

Crossing Thresholds Vision Guide

First Presbyterian Church
Fayetteville, North Carolina

Mission Statement

Our Mission at First Presbyterian Church is to serve Jesus Christ and share his Gospel through meaningful worship, loving fellowship, spiritual growth, and compassionate outreach within our community and throughout the world.

Vision Statement

We will be an open and vibrant vessel of Christ grounded in God's love, equipping and providing opportunities for our congregation to serve and share God in our community and the world.

Mission Motto

Deep Roots, New Fruit

Core Values

*Compassionate relationships
Community and fellowship
Missional outreach
Biblical/scriptural foundation
Continual learning
Heartfelt worship*

Summary Statement

FPC Fayetteville is a healthy church, poised and positioned for mission-congruent adaptive exploration and expansion



Happy are those who trust in the Lord, who rely on the Lord. They will be like trees planted by the streams, whose roots reach down to the water. They won't fear drought when it comes; their leaves will remain green. They won't be stressed in the time of drought or fail to bear fruit.

-- Jeremiah 17:7-8

The Why

During 2025, the Session of First Presbyterian Church (FPC) discerned a need for visioning; for discerning God's calling in this community for this current time. FPC partnered with Rev. Mark Tidsworth of Pinnacle Leadership Associates for designing a process specifically for FPC, yielding this mission and vision guide. As the process took shape, it became clear that the timing was ripe for this work by the church, Holy Spirit driving through the following dynamics:

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Retirement of Senior Pastor

FPC has enjoyed a fruitful partnership with Senior Pastor Rev. Dr. Mike Garrett for the last eleven years, resulting in much missional progress. Dr. Garrett's stable leadership and welcoming presence has contributed to vibrancy throughout this church. Anticipating his retirement, Dr. Garrett gifted the church with advance notice, alerting church leadership to the possibility of a visioning process. Dr. Garrett recognized these Kairos moments as a spiritually opportune time to discern vision for the next chapter of life and ministry.

Community and Contextual Changes

Since 2000, our world has been in a time of significant change and transition. The COVID pandemic was perhaps the most impactful, yet it seems that nearly every area of life is undergoing significant adjustment at this time. In addition to large-scale changes, the community of Fayetteville is changing as well. Downtown revitalization is underway, while the opportunities and needs of this community are shifting, making for a different ministry context.

First Presbyterian Church Progress

In recent years, newer persons are joining with First Presbyterian, integrating into this body of Christ. Did increased vitality bring them to this church, or did newcomers help initiate increased vitality? Either way, FPC is enjoying a season of forward momentum, including great unity around its sense of mission and purpose. This visioning process is designed to build on this momentum, opening pathways for continuing proactive forward-leaning ministry.

Church Staff Vacancies

There are times when circumstances conspire to bring significant change to organizations. The staff team of FPC has experienced this reality recently. Due to military transfers, changes with spouses, and other influences, FPC has current vacancies in program and administrative positions. An Associate Pastor Search is currently underway as well. Though FPC grieves the loss of beloved staff persons, this church also recognizes this natural opportunity for assessing its staffing structure with an eye towards missional alignment.

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The Visioning Process

We are grateful to the Coordination Team who served to plan, organize, and facilitate this Crossing Thresholds Visioning Process along with Consultant Rev. Mark E. Tidsworth.

Coordination Team

Bud Lafferty, Chair	Drew Kramer	Rev. Dr. Mike Garrett,
Diane Regensburger	Debra Chestnutt	Ex Officio
Brandon Hammond	Joshua Barkman	Rev. Mark E. Tidsworth,
Ann McRae	Thomas Boyette	Consultant
Lou Brooks	Alex McFadyen	
Jeannie Plummer	Rodney Baker	

Activities in the Crossing Thresholds Visioning Process

- Summer 2025 – Formed Agreement, Selected Coordination Team
- November 14-16, 2025 – Church Assessment Weekend, including Orientation with Coordination Team
- January 11 – Launch Sunday, Commissioning in Worship and Congregational Event
- Lent 2026 – Forty Days Of Prayer with Prayer Guide
- March 20-22, 2026 – Listening Groups, Plus Zoom Sessions
- March 23-April 12 – Congregational Survey
- April 18 – Leadership Retreat, Processing Collective Discernment
- April 26 – Coordination Team Meeting, Refining Missional Pathways
- May 2026 – Crossing Thresholds Vision Guide Approved by Session
- June 14, 2026 – Crossing Thresholds Vision Guide shared with congregation and commissioned in worship

June Onward:

- Handing off to the Pastor Nominating Committee to aid in their pastoral search
- Handing off to the Session who will serve as Stewards of the Vision along with the pastors and church staff

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- Handing off to the Congregation for living into these collective hopes and dreams; this calling toward becoming the best expression of church possible
- Inviting the Presbytery to approve this Crossing Thresholds Vision Guide as the Mission Study typically done to prepare for the Pastoral Search Process

Crossing Thresholds Congregational Survey

This survey is designed to assess the recent and current functioning of this church. The following provides insights gained from this survey, while detailed information is included in the Leadership Summit Report which the church has on hand. 88 surveys were completed

Top strengths

- Online and in-person worship availability
- Worship space quality and campus condition
- Newcomer welcome and congregational friendliness
- Shared mission and unity across services
- Care, discipleship expectations, and governance stability

Top improvement opportunities

- Expand online ministry beyond worship streaming
- Strengthen small group participation and leadership
- Develop newer leaders and volunteer pipelines
- Improve mission-facing communication and digital tools
- Reassess staffing and systems that support growth

Crossing Thresholds Listening Groups

Very different than a survey, the Listening Groups provided opportunities for participants to share their discernment regarding the future of this church. Small groups were able to hear one another describe their hopes and dreams for FPC. Again, more detailed feedback is included in the Leadership Summit Report which this church has on hand.

There were 11 In-Person Groups plus 2 Zoom Groups for a total of 79 participants.

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FPC Identity Markers

- Sense of Community
- Traditional and Meaningful Worship
- Effective Pastoral Leadership
- Strong Ministry with Children
- Missional Service in this Community and Beyond
- Presbyterian Identity
- Christian Formation and Nurture
- Ease of Involvement
- Youth Ministry
- Historicity and Legacy

Hope and Dreams as a Church

- Strengthen and Expand Engagement with Children, Youth, and Young Families
- Expanding Missional Service
- Continuing Identity and Values
- Continuing and Strengthening Traditional Worship
- Pursue Faith Formation
- Increasing Community Engagement
- Grow Numerically
- Ministry with Military Personnel
- Calling New Senior Pastor
- Pursue Ministry with Young Adults

Suggested Highest Priority for the Near Future

- Calling the Next Senior Pastor
- Engaging With This Community
- Ministry With Youth and Their Families
- Missional Engagement and Service
- Numerical Growth
- Ministry With Children and Their Families
- Growing as Disciples
- Continuing Clear Biblical Focus

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Suggested Adjustments, Changes, And Shifts

- Improving and Strengthening Internal and External Communication
- Calling the Next Fitting Senior Pastor
- Increasing Our Willingness to Adapt and Change
- Structural Streamlining
- Strengthening and Expanding Intergenerational Relationships
- Inspiring More Members to Serve In and Through This Church

Interpreting This Congregational Input

Who We Are When Our Best Self As A Church – Strengths, Identity Markers

- Relationally Connected
- Caring For Each Other
- Friendly And Hospitable
- Traditional Worship
- Outstanding Facilities
- Presbyterian Identity – Conservative to Moderate
- History of Effective Pastoral Leadership
- Missional Service in Your Community and Beyond
- History Of Strong Age Group Ministries
- Historical and Enduring Presence and Institution
- Recent Growth in Momentum, Children, And Finances

Aspirations, Longings, and Visions

- Making a good thing better
- Engaging and Involving more people
- Securing Pastoral and Staff Leadership
- Serving Christ in the World
- Strengthening as an Organization

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New Motto

Throughout this visioning journey, two aspects of FPC's identity presented themselves over and over again. These two themes reflect the character and spirit of this church, embodying who this church is, and who it longs to become. In addition, this new motto flows from the Mission and Vision Statements, which reflect the identity and calling of this church.

Deep Roots, New Fruit

Deep Roots – It's not surprising that 225 years of life and ministry in this location has provided a body of Christ wherein generations can find a spiritual home. FPC has become part of the family history for many who are here one generation to the next. Even so, Deep Roots means far more than time. Newer members frequently describe the sense of depth, life-giving tradition, and invigorating faith as they become part of the FPC community. There

is a spiritual depth, influenced by historicity and longevity, that keeps the people of FPC grounded in a volatile and rapidly-changing world. These deep roots are nourished by the soil of God's love and sustaining strength, empowering and growing First Presbyterian Church.

New Fruit – There is a growing longing within the people of FPC to reach even further...in faith, in service, and in connecting with the Fayetteville community. Like a tree reaching for the sky, God is equipping and empowering FPC to become an even greater expression of the body of Christ. This church is dreaming new dreams of greater community engagement, investing in the life and well-being of neighbors. This church is seeing visions of serving in even greater ways, partnering with those in this community toward the kingdom of God taking shape more fully. This church is welcoming in newer persons who are also seeking Christ, making more room



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around God's table, becoming church community together. The people of this church are engaging in ministries that grow their faith, becoming disciples in new and meaningful ways.

The following statements provide more perspective on what God is currently doing in and through FPC. These are preserved here, available for use in communication as needed.

- Rooted And Reaching
- Anchored And Alive
- Under Construction, Pardon The Dust

Happy are those who trust in the Lord, who rely on the Lord. They will be like trees planted by the streams, whose roots reach down to the water. They won't fear drought when it comes; their leaves will remain green. They won't be stressed in the time of drought or fail to bear fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Missional Pathways

This process involved spiritual discernment and spiritual flow. Clearly, we have included everyone in this church who was willing and able to participate in the activities of this Crossing Thresholds Visioning Journey. First, the church was commissioned to be in a season of discovery, committing to listening for God's calling. Second, this church prayed daily for the eyes to see and ears to hear God's calling. Third, the Congregational Survey and Listening Groups we channel through which the people of this church shared their perspectives, hopes, aspirations, and visions for FPC. Our consultant and church leadership processed these collective aspirations, praying and discerning the spiritual guidance embedded therein. The outcome of this spiritual journey includes the following Missional Pathways.

We are using this pathway metaphor since it communicates

- Clear Direction
- Ongoing Movement Over Time
- Flexibility For Adjustment

Below each Missional Pathway are recommendations for beginning forward movement. Rather than create a very detailed Strategic Plan, we recognize the wisdom in including the new Senior Pastor in the logistical implementation of this discerned plan. Each Missional Pathway then

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includes recommended actions, recognizing these are starting places, not a comprehensive list of the limited activities for each Pathway.

These Missional Pathways are also organized with the two aspects of the new Mission Motto. Though they overlap, the first set of Pathways seem to be the internal work of the church while the second set is more external in focus.

FPC Mission Motto

Deep Roots, New Fruit

Deepening Our Roots

Strengthening and continuing vitalized traditional worship, while launching alternative worship forays and holy experiments

FPC enjoys a long history of rich, meaningful, and thoughtful traditional worship. Many persons who are part of this church were initially drawn into this church through worship experiences, continuing to value this approach to Christian worship. During this visioning journey, no one suggested FPC discontinue its traditional approach to worship. At the same time, there is a strong yearning within this church to expand worship experiences with different approaches, and even in different locations. The following are recommendations for moving down this Missional Pathway of worship.

- Building on the strength of traditional worship, the pastors, musicians, and other worship leaders will collaborate toward constantly improving and strengthening each worship service.
- Within the traditional worship paradigm, pursuing innovations with each part of the services, which strengthen and deepen the worship experience.
- Designing and implementing alternative worship experiences which are missionally congruent with FPC's expression of church

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- Engaging with the larger Fayetteville community, discerning what additional and alternative forms of worship may open the doors to God and church engagement for more in this community.

Developing an intentional formational small group culture and ministry, engaging every disciple in formational life groups

- Commissioning a study of the small groups currently part of FPC life, assessing for effectiveness and missional congruence, with curious listening and observing.
- Exploring the various approaches of similar churches to churchwide formational small group ministry, discerning next steps for FPC.
- In alignment with the calling of God's Church to form disciples, providing pathways for every person in this church to move toward Christian formation.
- Integrating small group culture and ministry into the life of this church to where this becomes a typical aspect of church participation (culture formation).

Calling our next senior pastor, while evaluating our staffing structure for missional alignment

Through this visioning process, it became clear that FPC is experiencing the typical anxiety of pastoral transitions. Though Dr. Garrett's retirement was anticipated, the reality of a pastoral change brings some level of anxiety to the church. While experiencing anxiety is normal in this situation, this church is proactively moving forward step by step. The following activities are already contributing to the calling of a new Senior Pastor.

- Submitting this Crossing Thresholds Visioning Guide to the Presbytery for completion of the Mission Study required in the pastor search process.
- Establishing the Pastor Nominating Committee, followed by Presbytery training and equipping.
- Providing pastoral candidates with this Crossing Thresholds Vision Guide as part of the interview process, introducing them to the collective vision of FPC.

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- When the next Senior Pastor is called, using this Vision Guide as a roadmap for missional movement, adjusting steps on the pathways with the Senior Pastor's engagement.
- Using this Visioning Guide to evaluate the current staffing structure, making adjustments that allow for leadership aligned with this vision for the near future.

Evaluating our organizational structure and processes with an eye toward effective missional alignment and flow

The structures, systems, and processes in place have brought this church to where it is now, as they should. Now that this new Vision Guide is affirmed and activated, the church will need to explore the adjustments needed to support the implementation of this vision. The following suggestions are ways to begin down this Missional Pathway. Ideally, churches are constantly updating their approach to ministry, adapting as they go.

- Studying the leadership structure overall, evaluating for missional-congruence, roles, necessity, and effectiveness.
- Implementing the adjustments and changes resulting from the previously noted evaluation.
- Integrating ongoing structural and process evaluation into the ongoing work of this church.

Growing New Fruit

Serving and loving children, youth, and their families

Many people who are currently part of FPC entered into this church through children's and youth ministries. Historically, FPC has served the needs of this population with quality programming and Christian nurture. While historically strong, these areas of ministry seem to ebb and flow. In recent years, the children's ministry has strengthened, along with youth ministry. Currently, staff leaders for both of these ministries moved on to other opportunities. FPC continues to express a strong calling to minister to children, youth, and their families.

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- After the staffing evaluation effort, securing the fitting leadership for each of these areas of ministry.
- Given the large-scale changes in our world, and the significant changes in the life of FPC, when the new Senior Pastor is on board, a time of visioning regarding these ministries would help move forward with direction.
- During the interim transition, parents and volunteers serve to meet needs and provide the programming needed to sustain these ministries.

Strengthening missional service, establishing partnerships and discerning our signature missional calling

This Visioning Journey made crystal clear what the people of FPC already know....FPC serves. Over a long period of time, the people of this church have engaged their community in missional service, as leaders of non-profit organizations, through financial donations, and hands-on engagement with hurting neighbors. Many in the Fayetteville community know FPC through its ongoing service in the community. Building on this strong theme of missional engagement, the following activities and possibilities arose through in this Visioning Journey.

- A strong desire to draw more FPC members into missional service through this church, expanding the culture of service in place.
- Initiating a season of discernment around the many missional ministries of this church, exploring the possibility of focusing its efforts toward a signature missional calling.
- Continuing to partner with individuals and organizations who contribute to the common good, while expanding these partnerships.

Engaging our community with love, boldly sharing our faith and the story of God's work through FPC

"A well-kept secret"....this statement was heard multiple times during the Visioning Journey, suggesting that the people of FPC value their church, yet are aware that many others in this community are unaware of the presence and ministry of FPC. Increasingly, we live in a world where familiarity with church life is declining, with fewer people naturally finding their way into churches. So, this means that simply existing and doing good ministry as churches have done, is

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unlikely to bring many new people into churches. The people of FPC sense a call to more proactively connect with their community, opening the doors to God, faith, and church life.

- Developing relevant, quality, and effective ways for the church as an organization to interact with its community.
- To develop a communications campaign for raising awareness of FPC in the greater Fayetteville community.
- Training each other to share one's faith in respectful and authentic ways.
- Training each other to invite people in this community into the life of this church.
- Strengthening the approach to Christian hospitality for those who visit the FPC campus for worship, activities, or any kind of visit.

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Crossing Thresholds Summary Statement

FPC Fayetteville is a healthy church, poised and positioned for mission-congruent adaptive exploration and expansion

Stewards Of The Vision

When a church discerns a new vision, who owns the vision? In other words, who is responsible for living into the vision. The obvious answer is the entire congregation. FPC will need all its people to engage this Vision Guide in order for it to become a reality. Though all own this vision, the church also needs leadership. We are suggesting the Session, along with pastors and church staff persons, serve as stewards of the vision. Regularly reviewing progress, while strategically planning next steps, will help this vision become real.

Thank You And Blessing

We are grateful that the members and participants of FPC embraced this Visioning Journey with vigor and enthusiasm. The outcomes reflect the identity of FPC, while capturing the spiritual imagination rising in this church. All the church leadership, along with our consultant, express great appreciation for the fruit of this effort.

Now, through the power, presence, and love of Jesus Christ our Lord, may First Presbyterian Church live into this calling, becoming the very best version of the body of Christ it can be.

Supporting Documents

The Leadership Summit Report

The Vision Guide Summary

