



**First Presbyterian
Church**

**Planning Committee
Presentation to the
Congregation**

February 2, 2014

“If we don’t change, we don’t grow.”

-- Mark Twain

To look forward, it is wise to first look at where we have been and where we are now. The Planning Committee has looked at practicalities. We have dreamed.

The congregation was asked to do this with us, and you have responded!

We have wondered: what works? What needs change? What if dollars were no issue?

First Presbyterian Church is alive! A great many of our members are active and engaged in the life of this church. We are on solid financial footing. We have strong leadership and a facility that has served us well for many years.

But we cannot rest on our laurels, past accomplishments and who we have been. There is need to evolve and change or we will encounter the reality of stagnation and no growth.

This report is presented in five sections.

- Worship and Music
- Small Group Ministries
- Communications and Marketing
- Facilities
- Staffing and Personnel

There are immediate needs in each section where action has already begun. Many points will require further study.

The overriding vision is to build on our strengths with a framework that guides us, willing and eager to work together to assure our future as a vibrant and growing community of God’s people.

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

Overview:

Worship and Music are viewed as strengths at First Presbyterian Church. On the Congregational Survey, 94% responded they hear inspiring sermons and 83% responded they hear beautiful music. When asked if one of our services should be more contemporary, 44% responded “yes”. While not a majority, this is a significant number requiring our attention. Written comments reflected strong and conflicting opinions about worship styles. In general, 35% of respondents expressed a desire to move in “new directions”. We understand this to include new directions is worship based on some of the answers to open ended questions and Focus Group responses. There is, however, a lack of clarity about the meaning of “contemporary” which bears further dialogue. Does contemporary refer to the informality of the service, the style of the sermon, the style of the music, and/or the inclusion of dance, drama, chant, clapping?

Goal:

We desire to create broadening and deepening opportunities at FPC to engage in spiritually nurturing and energizing worship of God for both our present members across the age spectrum and to meet the needs of residents seeking a place of meaningful worship.

Actions:

- Form a Creative Worship Task Force under the direction of Worship Council to research alternative styles of reformed worship; to assess the interest among FPC members and within the Holland community for such a worship offering; to experiment with occasional worship alternatives; to make recommendations to Session by January 2015
- Consider information on worship and music collected from our young families with children to determine their preferences
- Use this target audience and the current congregation to further define what is meant by “contemporary worship and music” as it applies to our church
- Charge Christian Education with assessing the impact of a change in Sunday worship styles, number of services, and education times with a report to Session.

4 SMALL GROUPS & SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Overview:

Social or study groups, whether large or small, become points of entry for visitors desiring relational connections with the church beyond Sunday mornings. 78% of the Survey participants responded positively to the statement “it is easy to get involved” at First Presbyterian Church. 60% responded positively to the statement “I have close friends who attend here.” Church growth research demonstrates the importance of creating and nurturing small group ministries. One of the measures of a healthy congregation is the number of new groups started each year. Although FPC has not made this a Session focus in recent years, a number of Small Groups have “bubbled up” such as Youngest Families, various Book Study Groups, It’s a Guy Thing, and Watchers.

Goals:

- Through Small Groups, retain FPC members while increasing connections and a sense of belonging
- Through age specific, interest specific, and spiritual growth focused Small Groups, offer opportunities to invite friends and attract members from a variety of demographics
- Continue intergenerational large activities such as Easter Breakfast, Canoe Trip and Mission Trips

Actions:

- Create an Elder position and fund a Council for Small Group Ministries
- Create and maintain three new Small Groups of various types in each of the next four years
- Create Small Group Ministry as a staffing priority in one or more job descriptions

Overview:

A communication plan that includes a “brand” identity, a concise vision statement, or “elevator speech” is needed to articulate the First Presbyterian Church identity. Our current primary communication vehicle for sharing information about church events or reporting on ministry efforts is the monthly newsletter *Profiles* which is delivered electronically via email or mailed directly depending on the recipients’ preferences. The fast paced rise in technological options necessitated the recent creation of a Communications Specialist staff position.

Goals:

- Establish a consistent branding for all internal and external communications including bulletins, *Profiles*, mailers, advertising, and social media, especially the church Website and Facebook
- Increase visibility of FPC as a community of Christ in Holland through vibrant and compelling messages to attract and involve new members of all ages with particular emphasis on youth and young families

Actions:

- Create an internal evangelism/marketing team to advise direction
- Develop First Presbyterian Church branding
- Update a brochure of activities, services and contact information
- Publicize FPC Outreach efforts

FACILITIES

Overview:

From a broad perspective, our church facilities serve us well, particularly our worship space and Worship Center classrooms. Spaces for fellowship activities are modest. We have done admirably keeping an aging building fresh with two exceptions: the kitchen and the parking lot entrance.

Goals:

- Continue timely maintenance
- Ensure safety with particular awareness of the needs of our aging members
- Provide attractive and functional spaces with attention to the needs of children and youth

Actions:

- Revise the parking lot entrance to improve safety and aesthetics
- Update the kitchen with appropriate appliances and storage
- Redesign the M&M Café to optimize space, create a cozier atmosphere and rethink beverage choices
- Install video capability in the sanctuary to tastefully enhance communication options
- Upgrade Youth areas for recreation and refreshments

Overview:

The information garnered from the Congregational Survey strongly suggests First Presbyterian Church must take steps to attract young families to our worship services and strengthen our programming for this population. The first step is to address staffing. We believe this necessitates securing long term dedicated and skilled staff in the area of children and family ministries. Ideally, this is someone who easily identifies with young families and their spiritual and social development. We suggest the way to accomplish this is to include this emphasis in an associate pastor job description; however, there may be other appropriate options which could be explored.

Goals:

- Renew a church focus to attract, retain and minister to young adults, young families and children facilitated by a dedicated, skilled professional who relates with this key group
- Increase program/pastoral staff to a minimum of 2.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE)

Actions:

- Charge Session through its Personnel Council to design a staffing model and job descriptions to support ministry functions reprioritized to include youth, young adults, young families and children
- Elect an Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) no later than March 1, 2014, to recruit candidates to fill the job descriptions created by Session
- Recommend Session redistribute the available budget dollars to provide additional monies to support the new emphasis on young families and children

Change, planning for change, and creating changes are not simple tasks.

Working together as a church community will require action from all of us.

- Clear visionary minds are needed to find solutions.
- Practical thinking is needed to transform plans into action.
- Temporarily redistributing funds and requesting new monies may be a reality.

We are ALL needed!

But most of all, prayers for open hearts, listening ears and clear vision for and from our entire church family are essential as we grow into a vision of a vibrant congregation that, long after our time here, will still gather in this place of worship to serve and live to the glory of God.

*God grant us the serenity
to accept the things we cannot change;
courage to change the things we can;
and wisdom to know the difference.*

(paraphrased)

**Long Range Planning Committee
2013-2014**

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**First Presbyterian Church
of Holland**

**Worshipping, serving and living
with a fresh vision of
God's vibrant energy and grace
for all**

