
FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

OUR COURSE TO 2030

THE BICENTENNIAL OF FUPC, FOUNDED IN 1830



Table of Contents:

FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH HISTORY	2
OUR CHURCH’S “DNA”	3
GROW SPIRITUALLY (GOAL #1)	5
STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS (GOAL #2).....	6
BROADEN OUTREACH AND SERVICE (GOAL #3)	8
CULTIVATE GENEROUS STEWARDSHIP (GOAL #4).....	9
FAITHFULLY COORDINATE LEADERSHIP (GOAL #5)	11
ACCOUNTABILITY AND REVIEW OF THE PLAN BY THE SESSION AND PLANNING MINISTRY	12
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO CONSIDER	13

First United Presbyterian Church History

First United Presbyterian Church has a history of looking forward in our ministry. Encouraged by the work of the Planning Ministry Team, the Session has reaffirmed the following mission and vision:

MISSION

Called to be a light on the hill,
we boldly proclaim and serve Christ,
the hope of our changing world.

VISION

Reaching out as a visible expression of God's grace,
we will meet people where they are,
inviting all into Christ's family
through engaging worship, fellowship, learning, and service.

In 2019 the planning ministry asked the Session to read three books to help us better understand the challenges and opportunities of the church in our times. These books were: *Canoeing the Mountains* by Todd Bolsinger, *Neighborhood Church*, by Krin Van Tatenhove and Rob Mueller, and *Sailboat Church*, by Joan Gray. From the discussions that followed, we adopted a new structure for the Session which involved separating the ministries into two primary groups, Engaging Ministries and Equipping Ministries, connected by a new Communications Ministry Team, with an emphasis on being a "sailboat church": a church that seeks to discern God's will and allow the Spirit of God to direct our focus, as we strive to fulfill our mission and vision.

In 2020, the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, we focused our efforts on putting this 10-year plan together. The church will be 200 years old in 2030. We felt the church needed to develop SMART goals and action steps to better put the church on a path to success. A SMART goal is **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound**. We decided on 5 goals that are shared in this document, along with implementing actions steps.

At the session retreat in August 2021, we discerned that setting goals ten years into the future might be too ambitious. We heard the word "pathways" from our guest speaker Jason Tucker. The Planning Ministry embraced this term, feeling that Session's work on the goals is still relevant, but wanting to encourage all ministries to discern how we can more tangibly use these goals to establish intentional pathways. As defined by Rev. Tucker, a pathway moves church members and seekers from the community towards deeper knowledge, love, and service of God in Christ, and towards more intentional ministry engagement. We realized these pathways would need to be clearly defined within shorter-term time frames.

Our Church's "DNA"

There are a variety of ways to talk about qualities in a church that seem to characterize a particular congregation over decades and even—because of our long history—centuries. Some like the language of “*core values*.” Others speak of the congregation’s “*personality*,” in analogy to a human individual based on the metaphor of the church as a body. Revelation 2-4 addresses specific prophetic messages to the “*angel*” of each of seven congregations in the early church. Church consultants sometimes refer to the “*DNA*” of a church. FUPC has stated core values.

A sermon preached in celebration of our 190th anniversary, entitled “*Called to Be a Light on the Hill*,” suggested seven characteristics of our congregation that have endured over the decades (and possibly since our founding).

- **Sharing God’s love in word and deed.** Along with Presbyterians everywhere, FUPC has valued both words and actions. They go hand-in-hand. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we gather joyfully each week to hear and receive God’s Word. We believe it’s our responsibility to put God’s Word into practice by acting upon it in obedience, sharing —God’s love by what we say and by what we do.
- **Being lifelong learners.** We were founded by the same Cumberland Presbyterian pastors and elders who started Cane Hill College in northwest Arkansas in the 1830’s. In the 1870’s, the University of Arkansas was established in Fayetteville. Both developments guaranteed that Presbyterians here would value education, learning, and spiritual growth. FUPC has consistently demonstrated this value over the years as we encourage all members to learn and grow throughout our lives.
- **Flexible resilience.** A church that endures for almost 200 years certainly needs to be flexible and resilient. FUPC began as two distinct congregations from different denominations (Cumberland and Southern Presbyterian), endured through the Civil War, merged into one while our parent denominations were still separated, thrived through a global pandemic, and has consistently adapted amid many cultural changes. We continue to be committed to embracing change and to adapting in response to God’s call and our community’s needs, with our sights fixed on Christ, the hope of our changing world².
- **A spirit of welcoming hospitality.** In our early history, the ministry of hospitality was lovingly embraced by the women of our congregation. As gender norms have changed, we’re all learning to be warm and welcoming. This welcome extends not just to people who look, dress, and act like us, but also to people from a wide array of economic circumstances, racial and cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations, and educational privilege. Gathering and sharing around delicious meals has bound members and friends of FUPC together for decades and will continue to be a part of our ongoing effort to embrace all with Christ’s love. More and more, we intend to reach out to feed, house, and care for others in our community who struggle with food insecurity, are experiencing homelessness, or are in need of other support to live and thrive.

- **Grateful generosity: time, talent, treasure.** Our mother congregations were pioneers in generosity, showing profound commitment to sharing their time, talents, and treasure for God’s glory in support of one another and the community. Today, the overflowing generosity of members of the congregation continues to grow. Whenever financial support is needed to fulfill God’s work and the congregation’s vision, God always provides through the generosity of our members. Many willingly say “yes” when asked to use their gifts on ministry teams, through service as elders and deacons, and by helping those in our community and world. Many also intentionally and devotionally remember the church in their wills so ministry will continue to flourish.
- **Love of beauty in worship and in God’s creation.** Throughout our history, we’ve gathered in person to sing praises to God in a variety of musical styles, to confess our sins and receive God’s forgiveness, to hear and respond to God’s Word proclaimed, to bring our offerings and shared prayers to God, and to celebrate baptism and the Lord’s Supper together. Visual and dramatic arts have been important in our church life as well. We strive for excellence, welcoming and honoring the gifts of each person who creates after the image of our Creator. Although we’ve cherished worship in each of our church sanctuaries, we’ve also enjoyed worshiping outdoors on our campuses and in retreat settings. Talented members have lovingly extended the gardens and tended the grounds of our property with sustainability in mind.
- **A commitment to seek unity.** Ours is a deep heritage of working toward Christian unity. The word “united” in our church’s name reflects both our coming together from two denominations into one and our desire to stay together. Over the years, our congregation has deepened and expanded by joining hands with other congregations and traditions, rather than by splitting. Today, as our culture divides into “red” and “blue,” FUPC strives to be a “purple” church that reaches out as far as possible both to the right and to the left, in the conviction that Christ’s body is stronger when we reflect the unity in diversity of our triune God.

Adoption and Embrace of our Goals, and Strategies for their Accomplishment.

In early 2021 the Session agreed to the draft of the 5 proposed goals. The planning ministry led two zoom congregational meetings to share these goals and receive feedback on action steps to accomplish the goals. With this information the planning ministry began to draft this plan by working with the different ministries and the session. This plan will be reviewed by the session in the fall of 2021 for further revisions and adoption.

Grow Spiritually (Goal #1)

The church is the Body of Christ, and we respond to God's love in Christ by seeking to further God's kingdom in the power of the Spirit. As individual members of that body we need to stay healthy and keep growing spiritually. As a community, we encourage one another as together we grow up in every way into Christ, building one another up in love. We will provide tools and resources to support and assess growth in each member's faith journey, and our spiritual progress as a congregation.

Ministries that would primarily be involved in this goal: Worship, Spiritual Growth

Strategies & Tactics:

1. Provide and evaluate spiritual growth opportunities through enhanced worship and learning opportunities for all ages that glorify God, deepen our relationship with God, and educate, support, challenge, and encourage each member along our faith journey together.
2. Find or develop spiritual progress tools to measure the congregation's and each person's faith journey every year.
3. Develop a more contemporary style worship service held once a month targeted towards the needs of new and younger worshipers.

Strengthen Connections (Goal #2)

Develop a process and systems to strengthen internal and external connections among our members and with groups outside our church. This process would result in having 80% of our active members (including baptized children and youth) be connected in some way to worship, fellowship, caring, serving on a ministry team, spiritual growth, and/or other learning experiences.

Ministries that would primarily be involved in this goal: Fellowship, Deacons, Belonging, Communication, and Presbyterian Women

Strategies & Tactics:

1. Increase the visibility of the church within the community with traditional and current media.
 - a. Use online calendars and news sources such as Fayetteville Flyer.
 - b. Use Facebook ads.
 - c. Continue to livestream the worship service
 - d. Improve searchability of current YouTube channel.
 - e. Post regularly at Facebook.
 - f. Publish news regularly at the website.
 - g. Add video kiosk at First School
2. Improve communications systems within the church in ways that increase congregational engagement, bringing more of our members into fellowship, learning, & outreach activities.
 - a. Improve use of bulletin boards in church.
 - b. Add print or physical mail communication for members who do not use the internet.
 - c. Maintain Weekly Update.
3. Make and track connections with the church outside of physical attendance. Use the data to celebrate improvements and identify opportunities.
 - a. Track YouTube views and website visits. Use data for strategic planning.
 - b. Track phone contacts.
 - c. Track Zoom attendance of spiritual growth opportunities.
4. Develop an iPad or tablet library for homebound members.
 - a. Notice the homebound and lonely in special ways (with social distancing “hellos” like the Circle 2 yard sign, “We miss you,” and related visits).
 - b. Have ongoing support to help these members be connected to the website and YouTube services.
5. Strengthen small groups by letting congregation know about all the different small groups available such as choir, yoga, Presbyterian Women, men’s breakfast and lunch groups, youth groups, etc. There is some evidence that people are not aware of these opportunities.
 - a. Include “form your own” activities with strong church leadership.
 - b. Provide leadership to make small groups work better for young families.
6. Engage new members in church activities with new members’ luncheons.
7. Continue to plan new events and get the word out.

8. Work to become a more diverse church.
 - a. Ask the Nominating ministry team to include diverse membership as deacons.
 - b. Continually be aware of caring ways to reach out to children and youth, especially with health/medical needs and celebrations (birthdays/special honors).
 - c. Ask the Nominating ministry team to include members who are teens and college-age in deacon leadership.
 - d. Continue to be present to our college students through the “First Five” ministry (for five years following high school graduation).
 - e. Begin a faith forum (possibly similar to the Interfaith Dialogue) with diverse racial backgrounds (specifically including St. James Baptist).
 - f. Help to create meaningful conversations as we get to know each other.
9. Strengthen our Stephen Ministry by sending adults every other year for leadership training.
 - a. Include deacons in special educational training events for Stephen ministers (cancer, grief, funeral home, etc.).
 - b. Actively encourage care receiving connections with our Stephen ministers in the congregation and community.
 - c. Explore whether aspects of this ministry can be carried out online.
10. Maintain at least two Zoom accounts for members to utilize.

Broaden Outreach and Service (Goal #3)

Increase the number of members who are involved in outreach and service activities by 30% and increase the annual financial commitments the church makes to outreach and service to 25% of the pledges made to the church, drawing on various offerings and church outreach funds in addition to pledges. Engage with other non-profits to work towards fulfilling the Mathew 25 initiative.

Ministries that would primarily be involved in this goal: Outreach, Welcoming, Spiritual Growth, First School

Strategies & Tactics:

1. Look back over the last three years to determine the current percentages of Pledges going to "Outreach". Outreach is defined as any money going to support other groups non-profits, not programs or ministries of FUPC. This will establish our base line. Communicate this information to the congregation
2. Develop a tracking recording/tracking system for every member that volunteers their time to the church. Use this information to recognize and show appreciation to these volunteers.
3. Host a fellowship gathering to share the many volunteer opportunities we have and encourage people to get involved in whatever they feel called to do.
4. Investigate the possibility of providing a program similar to "Changing Lanes" in Fort Smith with seven hills or other non-profits.
5. Expand and provide additional financial support for scholarships to First School
6. Host a forum of lawyers to understand the laws that might need to change that inadvertently punish the poor and disadvantaged communities.
7. Talk with Root elementary to see what we can do to help them

Cultivate Generous Stewardship (Goal #4)

Stewardship and Care of God's creation are fundamental for ensuring vitality and growth of our Living Church. We will develop the processes and plans to increase the financial and personal contributions of our Members, and we will continue caring for the church property as good stewards of God's creation.

Ministries that would primarily be involved in this goal: Stewardship, Properties, Planning

Strategies & Tactics:

1. Increase the financial resources of the church by increasing the number of operating pledging units from 120 to 175 by seeking more one to one personal contact with church members to add new pledging units
 - a. Ask ministry team and other church members to select 10 church members to contact regarding additional pledge units and filling out time and talents
 - b. Utilize more mail, email, and web presence to transmit information about giving and time and talents
2. Increasing the pledge income by 3% a year with a goal of \$800,000 at the end of 10 years by seeking more one to one personal contact with church members to add new legacy giving commitments
 - a. Ask ministry team to identify at least three potential legacy givers each year
3. Add \$1 million in new gifts to increase the endowments and long-term restricted funds by encouraging legacy giving to the church's Ministry Endowment Fund, Mission and Outreach Fund, Properties Fund, and Lee Power Ministry Scholarship Endowment Fund
 - a. Utilize the Texas Presbyterian Foundation's communications subset for legacy giving
 - b. Host at least one event a year to discuss legacy giving
4. Broaden our understanding and practice of stewardship to better incorporate each member's time and talents
 - a. Host events/meetings in group settings to provide more giving information to church members
 - b. Provide a "Minute for Ministry" during worship to motivate participation in various ministry teams 4 times a year
 - c. Utilize more mail, email, and web presence to transmit information about giving and time and talents
5. Reduce our Carbon footprint, determining where to focus our efforts so quantifiable goals can be identified and achieved, and improving our facilities so other church ministries are able to work towards achieving their objectives/goals
 - a. Seek assistance from SWEPCO, qualified church members and campus ministry students to determine current carbon footprint
 - b. Install additional solar panels
 - c. Reduce electrical consumption
 - i. Convert all lighting to LED

- ii. Replace failed HVAC units with high efficiency units within budgetary guidelines
 - iii. Improve HVAC filter replacement procedure
 - iv. Ensure that unused spaces are maintained at correct temperatures
 - v. Encourage everyone to turn off lights when not needed or in use.
 - vi. Identify and disconnect unnecessary “Vampire” devices plugged in continually.
- d. Reduce water consumption
 - i. Incorporate careful planting practices
 - ii. Immediate repair of any reported/detected continual running of toilets or faucets.
- e. Prepare for future Equipment replacement as needed

Faithfully Coordinate Leadership (Goal #5)

Create processes and structures to discern God's leading for both paid personnel and volunteer leaders to support the ministries of the church, as transitions and growth occur.

Ministries that would primarily be involved in this goal. Personnel, Nominating, Planning

Strategies & Tactics:

1. Review and evaluate annually the structure of ministry teams to ensure that the current and future needs of the church are being met.
2. Continuity and effective leadership from elders and deacons provide the rudder needed for FUPC to be the Light on the Hill. A mentor should be assigned to an elder/deacon who has not served as an active elder in that role previously. If possible, an elder should not serve as a moderator until they have had one year of experience. Also, elders/deacons should understand the importance of serving a two- or three-year term.
3. Attracting and selecting high quality paid staff is crucial as we continue our journey to be a Christ led church. The Personnel Ministry will develop a structure and prayerful search process that is transparent and inclusive anytime a position is vacant leading to a recommendation at a session meeting for final action.
4. Survey past elders to understand how the time they served on session was good or bad and suggestions for improvement.
5. If people decline to serve on the session, try to identify the reason they said no to see if we need to change our structure in some way.

Accountability and review of the plan by the Session and Planning Ministry

The planning ministry will review the actions steps that have been adopted annually and make a report to the session on the progress of the action steps to achieve the goals and make any recommendations to modify the plan.

Additional information to consider

Board of Deacons

June 11, 2020

First Thoughts on Ten-Year Goals

1. The onset of Covid-19 has changed our ways of caring in many ways. These short-term goals (for next 1-2 years) match the new realities:
 - a. Know that more of our caring will need to happen virtually. Develop the basic skills and have the technology to lead in this way.
 - b. Connect each person on our membership rolls at least occasionally to the worship services. (The deacons' role is person-to-person. The hardware connection is also important and will need to be done by another group.)
 - c. Develop weekly connections to the worship services for those who desire this.
 - d. Use FaceTime and Zoom (and whatever is yet to be developed) in our personal caring to continue to be connected closely as a congregation.
 - e. Encourage the involvement of those that deacons call in Zoom (or other) fellowship events that build community.
 - f. Notice the homebound and lonely in special ways (with social distancing "hellos" like the Circle 2 yard sign, "We miss you," and related visits)
2. Be involved in helping to make small groups effective
 - a. for young families.
 - b. including some "form your own" gatherings.
 - c. with the church locating strong leadership for these
3. Help newer deacons build relationships with our members by setting up specific connections for them through the Board and/or pastor.
4. Continually be aware of caring ways to reach out to children and youth, especially with health/medical needs and celebrations (birthdays/special honors).
 - a. Ask the Nominating ministry team to include members who are teens and college-age in deacon leadership.
 - b. Continue to be present to our college students through the "First Five" ministry (for five years following high school graduation).
5. Work to become a more diverse church.
 - a. Ensure that we are paying attention in our caring to all members.
 - b. Help to create meaningful conversations as we get to know each other.
 - c. Begin a faith forum (possibly similar to the Interfaith Dialogue) with diverse racial backgrounds (specifically including St. James Baptist).
 - d. Ask the Nominating ministry team to include diverse membership as deacons.
6. Involve the deacons alongside of the session in an every-member visitation again. (The last one was in 2008.)

7. Strengthen our Stephen Ministry by sending adults every other year for leadership training.
 - a. Include deacons in special educational training events for Stephen ministers (cancer, grief, funeral home, etc.).
 - b. Actively encourage care receiving connections with our Stephen ministers in the congregation and community.
 - c. Explore whether aspects of this ministry can be carried out online