel they are needed, and are competent
Empowering each member and friend to find at least one point of connection with the missions and ministry work of FPC. Individuals of all ages will be encouraged to exercise and develop their personal gifts, including spiritual gifts, in the context of ministering to others.

Goal 3 - Small groups have initiated mission connections within the regional community
Empowering the possibility of diverse ministries to flourish beyond the walls of FPC, building on the energy and engagement of small group members.

We can build toward these 3-year goals in the next year by:

Goal 1, Action 1.1 Establishing an apartment Refresh Team (RT) that plans and executes apartment refresh, including budget and timeline

Action 1.2 Encouraging each RT member to invite at least 1 person not regularly engaged with FPC each to join in the work

Action 1.3 Establishing a Housing Ministry Team to identify potential partnering organization

Action 1.4 Researching and identifying an organization or entity with which to partner with the goal of offering these apartments as a mission of the church beginning in January 2026

Goal 2, Action 2.1 Inventorying all the ministry opportunities related to our church

Action 2.2 Publicizing current ministry opportunities connected with FPC

Action 2.3 Providing a platform for individuals to match passion and ministry calling with identified needs and ministry opportunities

Action 2.4 Following up and encouraging continued participation

Goal 3, Action 3.1 Small groups formed in “CC 2.0” are inventorying group interests and potential mission gaps to be filled

Core Pillar Four: Collaboration

We will collaborate with organizations with common goals and missions to serve the broader community



We are called through the Great Commission to take our love and faith out, beyond the campus of FPC. As we seek relationships with other organizations we strengthen the fabric of our community and society. We can build relationships by contributing financial assistance to existing programs, working collaboratively on projects, or serving as a host for new initiatives. As we serve others alongside others, we are able to serve Christ and gain fresh perspectives.

As we live into the Ministry Plan, we envision that in 5 years FPC will have ongoing relationships with like-minded organizations to meet local, national, or global needs as an expression of our Christian faith.

To help us move forward towards this 5-year vision, 3-year goals have been identified:

Goal 1: Participants of all ages are engaged in service with and in support of external organizations, both emerging and established, prioritizing organizations that meet local, national, or global needs as identified by the interests and connections of FPC participants

Empowering each member and friend to play an active role in addressing community issues through gifts of time, talent, or treasure; to promote a culture of generosity in the giving of ourselves and our resources; and to make a Christ-like impact to contribute to the realization of God's Kingdom on Earth.

Goal 2: The congregation offers its physical space to external organization(s) whose values align with those of FPC as a means to address local, national, or global needs.

Empowering the congregation to fulfill its mission of serving others by offering our building spaces as a means for fruitful collaboration. In this way the congregation can have a greater impact and make a meaningful difference.

We can build toward these 3-year goals in the next year by:

Goal 1, Action 1.1 - Mission & Social Action will identify at least 12 organizations (new or renewed relationships) with common goals and missions of FPC by surveying the congregation and plugging into resources of PCUSA and John Knox Presbytery by the time the stewardship lesson is introduced in CC2.0.

Action 1.2 - Each CC2.0 group will establish a connection with one of the 12 identified organizations and work with that organization to complete a “group project” which will meet the organization’s needs through service or financial means.

Action 1.3 - Upon completion of CC2.0, groups will work closely with Mission & Social Action to assess the congregation’s interest and ability to continue serving, providing financial resources, and/or building relationships with external organizations beyond CC2.0.

Goal 2, Action 2.1 - Forming a Collaboration team to welcome guest groups and coordinate with the Administrative Assistant and Custodian to meet the needs of the group using FPC’s physical space.

Action 2.2 Assessing our physical space to consider current external organizations’ use and the availability of our space for additional organizations to use.

Action 2.3 Updating (or drafting, if necessary) policies for the use of our physical spaces for the benefit of our mutual missions

Action 2.4 Determining how we will inform and communicate the availability of our physical spaces.

Appendices

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Annual Meeting Responses

When asked “why do you choose First Presbyterian Church?” respondents repeatedly expressed they felt a sense of belonging, that FPC was like a family. Respondents also appreciated the worship format and church programming, or felt a connection to the denomination throughout their lives. Many other reasons for attending FPC were also shared, like being drawn to the music, or attending at the encouragement of friends or relatives. The bubbles below, scaled in size to the number of responses falling into each category, are a visualization of the important characteristics of FPC that draw us together.

