

MISSION STUDY

MAY 7, 2020

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEW BERN, NC



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Mission Study Introduction

First Presbyterian Church (FPC) is an incredible place to experience God. While growth and work are always possible, FPC is alive with energy and outreach. One of my favorite sayings when I get to a congregation is, “We do not want to be the best church in town. Rather, we want to be the best place for this town.” FPC New Bern organically gets the difference. The Session, alongside other faithful members, continues a long history of a vital ministry presence in New Bern and the surrounding community.

I want to be upfront and admit a personal bias. This report is more than a Mission Study to me. These words are bittersweet for me to write as they carry the freight of moving us closer to calling the new Head of Staff and ending my time at FPC. This place is my home and where I grew up. I love the people of FPC. They were crucial players in launching my call as an ordained clergy in the PCUSA. So, between each line, punctuation mark, and word lies the deep affection I have for this place and these people, who are my family. There is something in the DNA of the Craven County community and FPC that allows ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

The production of a Mission Study during the “in between installed pastors” time is something more than a ritual prescription. Congregations are best served when the Mission Study opens the eyes of a church and its people to the heart of God and God’s plan for God’s church in the community it is to serve. This Mission Study has several important purposes:

1. To inform and support the work of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC)
2. To educate candidates for the installed Head of Staff/Pastor position available at First Presbyterian Church (FPC)
3. To resource the officers of FPC as they exercise their leadership responsibilities
4. To encourage members of the congregation to talk in a non-threatening way about their congregation and community and to stimulate thinking about FPC’s corporate future as a church of Jesus Christ
5. To inform and equip the Presbytery of New Hope through its Commission on Ministry.

This project was blessed with many hands in its development. To name them all would require the addition of several more pages. One group needs a special mention and owns the development of the material in the Mission Study. On behalf of FPC’s Session and congregation, I wish to thank the Pastor Transition Team (PTT) members (Peggy Clark, Chris Kelso, Steve Mabie, Alison Mattocks, and David Taylor – chair) for their faithful and dedicated service. Their overwhelming talent brought encouragement and steadfastness to the process as we continued to work through a pandemic to bring this Mission Study in its current form to life.

As you read this Mission Study, I am thankful for one other group we call the ‘Community of Saints’ who surround us, and whose vision and commitment throughout the years, built FPC. Their work is the foundation upon which we now stand. May FPC step out in faith to proclaim the love of Christ to the new generations of seekers and believers!

Shalom,
Edward Bellis, Interim Pastor

Background of the Writing Process and Purpose of This Mission Study

My interim ministry with FPC began October 1, 2019 and my initial efforts at orienting myself and discerning the present situation at FPC included the following:

1. The FPC Interim Pastor Search Committee corporately and individually provided thoughtful, comprehensive, and a candid interview experience. I left the face-to-face interview knowing that I wanted to be FPC's Interim Pastor and was delighted when the call was extended.
2. Ted Churn asked a key question of me, "As your growing up/home church, will you be able to be an effective interim." My prayer is that I was ruthlessly honest with myself and God in seeking to do God's will. Any bias for the past I hope God uses to validate the present interim process. I admit a strong desire to see FPC continue a healthy and successful ministry in Craven County and specifically New Bern.
3. Conversations with staff (Daewon Goldenbaum-Yang, Rev. Lloyd Griffith, Tommy Hall, retired full time secretary Connie McLean, Pat Rowlett, Rev. Dr. Maren Sonstegard-Spray, Cathy Wingfield, and Amber Zapffel.) were insightful to history and present circumstances. I also met with former pastor. Each person provided a piece of color to the tapestry woven at FPC New Bern.
4. A small team of "key players" was assembled to gather data and write the Mission Study. This team was named the Pastoral Transition Team (PTT).
5. The Holy Cow! Consulting team who guided us through and interpreted the Church Assessment Tool (CAT).
6. Of note, I normally hold "Listening Sessions" with many of the elders and small groups of the congregation after the CAT. Yet, due to the COVID-19 stay at home orders, I chose not to do them. I am leaving the CAT as a stand-alone tool for the congregation's feedback.
7. Graphs of membership data from the General Assembly (2009-2019), placed in the Appendix.
8. Financial data (2009-2019) supplied from the Church's Treasurer and Bookkeeper.
9. I read Session minutes from 2014-2019.

These nine (9) activities are the source from this report's observation, findings, and recommendations. FPC is a great place to work and worship.

Some Conclusions and Opinions

"The Emperor's New Clothes" is a short tale by Hans Christian Andersen about two weavers who promise an Emperor a new suit of clothes that are invisible. When the Emperor parades before his subjects in his new clothes (in reality he was wearing nothing), no one dares to say that he doesn't see any suit of clothes until at last a child cries out, "But he isn't wearing anything at all!"

Although a larger church, FPC knows how to be a family. One challenge of an interim pastor is to name the areas of denial and/or avoidance (i.e., the emperor with no clothes) that keep a church from developing authentic Christian relationships. I will attempt below to report them to you without comment. I am not recording them with any priority or order but commend each consideration in the days, months, and years ahead.

- As the Church Assessment Tool (CAT) revealed, the stewardship potential of the congregation is underperforming (average household income is \$129,558 and average percentage of income given is about 1.17% [Vital Signs page 25]), and the data suggests a challenge to connect the spiritual health of the organization to giving, and the interpretation identified this as a growth area.
- The CAT data revealed the position on the "Energy-Satisfaction" as High Energy-High Satisfaction. This quadrant is defined by the question, "Who are we?", and FPC's answers indicated that it is in the "Transformation Quadrant." This position indicates that a pastor who is a good Strategic Planner is needed to lead FPC to take calculated risks. The CAT also indicates that Preaching, Teaching, and Pastoral Skills are areas identified by the congregation as highly desired, yet our consultant (Emily Swanson) said that a Strategic Planner is the critical skill that is needed for this quadrant and at FPC. The PNC will want to pay attention to how the different candidates demonstrate success in their past challenges and how they turned a challenge into a learning time or success. A serious challenge for the Transformation Quadrant" needs to be named. Complacency may creep into a church's life. FPC must be vigilant to not rest on work that is already completed.
- My experience with the people at FPC and the data in the CAT (p. 13) suggests that the congregation is a Big Tent church theologically. The pastor called needs ability to work with a wide range of diverse theologies while maintaining the basic structure of Presbyterianism and maintain a united congregation.
- Excellence in Adult Education is a draw for FPC, extremely important to the adults, and a core strength of its membership.
- FPC holds onto its staff for long periods of time (often decades). Yet, in the next five years or so, I foresee multiple retirements that will disrupt the long tenure. The advantage is that longevity of retention brought stability throughout the organization. Those retirements/changes will present FPC the challenge of change. A list of possible retirements/changes is noted. I am the interim, and that position is time limited. Both the Church Organist and the Director of Music are over forty years employed at FPC which will see a change in the church's theology. (My understanding and experience suggest that when I change the church's music we influence a congregation's theology.) The Facilities Supervisor was hired over ten years ago and is in his second career. The Sexton was hired in 1980. The Director of Youth and Education was hired seven years ago, and he will end his employment at the end of May 2020. The Office Supervisor will be with us for two years. Her husband will retire in the next couple of years, and she will leave

FPC upon his retirement. The Personnel Committee is developing a plan for celebrating and managing those transitions, and FPC will need to be thinking about and pay attention to those transitions.

- While FPC is blessed with a Treasurer who is amazing and highly skilled, his tenure as the Treasurer is over forty years. His strength and integrity bring balance, stability, and personal knowledge of history to the FPC system. The finance system and history will be affected by the retirement of the Treasurer. A succession plan would benefit the system.
- This church does conflict management so well organically that I am not sure the church really understands the jewel that it has as a church in its unity of purpose and ministry.
- In 2019, the Preschool turned a corner, and is now in a profitable position. Historically, the Preschool is incredibly strong and a blessing to New Bern. Yet, the Preschool was losing money and heavily subsidized by the church. Through the hard work of the Preschool Board, elder Trudy Martin, and under the leadership of the Associate Pastor, the Financial Secretary developed a plan that turned a program that was experiencing major financial losses to one that is now operating in the black.

FPC is a great church to serve. The system left by the former pastor is healthy and strong. While the former pastor serves as a strong witness to how to “BE” a church, as an administrator the former pastor was not a good and effective planner or strong in the area of pastoral care. FPC cares about its members and a good plan for pastoral care would be helpful as the new Head of Staff engages the church. Organically, this church supports its pastor and staff well and is a model for a place to serve.

The next list contains my understanding and observations of a few challenges facing FPC, and my hope is that during my remaining time at FPC we begin the process to address these challenges. My desire is that the PNC and candidates can use these observations to begin discussions on ministry fit. This list is in no order. The challenges are:

- The large campus is heavily used but, in my opinion, still is under-utilized. Strengthening a process and plan for outside non-profit groups use of the buildings is important and clarifying the expectations (FPC’s and the user) of use needs to be addressed.
- Hurricane Florence greatly impacted the programs and campus of FPC in 2018. The resilience of the organization kept a strong focus on its members and repairs, yet it did experience the disruption caused by the storm.
- Although the J. Murphy Smith Fellowship Center received a major upgrade following Hurricane Florence as described above, other property needs are as follows. The church grounds received a facelift in the spring of 2020. The sanctuary’s outside structure painted, and steeple repaired. The Session House kitchen is undergoing needed repairs from water damage. I foresee a capital campaign in the next 5 years or less to handle the other campus needs.
- While proper campus signage is being addressed, it is still not completed.
- Like many churches in the PCUSA, the decreasing involvement of families in Sunday School is bringing into question how to address and support the current needs of education ministry, particularly on Sunday mornings.
- The church is financially solid for the next 3 to 5 years, but on the horizon, the church’s finances may be impacted by membership decline and ministries affected by a slowly

shrinking and aging congregation. Unless a plan is in place and certain steps are taken to execute the plan, these realities may soon affect ministries.

- Outreach is a hallmark and strength of FPC. A more focused and targeted approach that is connected to vision and mission may need to be considered. Currently, the focus is on so many different ministries.
- The Montagnard ministry is changing from an outreach ministry to one of integration of the community into the entire church's life.
- Clearly defined paths of new member entry are not readily apparent. For the visitor, the "insider" language is difficult to maneuver. While FPC sees itself as open and hospitable, attention needs to be paid to the people who are on the fringe, and clearly marking pathways and consistently offering ways to join the church is important. The church should clarify and pay attention to an evangelism strategy that fits the style of FPC and directs people to join and participate in the life of FPC's ministry.
- We are traveling off the map right now in this age of COVID-19. FPC is positioned well and while it is scary, I am excited for how FPC lives into this new way of being church.
- FPC membership does not like this era of fast paced change and technology. The members prefer lots of paper copies of items that I am used to seeing in electronic form.
- FPC needs to clarify and deepen the engagement of its members in the ministry of the Village at Neuse Forest Presbyterian.
- We must analyze staffing for the future of FPC. FPC may or may not be overstaffed. It may or may not be utilizing the positions to the fullest.

One last note, FPC is aware it is on the east side of I-95 and at the edge of the Presbytery of New Hope. In many ways, I think the leadership for the most part is happy to be left alone. In my interaction with FPC leadership, FPC sees Ted Churn and his leadership as General Presbyter as positive, and FPC is rock solid in its commitment to New Hope Presbytery.

I am impressed by the open and welcoming of FPC towards me and my current setting in life. My son graduates in 2020 from North Lenoir High School outside Kinston, and the leadership allowed me to commute to work so that he could graduate. While I made a comment about welcoming visitors above, I would like also to temper my comment based on my personal experience. While churches make big, bold claims at being an "open and welcoming" church, FPC members love being together. The membership enjoys seeing one another and they are a large family without it being written as a mission statement. They have reached out to me and welcomed me and my family in a way that touches my heart.

FPC is a wonderful opportunity for a pastor with excellent skills in preaching and teaching. Yet, strategic planning is another critical skill needed to grow FPC's energy and satisfaction. This congregation is open to change (Vital Signs p. 14) and ready to move boldly forward into its bright future. FPC is an important, growing, and reaching example of the powerful witness of the love and justice of Jesus Christ. I am privileged to serve as First Presbyterian's interim pastor. Thank you!

Mission Statement

First Presbyterian Church is a welcoming community of faith where Jesus Christ transforms lives:

- through *worship*, as we praise and glorify God;
- through *outreach*, as we embody God's love in service to the world;
- through *education*, as we listen for God's word;
- through *giving*, as we express gratitude to God;
- through *caring*, as we love and care for one another;
- through *communication*, as we invite all to join in God's work;
- through *fellowship*, as we share our lives and faith together.



Demographics of New Bern / Craven County, NC

The City of New Bern is one of North Carolina's best kept secrets. Located just 35 minutes from the beaches of the Crystal Coast, New Bern offers outdoor recreational opportunities including golf, tennis, fishing, and boating. Situated at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent Rivers, New Bern offers idyllic dining and entertainment venues. New Bern proudly served as the Colonial Capital of North Carolina. Much of the early architecture is preserved, and history abounds in the city and throughout Craven County. There remains particular interest in the Civil War period, centered around the New Bern Battlefield, located 5 miles east of town.

New Bern is a progressive community. For several decades, New Bern has been sought out as a retirement destination. Our "imported" citizens bring with them a wealth of varied experience. As a result, the arts, theatre, music, and other cultural activities flourish in New Bern. Likewise, local non-profits for human and environmental causes have proliferated. Probably not a week-end goes by that does not include a worthy fund-raising event or cultural activity.

In 1792, Raleigh became the Capital of North Carolina. Located 125 miles from New Bern, its site provided a central location for governmental affairs. New Bern citizens are fond of going to Raleigh for events and programs, to enjoy shopping, or to attend an ACC sporting event. The Raleigh-based NC Symphony plays several concerts a year in New Bern. The offices of the Presbytery of New Hope are located in Raleigh, on the campus of White Memorial Presbyterian Church, church home to our current Governor, Roy Cooper.

Wilmington and Greenville are other nearby cities within a morning's drive. Both cities host UNC System Universities. East Carolina University (ECU) boasts a highly ranked Nursing and Medical School. UNC-Wilmington is nationally recognized for its Marine Biology Department. While New Bern has many cultural and educational opportunities, a variety of additional opportunities are nearby.

New Bern is the county seat of Craven County, established in 1712. The county is home to 103,000 people. The Cherry Point Marine Corps Air Station and its tenant, Fleet Readiness Center East, a Naval aviation maintenance complex, comprise the largest employer in the county. Over 7500 active duty Marines and Naval civilians are employed at Cherry Point. Other major employers include our regional hospital, CarolinaEast Health Systems, BOSCH Corporation, Hatteras Yachts, Moen, International Paper, Wal-Mart Stores, and the Craven County Schools.

Craven County Schools includes 3 Senior High Schools, 5 Middle Schools, and 15 Elementary Schools. In partnership with Craven Community College, the county schools offer a 5-year Early-College option beginning in 9th Grade and culminating with a high school diploma and a 2-year Associates Degree (or 2 years University credit.) The previous and current Chairs of the

Craven County School Board are members of First Presbyterian Church. Among our church members are a number of current and former educators. Frequently one or more of our three public high schools is in contention for the state high school football championship in their respective divisions. Two private schools operate within the City of New Bern: Saint Paul's Catholic School (Pre-K-8th), and The Epiphany School of Global Studies (K-12).

In 2018, Hurricane Florence inflicted significant damage on the downtown Historic District, and upon many low-lying areas of Craven County. A number of the damaged homes and structures have now been repaired and rehabilitated, but work is continuing. In Spring 2020 the Riverfront Convention Center re-opened, an important driver of economic activity in the downtown area.

Several newer neighborhoods are also available, featuring golf, recreation, and boating / sailing. A number of quality homebuilders are active in New Bern. Typically, a 3000 square foot home in a family neighborhood featuring amenities will be priced beginning around \$300,000.

But Craven County also includes significant poverty (15%). Hurricane Florence severely impacted those in mobile home parks and in sub-standard housing. Elderly and racial-ethnic populations were adversely affected. Some have relocated outside of the county to make a new start. Many continue to struggle to provide the basic necessities for their families. Craven County has benefitted from the numerous disaster relief agencies who have come to the aid of our citizens. As with most places, inadequate education and resources lead to dependence upon charitable and public assistance. Predictably, these same at-risk communities experience active substance abuse, opioid addiction, and criminal justice concerns. The church's involvement in ministry with these communities is active and ongoing. It is further described in the Outreach Section under Church Life.

Active elements of the faith community continue to make efforts to educate and address racial division in our community. Temple B'Nai Sholem, an active Jewish Synagogue, adjoins the First Presbyterian Church campus. Within our congregation are Montagnard families, initially resettled in New Bern by Interfaith Refugee Ministry, a non-profit agency. Karin and Congolese people also now call New Bern home. Other ethnic groups are represented throughout the county population. Craven County's population is 66% White, 21% Black, and 7.13% Hispanic. 97% of county residents are US Citizens. In the 2016 Presidential Election, registered voters cast 59% of their ballots for Republican Donald Trump, and 37.5% for Democrat Hillary Clinton. The 3rd Congressional District, of which Craven County is a part, is considered a "safe" Republican District.

There are over 150 churches or houses of worship in Craven County. Many of these are small, non-denominational storefront facilities. Within the county, dozens of country protestant churches remain. Two Catholic parishes exist: one in Havelock and one in New Bern. Baptist and Methodist are the predominant Protestant denominations. Lutherans, Disciples of Christ, and Episcopal, are also represented. There is not currently an active Ministerial Council in New Bern. Most congregations remain effectively racially segregated.

There are 6 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations in Craven County. Two, Trinity Presbyterian, and Croatan Presbyterian are members of the Coastal Carolina Presbytery. The remaining First Presbyterian, Ebenezer, West New Bern, and Neuse Forest are members of the Presbytery of New Hope. Active joint ministry within these churches is moderately successful.

Participation in community forums, the annual CROP Hunger Walk, and support for the local homeless shelter / soup kitchen, Religious Community Services (RCS) is cordial and ongoing. Other joint involvements include the Rothermel Foundation Lectures, Faith Connection, and New Hope Volunteer Village, a new relief worker dormitory hosted by Neuse Forest Presbyterian Church. Total estimate of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) active members in the county is 1200-1500.

Tourism is a primary economic driver in New Bern. Our local airport and hotels depend upon tourism. Soon our major East-West Highway, US 70, will be upgraded and converted into Interstate 42. Tourism is also a reflection of desirability of an area or city. New Bern has a long history of attracting people. Quite a few of our city's current residents came here first as tourists.

New Bern is not a raw topography that became the community of some developer's dreams. Here we are the product of 300 years of living together, not perfectly, but harmoniously. We share bruises of poverty and injustice. We embrace our common heritage. Even against the backdrop of rich traditions, we are very conscious that we are in the act of "becoming" as a community. The nascent Faith Connection association of members of all faith traditions, and the active Non-Profit Council of the Chamber of Commerce, are both evidence that in a city surrounded by rivers we hope to be "bridge builders". First Presbyterian Church does and will provide leadership in "bridge building" efforts.

Across every segment of our community, from the retiree from Pittsburgh, to the refugee from Southeast Asia, we would say, "Our best years are before us!"

History of First Presbyterian Church, New Bern, NC

The formal organization of the Presbyterian Church in New Bern took place on January 7, 1817 at the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Minor. The Reverend John Knox Witherspoon of Orange Presbytery established the church with thirteen original members. Two years later the congregation purchased a lot on New Street for the construction of a church building. Uriah Sandy built the sanctuary assisted by local contractors and church members Martin Stevenson and John Dewey. Begun in 1819, the sanctuary was dedicated on January 6, 1822.

The present Session House was built next to the sanctuary in 1858 at a cost of \$1500. It originally was aligned with the front of the sanctuary but was moved back to its present location in 1923. The building is used for church school classes, meetings of the Session, receptions and small meetings of local civic groups.

During the Civil War, all church buildings as well as tents and temporary structures on the grounds were used as a hospital for sick and wounded Federal troops. Two Union soldiers persuaded their superiors to plank over the pews to hold the wounded rather than removing them. Attempts by the church following the war to obtain compensation for damages suffered during the Federal occupation were unsuccessful.

The Reverend L.C. Vass became pastor of the church in 1866 with 29 members on roll. During his pastorate the sanctuary was repaired and “modernized” in the best Victorian style from walnut stained woodwork to gaslight fixtures on the interior columns. In 1866 the Reverend Vass wrote a History of the First Presbyterian Church and the city of New Bern. The church history was updated in 1988 by the late Reverend J. Murphy Smith, who was Pastor here for 28 years. It includes a reprint of Vass’ history as well.

In 1936, Mrs. Leo Harvey of Kinston and her sister, church member Mrs. Bess Hyman Guion, funded the restoration of the original pulpit. In 1958 white pews were installed in the sanctuary. Sconces on the first floor and a new brass chandelier were installed in 1964, with sconces being added to the balcony around 1986 when the Charles Fisk organ was installed.

Dedicated throughout its history to both outreach and missions, the First Presbyterian Church of New Bern was instrumental in the establishment of Ebenezer, West New Bern, Neuse Forest and Croatan Presbyterian churches. As one of the founding members of Religious Community Services (1982), the church reaches out to the needy of the community, providing food, clothing and shelter. A notable foreign mission project was the church’s Haiti Fund that grew from support of a small hospital (1985) to the Cormiers Development Project (1988-90), which involves 16 member churches, support from five presbyteries, two Episcopal dioceses and the Presbyterian Church, USA in reforestation and self-sufficiency projects. The church has also been very involved with the settlement and tutelage of Vietnamese Montagnard refugee families in New Bern and many are now United States citizens and church members.

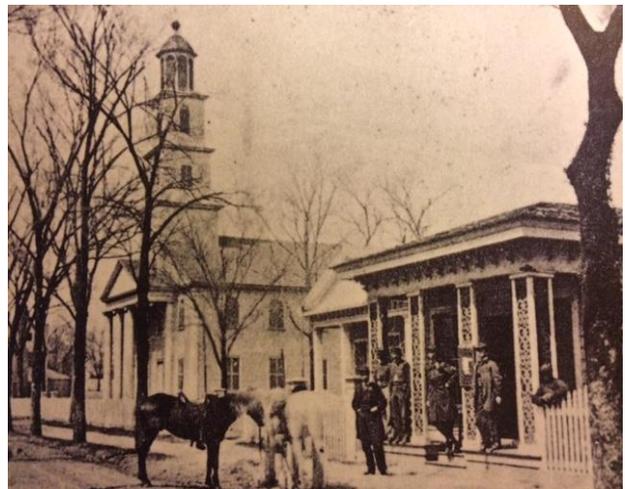
First Presbyterian purchased and remodeled the former St. Paul’s Catholic school on Middle Street into the J. Murphy Smith Fellowship Center which was dedicated on October 3, 1996. This facility provides classrooms for the weekday preschool, church school classes as well as

hosting fellowship events. Construction of a new kitchen in 2020 will greatly enhance the suitability of the building for such events.

The Ministry Center behind the sanctuary was completed in 2010 and contains offices, classrooms, a music suite and a chapel. This building permits our church and many community organizations to provide opportunities for Christian fellowship, spiritual growth and service.

In 2018, following the destruction caused in New Bern by Hurricane Florence, First Presbyterian Church and five other area churches undertook the conversion of Neuse Forest Presbyterian Church's classroom building into a 6800 square foot facility called New Hope Volunteer Village. The converted facility accommodates up to 60 volunteers who come to aid in rebuilding area homes and businesses damaged and destroyed by the hurricane.

First Presbyterian Church is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church USA and part of the Presbytery of New Hope. From its original 13 members in 1817, the church currently has about 736 members on the role and a budget of about \$1,000,000 for 2020. The church was governed by deacons and elders until 1988, when it adopted the unicameral system. There are currently 21 elders divided among seven commissions (Fellowship, Worship, Care, etc.) who serve three-year staggered terms. With the Reverend Edward Bellis as Interim Pastor and the Reverend Dr. Maren Sonstegard-Spray as Associate Pastor, plus a competent staff and many volunteers, First Presbyterian Church stands ready to continue its useful ministry to members, the community and the world in the name of God.



Church Campus and Buildings

The First Presbyterian Church of New Bern (FPCNB) is situated on the south side of 400 block of New St. between Hancock and Middle streets. The J. M. Smith Fellowship Center is located at 508 Middle St. The Northern & Southern Railroad operates daily freight trains transporting bulk commodities on the Hancock St. tracks. The intersection of New and Middle streets is locally referred to as the “church corner” where in addition to FPCNB, the Centenary United Methodist Church (founded 1772), the Temple Chester B’Nai (founded 1908), the original St. Paul Catholic Church (founded 1840, the oldest Catholic church in NC) are also situated. The FPCNB campus is included in the New Bern Historic District in which any exterior building modifications must be approved in advance by the New Bern Historic Preservation Commission.

The FPCNB campus is comprised of five buildings, a playground with modern playset, and the Memorial Garden columbarium. Property maintenance and upkeep for historic frame structures are major endeavors in eastern NC where hurricanes visit regularly. The campus is currently not situated in the 100-year FEMA flood plain or subject to local flooding. The FPC Property Committee has developed a “10 Year Spending Projection for Minor & Major Projects 2016-2025”. Several of the projects have been completed since 2016 and others were “accelerated” due to wind & water damages from hurricane Florence (2018). Following is a brief summary of remaining property needs by building:

Sanctuary- 400 New St. Completed 1822

Bids for painting the frame exterior are presently being solicited and will likely be completed in 2020. The interior water damage to the steeple, electronic sound system, plaster and paint from Florence has been repaired. There are persistent water leaks (pre-hurricane) in the rear narthex, which are likely due to poor design when the Ministry Center was physically connected to the Sanctuary in 2011. Currently there is no clear source of the leaks or remedy in sight. Other remaining projects include complete interior painting and replacing various units of the HVAC system as needed.

Session House- 408 New St. Built 1858

This frame building is used for group Sunday school classrooms, smaller fellowship events, the William L. Hawkins Library, and the Donald R. Taylor History Room. There is a full kitchen. Repairs are currently underway to repair water damage from a ruptured water line to an ice maker in the kitchen. The restrooms are “marginal” and need to be updated.

Ministry Center- 400 New St. (rear) Built 2011

This building is connected to the Sanctuary by courtyard on the ground level and an elevated walkway from the music department. Other than music department space, there are classrooms, a small chapel, offices for two ministers, Christian educator, church secretary, financial secretary, facilities manager, and a small nursery. There are no known deferred maintenance or physical issues.

Lighthouse- corner of New and Hancock Built c1960

The “Lighthouse” was a former Agriculture Production Credit office that was purchased by FPCNB in 1988. In it is the office for the Parish Associate Pastor. This space is greatly utilized by outside nonprofit groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and other faith-based step programs which result in issues of cleanliness and general wear & tear. Tenant groups are *gently* encouraged to contribute monetarily to the church for maintenance and upkeep.

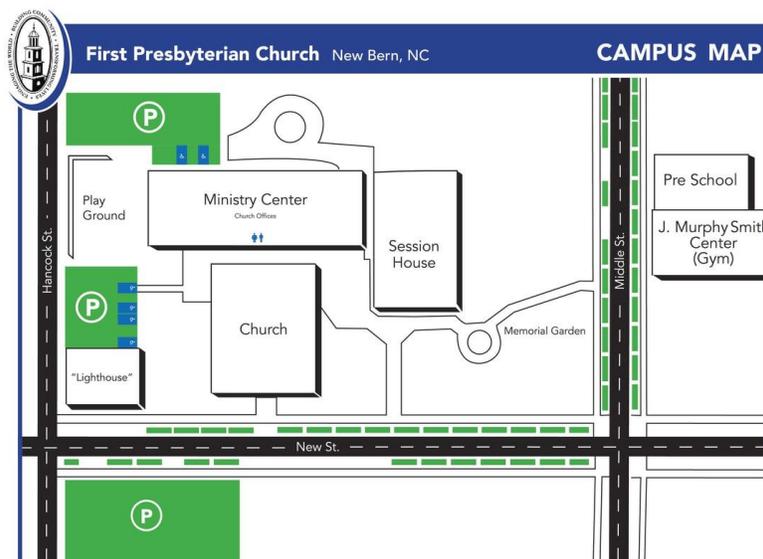
Fannie P. Congdon Fence- erected 1903

A typical period, wrought iron fence with gates in front of the sanctuary along New and Middle streets defines the main church campus. The fence is in dire need of maintenance and paint due to age.

Memorial Garden- A columbarium was established in 1995 on the brick paver path from the Session House to the J.M. Smith Fellowship Center. This peaceful, concentric brick paver garden has been well-subscribed by church members with red sandstone markers for those interred. Some sandstone markers are wearing from foot traffic and the environment. Estimates for replacement with granite markers is being considered. The garden fountain has been an on-going challenge to maintain due to children involvement and forces of nature.

J. M. Smith Fellowship Center- 508 Middle St. built c1950, purchased/improved 1988

A former catholic parochial school building, this is the main building for FPCNB fellowship events and the FPCNB Preschool. A modern “catering kitchen” was completed in 2020. The main floor is also a gymnasium with basketball goals and floor markings for pickleball play. This floor space is also used by children attending Preschool. There was extensive wind and water damage to the roof above the Preschool classrooms from hurricane Florence which has all been repaired from insurance proceeds and FEMA disaster grants. The Preschool is now one of the most clean and modern in the New Bern area. The fellowship space is available to outside nonprofit groups subject to the facilities manager approval for a token maintenance fee. That policy is currently under review due to a lack of security and abuse.



First Presbyterian Church, New Bern

5-year Financial Summary

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Assets					
Cash and Money Markets	840,912	874,447	764,532	439,191	299,721
Investments in Mutual Funds	1,421,497	1,099,159	1,094,491	965,757	903,869
Property and Equip. (net)	5,847,082	5,543,113	5,569,831	5,542,064	5,566,764
Other Assets	19,416	9,013	5,004	4,926	8,455
Total Assets	8,128,907	7,525,732	7,433,858	6,951,938	6,778,809
Liab. & Net Assets					
Accts Pay & Deferred Income	46,089	45,974	72,336	78,004	80,357
Note Payable Bank	784,167	870,897	930,223	987,569	1,042,907
Total Liabilities	830,256	916,871	1,002,559	1,065,573	1,123,264
Net Asset Balances					
W/O Restrictions					
Undesignated	176,523	129,833	104,817	102,186	67,664
Foundation	1,118,433	864,356	855,299	701,453	659,004
Net Inv. Property	5,062,915	4,672,216	4,639,608	4,554,495	4,523,857
W/ Restrictions					
Bicentennial Fund for Capital Improv.	505,322	527,152	440,078	166,129	57,411
Special Purposes	435,458	415,304	391,498	362,102	347,609

Total Net Assets	7,298,651	6,608,861	6,431,300	5,886,365	5,655,545
Total Liab and Net Assets	8,128,907	7,525,732	7,433,859	6,951,938	6,778,809

Summary of Operating Fund Support and Expenses

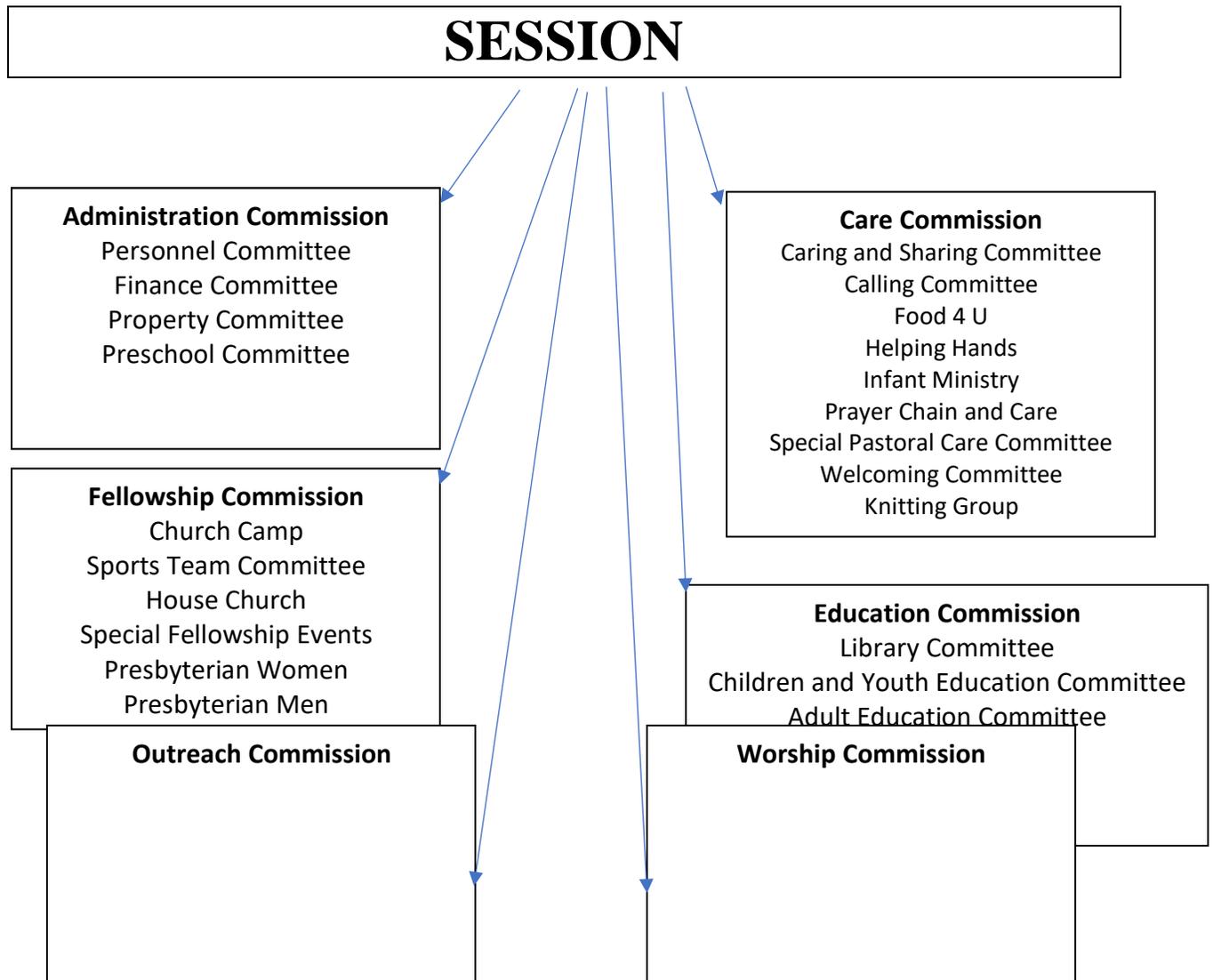
	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Revenue. and Support					
Offerings and Pledges	915,632	917,777	938,464	895,771	890,285
Designated Offerings and Restricted	260,615	214,833	140,409	157,082	131,463
Total Revenue	1,176,247	1,132,610	1,078,873	1,052,853	1,021,748
Expenses					
Program	64,407	50,620	54,783	51,804	44,856
Outreach	170,868	161,541	116,835	106,973	100,020
Sal/Admin	739,272	768,777	745,866	777,238	795,090
Capital Expense and Debt Serv	101,626	132,684	104,892	103,922	103,765
Total Expenses	1,076,173	1,113,622	1,022,376	1,039,937	1,043,731
Net Inc./Loss	100,074	18,988	56,497	12,916	(21,983)

Summary of Yearly Contribution to Bicentennial, Capital, and Foundation

	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
Contributions	198,204	198,033	353,362	172,601	165,792

Two specific incidents need a special mention for the Mission Study. First, Hurricane Florence in September of 2018 effected and affected many church members directly, some completely losing their homes. Overall, contributions in 2018 were \$25,359 less than 2017 but they rebounded in 2019 to more “normal” levels. Secondly, the COVID-19 pandemic, which sent shockwaves through our society and economy, also affected the area. Giving at FPC has kept pace with normal contributions from past years, however, through mail-in and electronic donations. Additional financial information is available upon need and request.

Structure of Session Commissions and Committees



Church Life at First Presbyterian

We Gather in Care

From our congregational mission statement ... “through caring, as we love and care for one another”. The Care Commission of FPC seeks to respond to the needs of our church members in a caring, compassionate, timely manner. The Care Commission oversees the following committees:

Caring and Sharing Committee

The Caring and Sharing Committee organizes volunteers to provide meals or receptions for bereaved families within the church.

Confirmand Reception Committee

The Confirmand Reception Committee provides an annual reception for the Confirmands, their families and the Session.

Prayer Team

The Prayer Team receives, records and updates prayer requests from the congregation and distributes them to volunteers who pray for them and minister to their needs.

Welcoming Committee

The Welcoming Committee contacts church visitors who complete a pew friendship pad entry by phone, email or letter.

Congregational Calling Team

This team contacts every church member by phone at least once a year to see how they are and determine any needs.

Food 4 You Committee

The Food 4 You Committee collects donated meals and stores them in the freezer to be distributed as needed to church members.

Knitting For Others Team

The Knitting For Others Team meets weekly to make and distribute prayer shawls chemo caps, infant booties, etc. for members.

Helping Hands Ministry

This group responds in a confidential and practical way to unexpected short-term needs of church members.

Special Pastoral Care Team

This team provides care such as regular visitation to shut-in church members and those with chronic problems.

We Gather in Education

Overview

The Education Ministry at First Presbyterian Church encompasses Children & Youth Ministry, Adult Education, the First Presbyterian Church Library, the Rothermel Lecture Series, and First Presbyterian Preschool. From the church's mission statement, "through education, as we listen for God's Word".

We offer a wide range of classes and educational opportunities for children, youth, and adults within our church family on Sundays and throughout the week. Under the leadership of our Director of Christian Education (DCE), we seek to engage with the middle and high school youth of our church and community through S.A.L.T. (Serving and Learning Together) and Middle/High School Youth Group. We fulfill our mission of further reaching out into the community through stimulating Rothermel lectures, offering a lively week of Vacation Bible School during the summer, and providing our youth with meaningful service projects. We prepare our youth for membership in the church and a lifetime of faith through Sacraments and Confirmation classes. Year after year, our Preschool is considered to be one of the best in the New Bern area.

Children & Youth Ministry

Children's Sunday School

Three Children's Sunday School classes are offered: Preschool, Kindergarten-2nd grade, and 3rd - 5th grade. The Sunday School curriculum for the Preschool age group is a 52-book series called God Loves Me and the Elementary curriculum is the Whirl Lectionary Study by Sparkhouse. Overall, Children's Sunday School attendance has averaged 12 over the last several years. In the summer months, adult and parent volunteers lead a combined Children's Sunday School class called "Read This Children's Book" because our numbers drop dramatically because of family summer travel.

Note: Beginning in late 2019, the Education Commission combined the older elementary groups into Kindergarten - 5th grade because of low attendance.

Middle/High School Sunday School

This age group is not very active and per the current Education Commission Chair, "We need to capture the High Schoolers. We need to make Sunday School more appealing" to this age group. The curriculum currently being used is the Faith Questions Youth Curriculum, published by PC(USA). On most Sundays, there are only 2-4 youth in Sunday School, resulting in the cancellation of a number of classes throughout the year because of lack of participation. This trend has continued for the last 5 or so years.

Note: The Education Commission also agreed to alternate Sunday School and Choir in an effort to increase attendance beginning with the Fall Quarter 2019.

Children's Worship & Wonder

Following the Children's Message at the 11 o'clock Worship Service, Kerri Wheeler and Daewon Goldenbaum-Yang lead children from age 3 through 2nd grade in "Children's Worship & Wonder"

in the Ministry Center classrooms and Chapel. The younger children (age 3-Kindergarten) meet with Kerri and follow a curriculum called Young Children and Worship by Stewart & Berryman. The older children (1st and 2nd grades) are led by Daewon and assisted by various parent and adult volunteers. Their curriculum is from the books 13 Very Cool Stories, 13 Very Surprising Sayings, and 13 Very Awesome Promises, which focus on the teachings of Jesus and other stories in the Bible while allowing for fun conversations and activities to make the lessons more relevant and memorable.

S.A.L.T. (*Serving and Learning Together*) youth group is offered once a month to 3rd – 5th graders. The group focuses on service and mission opportunities at First Presbyterian and within the community, and the goal is for participants to gain an understanding of why we as members of the church are called to serve. In addition to a monthly service project, the meeting is comprised of a shared meal, a Bible lesson, and active games to encourage fellowship and nurture relationships. Children are encouraged to bring friends that may not be members of FPC.

Middle & High School Youth Group

In 2019, the goals of the Middle & High School Youth Group included increasing attendance, serving the community through service projects, guiding our Youth Council to lead youth group, and continuing a joint youth group with Christ Episcopal Church. Youth Group served the community through participation in Crop Walk, assisting with Christ Church's Pumpkin Patch, delivering goodie bags to residents at McCarthy Court, and collecting canned goods for Religious Community Services. Youth Group also went on several outings throughout the year including a trip Busch Gardens, a trip to Air U Trampoline Park, and a trip to Bear Town Cinema. Over the years, our Youth Group has sent attendees to the Massanetta Middle School Conference and the Montreat High School Conference.

Youth Council

Youth Council is made up of 4-5 youth who are involved in planning and leading Youth Group activities alongside adult volunteers. They are chosen by the pastors/ DCE and the Youth Leaders based on leadership capabilities. They are invited to attend monthly planning meeting to share their input. They maintain contact with a designated group of youth throughout the school year to promote greater involvement in church and youth group activities. There are currently no FPC youth serving on Youth Council.

Sacraments Class

Children in second grade (or older) participate in a four-session class where they learn about the Sacraments of the Presbyterian Church (USA). The four classes will be completed one Sunday before Palm Sunday. The classes are led by the ministers and DCE. The children will be given a *Spark Bible* to be used during the class sessions and to keep at the conclusion of the class.

The titles of the four sessions are as follows:

Session 1 – We Belong to God

Session 2 – Lord, We Remember

Session 3 – I am a Child of God
Session 4 – A Teaching Meal

Upon completion of the Sacraments Class and the approval of the Session, participants will be invited to take their First Communion on Palm Sunday during the 11am Worship Service. After Communion, each child is presented with a Sacraments Class Certificate and other mementos agreed upon by the Education Commission.

In the following school year (usually in third grade), the children who completed Sacraments Class will no longer be dismissed to attend Children’s Worship & Wonder, but will participate fully in the Worship Service.

Confirmation Class

The 8-week Confirmation Class is typically for eighth grade youth (or older). The 8 class sessions are to be completed one Sunday before the Pentecost Sunday. The PC (USA) *Professing Our Faith* curriculum is used for our class sessions. The classes are taught by Pastors and/or DCE. In January of the Calendar year, parents of the eighth grade youth will be contacted with a letter describing the details of Confirmation. The Confirmands will be assigned to a mentor (Elder in PC(USA)) who will support them in writing his/her faith statement and putting together a pictorial collage depicting “Where he/she experiences God.” The Confirmands will be given a Study Bible at the first session for usage during class and their personal use from that point forward. Upon their confirmation, they will be presented with a Confirmation Certificate and other mementos agreed upon by the Education Commission.

Vacation Bible School

VBS welcomed about 55 participants during the month of June 2019. Using the Cokesbury curriculum, To Mars and Beyond, children discovered the wonders of God’s universe and explored where God’s power could take them. Children rotated through stations with science experiments and crafts that tied to the “theme” verse from Ephesians 3:20 “Glory to God who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us!” Each day focused on a different Bible story and the children learned memorable and upbeat songs and dances and spent time in the church yard for games and recreation each day.

Children & Youth Participation in Worship Services

Each year, Children’s Sabbath, Youth Sunday and Senior Recognition Sunday provide opportunities for our children and youth to plan and participate in the Worship Service at First Presbyterian Church. Children’s Sabbath highlights our Preschool students and staff, the Worship Service on Youth Sunday is planned and led entirely by the youth of the church (under the direction of the DCE), and Senior Recognition Sunday is when our Seniors are recognized for their achievements. At this time, the recipient of the J. Murphy Smith Scholarship is also recognized.

Adult Education

Adult Sunday School

The Sunday morning offerings are the heart of our adult education efforts. Attendance averaged 20% of worship attendance in 2019 and the offerings were very well received. The Adult Education Committee attempts to offer a balanced program of educational offerings covering four critical areas: The Bible, Christian Life, The Church, and Theology. It is our goal that a person attending our classes for a five-year period will be well grounded and have basic literacy in all four areas. We offer classes that are highly academic, classes that are contemplative, and classes that are devotional. We understand that our congregation is diverse and its needs are broad. Examples of the classes taught are: Encounters with Jesus: The Gospel of John, The Present Word (cooperative curriculum, offered every quarter), Short Stories By Jesus: The Parables, Contemplative studies of the present and future of the Church, including the Emerging Church movement, and The Book of Jeremiah. At FPC, we are blessed with competent, educated, compelling teachers both lay and clergy.

Library

Under the leadership of librarian, Mary Ann Caudle, the church library became a significantly more usable element of the church's mission in 2019. Among the accomplishments were weeding out of unused or unwanted books and discarding of VHS tapes (and replacing them with DVDs where possible) and creating an online catalog of all adult and children's books. This was a massive (and impressive) undertaking by Mary Ann and other volunteers, and makes our entire collection searchable remotely. We also improved signage in the library, developed a Library Mission Policy, which was adopted by the Session, and developed a Library Gift Policy, also adopted by the Session.

In May of 2019, the Session confirmed the email vote to rename the church library in honor of former Head Pastor and nearly 18-year tenure at FPC.

Midweek Bible Studies

The church offers three mid-week Bible study groups: a Monday evening Women's Bible Study (led by lay women), a Thursday morning Men's Bible Study (with Head of Staff), and a Thursday morning Women's Bible Study (with Associate Pastor Maren Sonstegard-Spray). The groups are small but steady and we judge that they are filling needs for those who attend.

The Rothermel Foundation Lectures

The Rothermel Foundation is a fund of First Presbyterian Church, administered by an interfaith, ecumenical Board of Trustees appointed by the Session. Members of the Board represent First Presbyterian Church, First Baptist Church, Centenary Methodist Church, Garber Methodist Church, St. Paul Catholic Church, Christ Episcopal Church, Temple B'Nai Sholem, and Al-Masjid Islamic Center and Mosque. The Rothermel Foundation was endowed in 1987 by a gift from Amel Rothermel, a former member of First Presbyterian Church who left instructions that it be used to provide educational programs related to the role of a benevolent Maker in the world.

In 2019, there were two Rothermel lectures, free and open to the public, held in the sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church. The lectures are co-sponsored by Public Radio East, which provides free promotional spots. The lectures are advertised in the local newspaper and in congregational bulletins and newsletters. The two 2019 lectures were:

- April 7, 2019 Faces of Alzheimer’s Disease Research, Dr. Carol Colton, Professor of Neurology, Duke University School of Medicine.
- October 6, 2019 Sex, Race, and Politics: Explaining the Division Between the Religious Left and the Religious Right, Dr. Daniel K. Williams, Professor of History, University of West Georgia.

Attendance averaged 250.

ESL Class Offerings

In 2015, members of First Presbyterian Church, New Bern, saw a great need for English language tutoring for the Montagnard members of our congregation who had come to New Bern as refugees from Vietnam. With a small group of volunteers and no formal funding, we began a program with donated materials and computers. Thus was born our ESL ministry that has grown in four years to now include our partner church, West New Bern Presbyterian Church, with refugees from Vietnam, Myanmar, Congo, and Rwanda.

Special funding has allowed us to upgrade and expand the computer resources in our ESL lab and to partner with West New Bern Presbyterian Church to establish a much-needed ESL lab to service their refugees. Our ESL mission, simply stated, is to provide English language and citizenship training to refugees in our church and the neighboring New Bern community. Through English language immersion and citizenship preparation our ESL students improve their reading, writing and speaking abilities and have greater opportunities to fully integrate into American life.

First Presbyterian Preschool

The First Presbyterian Church Preschool continues to be a highly sought-after program in the community, recognized for its excellent staff and curriculum. The Preschool began in 1984 with fifteen 3 year olds meeting two days per week. Today, enrollment is approximately 100 students in classes offered five days a week from Mother’s Morning Out through Pre-K. This encompasses children ages 6 months through 5 years old. There are twenty teachers on staff and our Preschool Director, Kerri Wheeler, has been leading the program for nearly 20 years.

The Preschool provides a place for Christian nurture and, from the current Mission Statement, “creates an environment where every child feels safe, secure, and has the opportunity to develop at his or her own individual pace.” Daily opportunities are provided for problem solving, critical thinking, and socialization, and the staff assist each

child in attaining the skills necessary for social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual growth.

Children participate in Chapel each week in the FPC Sanctuary and, weather permitting, walk to Story Time at the New Bern-Craven County Public Library. They also take unique and fun field trips in downtown New Bern, participate in weekly music class, and are challenged and engaged with unique curriculum themes.

The Preschool also offers a wide variety of Summer Camps, striving to bridge the gap of learning opportunities through the months between academic years. Participation in camp offerings is strong each summer.

We Gather in Fellowship

Again, from our congregational mission statement...” through fellowship, as we share our lives and faith together”. First Presbyterian is constantly looking for diverse ways of making sure all members and visitors feel welcome and can find a place to fit in.

Fellowship Cafe’

Among the many activities that promote Christian fellowship at church, there is a Fellowship Café from 9:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on Sundays where coffee and snack/breakfast items are served. It is hosted by the Fellowship Committee and volunteers and promotes meeting and conversation among worship attendees.

House Church

In order to foster closer relationships among such a large congregation, FPC has about 14 House Churches that meet once a month from October through May. Around 10-25 people comprise most House Church groups which meet at someone’s house, a local restaurant, or in the Session House for a meal brought by participants. After the meal, the group has a period of either pure socialization, or of fellowship and a spiritual devotional program. Individual House Churches often do charitable projects on their own and assist with the monthly Fellowship dinners in setting up, serving and clean-up.

Fellowship Dinners

Fellowship dinners are held on the first Wednesday of the month at 5:45 p.m. in the J. Murphy Smith Center. There is usually a program (stewardship) or entertainment (handbell concert) provided. Meals vary from catered affairs to food cooked on site by Fellowship Committee members and volunteers. Members of the various House Churches take turns helping with the setting up, serving and clean-up of these events. Depending on the time of year, 130 to 200 congregation members attend. The new kitchen in the Smith Center will vastly improve the capability to prepare, serve and clean-up at these popular functions. The Fellowship Committee also hosts special cookouts (Fourth of July) and lunches on the grounds several times a year.

Lunch Wagon

First Presbyterian has a Lunch Wagon program which transports members in the church van/bus to area attractions for tours and then to a local restaurant for a meal. Gas money is contributed by participants and attendance is typically around 23 people. Recent destinations of the Lunch Wagon have included a minor league baseball game in Kinston, the NC Estuarium in Washington, Boar’s Head and Yule Fest in Kinston, Carteret History Museum in Morehead City, a talk on rescued dog flights, Mother Earth Brewery in Kinston, Mike’s Farm in Beulaville, Lobster Fest in Salter Path and “Preparing for the Final Chapter” in our Session House. This program on preparing for the end of life was attended by 50 members.

Presbyterian Women

Presbyterian Women is a very active part of our church. There are currently five circles with individual leaders who meet once a month; three during the day and two at night. Approximately

100 women participate. Circles held a Soup and Service Luncheon which raised \$800 for Children's Hope Alliance. In April at the Spring Gathering in Lucama, NC, Carole Koi was installed as Presbytery Moderator, Esther Patterson was installed as Area9 Representative and Associate Pastor Maren Sonstegard-Spray addressed the group. PW participates in worship devotionals, assist with Lenten Lunch services, visit homebound members, and contribute to special collections throughout the year. Monthly mission projects this year included procuring infant layette items, sending gift cards to our college students, providing camperships to Camp Albemarle and providing the annual sock tree at Christmas. Individual circle projects included adopting families for Christmas, giving gift cards to the Montagnard families and toys to the Salvation Army. Ann Thornton is the present moderator.

Men of the Church

Men of the Church at FPC has a had a history of fits and starts. Begun in 1944, quarterly meetings were held until interest lagged and, in 1951, they stopped completely. In 1960, joint meetings were held with the other local Presbyterian churches, but that too met with little success. A period of renewed interest in monthly meetings evolved in the 1970s and 80s, with meals of steaks, baked potatoes and salads cooked and served on-site followed by a period of fellowship. As 2010 approached, erratic program quality and difficulty in securing assistance with meal preparation caused interest and attendance to decline once more. Around 2010, new leadership revived the Men of the Church with appealing programs and speakers and a reasonably priced meal at a local restaurant venue. Meetings included many church members as speakers for such programs as Civil War medicine, the 1922 New Bern fire, medical ethics and the archaeology of piracy. At this writing, after a successful decade, the MC are again in transition and seeking a new approach to this method of men's fellowship for all ages.

Family Camp

Camp Albemarle is a Presbytery camp on the banks of Bogue Sound in Newport, NC. Family camp weekends have been held there by our church since the 1980s. We currently hold an annual church camp day there in the spring with activities and fellowship for children and adults from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

We Gather in Outreach

The First Presbyterian Church – New Bern Mission Statement says, “First Presbyterian Church is a welcoming community of faith where Jesus Christ transforms lives... *through Outreach, as we embody God’s love in service to the world;*”

Outreach has long been an important aspect of church life at First Presbyterian Church. Our efforts of Outreach, or Missions, are intended to fulfill our calling of “Worship, Nurture, and Service” described in the Book of Order. We seek to be the hands and feet of Christ as we serve our neighbor, near and far. Every member is encouraged to participate in some form of Outreach Ministry. Many, especially those in retirement, have gladly accepted that invitation. Our teaching is that direct, hands on involvement in outreach ministry has a profound impact upon an individual’s spiritual growth and understanding. About 12-15 members serve on the Outreach Commission and attend the monthly meetings.

Approximately 10% of the church’s budget is dedicated to Outreach ministries. Some are international in scope, a few are national, and some local. Two denominational giving opportunities, *One Great Hour of Sharing*, and *Christmas Joy Offering* are conducted each year. The church’s response to the Presbytery Asking is included among the designated funds in the Outreach Commission’s portion of the church’s budget.

International ministries, vetted and supported through the Outreach Commission, are Mission Co-Workers in Thailand and in Guatemala. The church helped to found, and hosted for many years, an extraordinarily successful re-forestation program in western Haiti. This ministry is ongoing, but the administrative office is no longer located in New Bern. Among the actively supported international ministries, Interfaith Refugee Ministry is dear to our church. Over the last 15 years, we have welcomed Montagnard families into our community and congregation. Additionally, several First Presbyterian members have served on the IRM Board.

Rounding out the international outreach effort are two ministries that the church promotes but does not include in our budget: CROP Hunger Walk and Operation Christmas Child. Members participate in these ministries, but their donations are made directly, not through the church budget.

Nationally or Regionally, the church’s efforts are best described as financial, rather than participatory. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, a national agency of the church, is an exception. Youth and adults have participated in PDA sponsored disaster efforts. Our own recent Hurricane Florence was a local event with national scope. First Presbyterian’s primary response has been to lead a coalition of churches in developing New Hope Volunteer Village on the campus of Neuse Forest Presbyterian Church. Now completed, the facility will accommodate up to 60 guests who wish to come to our area for disaster relief work. Guest registration is accomplished through the offices of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. New Hope Volunteer Village is a unique facility in our area, and a genuine asset to the community. During the construction and re-configuration of an existing building, thousands of work hours were logged by members of several churches.

Other National or regional ministries supported by FPC-NB include Union Seminary, East Carolina University Campus Ministry, Camp Albemarle, and Relay for Life.

Local ministries offer the greatest opportunity for our church members to be directly involved. First Presbyterian members have been instrumental in founding several key local ministries including Religious Community Services (RCS), a homeless shelter, food pantry, and soup kitchen. After more than three decades, church members continue to be involved with feeding the hungry and providing other essential support through RCS. Likewise, a locally founded and staffed health clinic, MERCI Clinic, receives monetary gifts and volunteers from the church. FPC members have served on the Boards of RCS and MERCI Clinic. Our church's doctors and pharmacists have served in the Clinic.

More recently, the Backpack Blessings ministry, hosted by Garber United Methodist Church has been widely supported by First Presbyterians. This program is designed to provide week-end food for students who are food insecure. Twice yearly Ziplock bags of non-perishable food items are packed for distribution by schoolteachers into the backpacks of at-risk children. The teachers do this each Friday. These packing events have become festive occasions enjoyed by adults and children together. Backpack Blessings is also supported through the church's Outreach budget.

First Presbyterian also created a Grief Support Group which meets every third Tuesday of the month. This group serves two purposes - to provide support for those who are experiencing the loss of a loved one, and to be a safe haven for those who are living through this process. Church members as well as community members have discussions of their experiences on this journey.

The Interfaith Refugee Ministry (IRM) opened the door for members of the Montagnard community to become members of the First Presbyterian community. Now, in partnership with the Craven Literacy Council, and West New Bern Presbyterian Church a language lab has been established at both churches. Volunteers meet with Montagnard and Karin students to teach English as a Second Language courses. This is personal and computer-based training structured around the student successfully passing the United States Citizenship examination. The church members have joyfully accompanied their students to their Citizenship Ceremony!

Brinson Buddies is a program involving students at Brinson Elementary School in Craven County. Church members serve as greeters, assist teachers, and tutor students in in their studies. The key is consistency and relationship building. The program is about 3 years old and has attracted several of our former educators.

Not surprisingly, our 200-year-old church has acquired a certain amount of property during our existence. In so doing, we are fortunate to be able to offer the "Ministry of Space". Our Lighthouse Building accommodates several 12-Step Meeting programs. In the Ministry Center Building we host the language lab and periodic gatherings of Christian and community groups. In the Session House we have hosted concerts, piano recitals, and hobby interest groups. The J. Murphy Smith gymnasium has hosted police / youth basketball, shoe making for African children, and NAACP and AA meetings and dinners. This utilization is viewed as an opportunity to be a good neighbor in our community. While no additional property acquisitions are being contemplated now, upgrades to these existing buildings are currently being accomplished.

There are probably not fewer than a dozen ministries in which church members are involved that are not described here. Every three years or so, the Outreach Commission will host a Missions Fair in the gym in a trade show format. Members are encouraged to attend and to meet with representatives of the different ministries supported by the church. It is a fun and informative occasion.

Outreach remains strong at First Presbyterian Church. Intentional reinforcement from the pulpit, and a calling to each member to find their place of service would be hugely beneficial.

We Gather in Worship

From our congregational mission statement . . . “through worship, as we chiefly praise and glorify God”. The church seeks to provide a broad range of worship opportunities and experiences incorporating readings of scripture, sacred music and pastoral preaching that will engage the congregation in praising and glorifying God within the community of faith.

Sunday Worship Services

Worship is one of the most vital parts of our church life. There are normally two Sunday morning services, one at 8:30 a.m. and one at 11:00 a.m. Beginning in 2018, the church began a single 10:00 a.m. service in the summer between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Here is a description of a typical Sunday service. At the beginning of each service there is the Chiming of the Trinity. At that time, the congregation is encouraged to quietly prepare for worship. A Prayer of Preparation is provided in the bulletin to encourage meditation. The organist plays a prelude and the choir sings an introit. Announcements of upcoming church events and activities are then made by the pastor followed by a responsive Call to Worship. The first hymn is then sung. Hymns and anthems are selected by the Director of Music that are associated with the scriptural readings and sermon that day. Next comes a Prayer of Confession and silent prayer by the congregation. An Assurance of Pardon is given by the pastor with a sung response. A Passing of the Peace follows where congregants greet each other and wish each other the peace of Christ. There is a Children’s Moment when a pastor or a church member gives the children 2nd grade and younger a lesson down front in the sanctuary after which the children go to their own Worship and Wonder church period.

Baptisms, when they occur, are held during this time and the children are included as they are asked to support the child as they grow in the church. An elder selected by the parents of the child to be baptized introduces the child to the congregation and asks if they will teach and support him/her in their church life. After the administering of the water, the pastor usually takes the child around the sanctuary, “introducing” him/her to the congregation.

Following the Children’s Moment, there is an Affirmation of Faith in which the Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed or other denominational declaration of faith is recited. The Lord’s Prayer is said also.

The offering is collected by volunteer ushers and usually accompanied by music from one of the seven children, youth or adult choirs or a handbell choir. The offering is followed by the Doxology, a Prayer of Dedication and another hymn. After a prayer for illumination, scripture from the Old and New Testaments of the bible is read, separated by an anthem by the choir. The sermon follows, then a closing hymn, prayers of the people, a benediction, response, and a postlude by the organist. Attendance at Sunday morning services has averaged 314, using 2014-18 figures, out of a total membership that has averaged 782 over that same period.

Other Worship Opportunities

A Wednesday evening worship service is offered at 5:30 in the Ministry Center Chapel. It features a contemplative approach to worship focused around silence, prayer and reflection on the biblical text chosen for the next Sunday's sermon. Communion is served by intinction on the fourth Wednesday of the month.

A Centering Prayer Group is held on Wednesdays from noon to 1:00 p.m. Various books and guides are studied for the purpose of re-discovering God's Spirit present in our lives.

Youth Sunday, in which the young people of the church perform all of the worship functions from ushering, providing music and liturgists, to sermons by graduating high school seniors, is normally held in March.

A Children's Sabbath Service is held in April.

Mid-week services are held at noon in the Chapel during Advent.

Lenten Lunch services are conducted in the Session House during the Tuesdays in Lent in conjunction with a meal provided by the Presbyterian Women.

Ash Wednesday evening services are at 5:30 p.m. (for young families and those who don't drive after dark) and 7:30 p.m. with communion served.

There is a Maundy Thursday evening service with communion served.

The Candlelight Service and Reception occurs in December and on Christmas Eve, there are two services; one at 5:00 p.m. (for young families with children), and one at 8:00 p.m. when communion is served.

Communion is currently served by elders thirteen times during the church year by regular trays or intinction. All bread served to the congregation is gluten-free. These communion events include Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Mid-Ordinary Time, Worldwide Communion Sunday, All Saints Observance, Christ the King Sunday, Christmas Eve and Baptism of the Lord Sunday. Communion is also observed by intinction at the annual Officers' Retreat at Camp Albemarle in November.

Choirs and Handbells

First Presbyterian Church has seven youth and adult choirs as well as two handbell choirs directed by Director of Music, Pat Kerr Rowlett. The vocal choirs include the Confirmation Choir (grades 6 through 12), Covenant Choir (grades 2 through 5), Kinderchoir (kindergarten and first grade), Preschool Choir (ages 3 and 4), Resurrection Singers (directed by Susan Mabie), and the Daybreak (8:30 service) and Sanctuary (11:00 service) choirs. There are two handbell choirs, the Sanctuary Bells for youth and adults, and an advanced handbell choir. These choirs play 5+ octaves of Schulmerich handbells and 5 octaves of Malmark hand chimes. Pat has served as Director of Music since 1980. She frequently secures brass players from nearby Cherry

Point Marine Corps Air Station or local string and flute players to provide accompaniment at special services such as Easter and Christmas. She often arranges organ recitals and chamber music concerts in our facilities. The 36th annual presentation of Handel's Messiah, co-directed by Pat Rowlett, is held each December with members of the NC Symphony and many First Presbyterian choir members participating.

C.B. Fisk Memorial Organ

Church Organist Vance Harper Jones has been with First Presbyterian since 1977 and accompanies worship services, weddings and funerals. The church has a beautiful Charles Fisk organ, [Opus 89 (1986)] built by C.B. Fisk, Inc. of Boston. The organ was built, completely assembled and tested in Gloucester, MA, then disassembled, packed and transported to New Bern. After church on February 9, 1986, the organ was unloaded by church members young and old to be reassembled and retuned by 26 craftsmen from C.B. Fisk. The organ is called the Memorial Organ because church members contributed the entire funding for the organ in memory of family and friends.

Executive Summary of Church Assessment Tool (CAT)

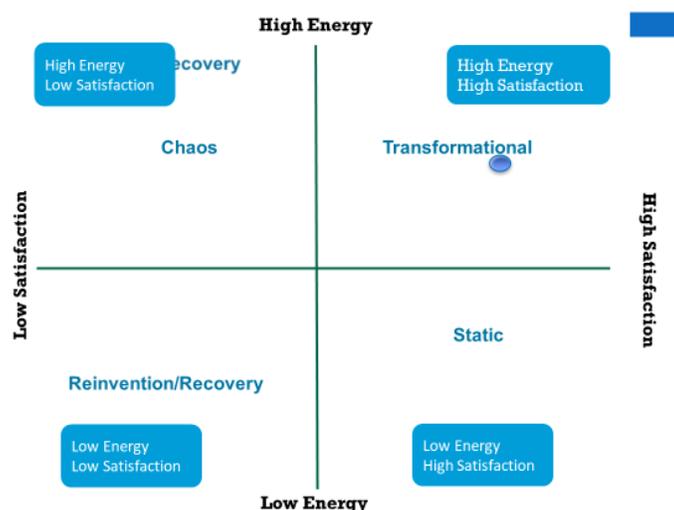
First Presbyterian Church (FPC), New Bern, NC

Online Review of “Vital Signs”, with Emily Swanson, on March 31, 2020

The Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT), which includes 102 congregational questions, was administered from March 1 until March 20 with upbeat publicity prior to NC’s “stay at home” order. The number of respondents was 280 persons, which is 85 percent of FPC’s average worship attendance. For a church our size, our response rate is considered above average. For a complete readout, please review the “Vital Signs” report for FPC, New Bern.

Questions in the survey (called Drivers of Satisfaction and Drivers of Energy) enable Holy Cow! Consulting (HCC) to develop the “Satisfaction-Energy” map. Overall, 66 percent of FPC members are clearly satisfied with things in the church, which is considered “High.” The other key measurement which we want disagreement with is, “It seems to me we are clearly going through the motions of church activity.” Overall, 52 percent clearly disagreed with this statement, which also is considered “High.”

When those two are brought together, we see that there is a high level of satisfaction and a high level of energy in the system at FPC New Bern (see graph below). This quadrant is called a “transformational quadrant.” A church that maps into this quadrant is one where members find a source of new meaning and purpose. Also, a church in this quadrant may be able to serve as a mentor to other churches. One more significant noting is that when congregation members feel more positive in these areas, they tend to feel more positive overall and the system is more open to taking strategic risk. This component will be key in the PNC’s moving to call a new pastor. While the members state clearly that preaching and pastoral care are desired characteristics, FPC will want a pastor that has demonstrated her/his ability to manage strategic planning and risk. A pastor can have a plan on how to handle pastoral care that does not involve him/her or has minimum involvement, but in this quadrant, strategic planning is essential. One question for the PNC to consider is “how does the pastoral candidate handle a risk that does not pan out.” Overall, FPC’s membership sees itself in a very positive light.



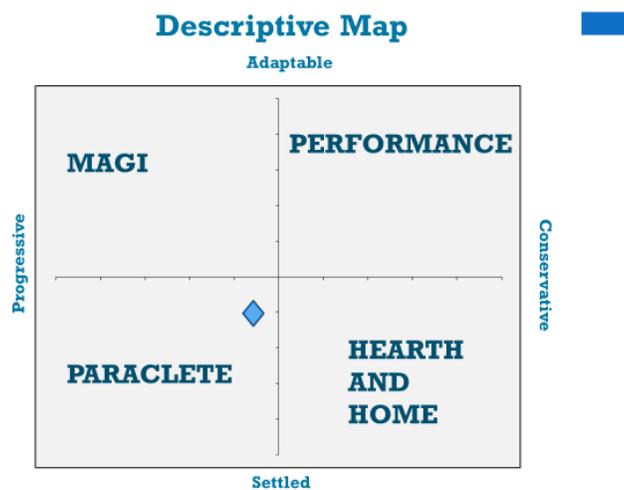
As members look to the future, their top four goals are:

- To make necessary changes to attract families with children and youth to our church.
- To develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church.
- To develop ministries that work toward healing those broken by life circumstances.
- To expand outreach ministries that provide direct services to those living on the margins of society. (i.e. homeless, immigrant, transient persons)

In comparison to the 2200 other churches that HCC benchmarked FPC New Bern against, three goals that are unusually strong are:

- To strengthen the pastoral response of the church in serving people with special or unmet needs.
- To expand outreach ministries that provide direct services to those living on the margins of society. (i.e. homeless, immigrant, transient persons)
- To work as an advocate for social and institutional change so that society might better reflect the values of the kingdom of God.

While the above points us to “where we want to go,” the second part of the CAT asks participants “who do we want to be?” Two key elements are considered in this mapping: Theological Perspective and Flexibility. For Theological Perspective, the continuum is from Progressive versus Conservative. FPC tends to be toward the middle but is still more adaptable than conservative. Flexibility is on a continuum of More Settled versus More Adaptable. FPC tends to be flexible, but only slightly so. Flexibility is a key element for church growth as HCC states that churches who maintain a good Flexibility tend to grow.



When the two elements of FPC New Bern’s Theological Perspective and Flexibility are mapped, we see they fall into the “Paraclete” quadrant. When Paraclete churches are at their best, they:

- Develop communities that are intellectually open and reflective but pay attention to structure and ritual.
- Commonly hear conversations about hospitality, inclusiveness, and spiritual practice.
- Are comfortable with the unique spiritual path everyone must follow but believe that there are important patterns to spiritual practice.
- Are uniquely equipped to focus on ministries of healing-often engaged in front line work-when the community is warm and hospitable and can be a haven for those in need of healing or recovery.
- Prepare members to deal with the harshness of cultural and political realities in ministry.
- Maintain enough level of flexibility to prevent becoming irrelevant to the thinking of those in the community around them.

FPC New Bern operates predominately from a position of health. Yet, if a Paraclete congregation operates out of its “shadow side,” they may:

- Find themselves going through the motions of set routines, rather than finding the deeper meaning, if missional thinking is lost.
- Be tempted to overcommit meeting the needs of others, which could cause burnout.
- Accept people where they are without adequate levels of accountability that could help make people whole.
- Not focus on the gospel’s power to transform lives rather than its power to comfort.

Overall, the congregation is an extremely healthy organization with many of the key elements in place for growth. The PNC will want to consider a pastor’s preaching, teaching, and pastoral care abilities, but the key element for church growth is a candidate’s demonstrated excellence at moving a congregation through a strategic plan. The entire document of “Vital Signs” is available for review by any potential candidate upon request.

APPENDICES

Total Worship Attendance

